To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Paul J. Bonicelli entitled "Serpent-Doves and Sons of Thunder in Mexico: Comparing The Politics of Latin American Evangelicals." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Political Science.

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Serpent-Doves and Sons of Thunder in Mexico:
Comparing The Politics of Latin American Evangelicals

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

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Paul J. Bonicelli

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the political attitudes and activities of Protestant Evangelical Christians in Mexico; it also compares the data on Mexico with information on other Latin American Evangelicals so that the points about Mexico are made clearer. The goal was to identify the reasons for the Mexican Evangelicals' lack of political involvement and their apolitical attitudes. The author conducted a literature review both in the United States and in Mexico, interviewed participants in the Mexican Evangelical community, and attended several meetings and social functions held by the subjects.

The study produced several findings. First, Mexican Evangelicals have not been involved in politics because they are constrained by several factors: history has taught them that involvement carries a high cost; Mexico's unique and semi-authoritarian political system closes the political arena to all but officially-approved groups; Mexican laws have traditionally barred religious persons and groups from effectively influencing society; the Roman Catholic Church and other societal actors such as the news media have persecuted Evangelicals violently and swayed public opinion against them, respectively; and finally, the Mexican Evangelicals' own doctrinal views have discouraged them from involvement, especially over the last 70 years. Second, the study found that in the last four to five years in Mexico, the attitudes and behaviors of Mexican Evangelicals have changed dramatically, as has their legal status. Constitutional reform and bolder, more politically-minded church leaders have produced what appears to be a nascent political awakening among this religious community. As some constraints are removed or weakened, social scientists may expect greater political involvement on the part of this traditionally withdrawn religious community. In sum, Mexican Evangelicals may be following the lead of other Latin American and U.S. Evangelicals by entering the political arena.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This dissertation is a study of the political views and activities of a particular religious group in Latin America: Mexican Evangelical Christians.[1] In this Introduction, I will

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[1]The author conducted preliminary research while working in 1986 as a graduate intern in Mexico City with a Senator of Mexico's governing party. It was during this time that he was introduced to the issue of Mexican Evangelical politics because of the Senator's involvement.

In the historical writings discussed in this study, some authors use the term "Protestant" rather than "Evangelical"; I shall use "Protestant" when discussing historical events since historians usually use this term. The term "Evangelical" is a more modern term and is now more commonly used, especially in Latin America. I will use it throughout most of the study. "Evangelicals" usually refers to members of mainline denominations but also non-mainline denominations such as the many Pentecostal, Charismatic, and independent Christian groups who are expanding rapidly in Latin America; finally, in Latin America, "Protestant" and "Evangelical" are interchangeable.

Most Evangelicals in Latin America are those members of churches which proclaim the inerrancy of the Bible in all aspects, and who also work out their faith-based salvation by proselytizing and attempting to live their lives according to scriptural mandates. Generally, these churches are Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Pentecostal, Independent Charismatic and Independent non-Charismatic, among others. [This term will not be used to include groups such as Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses. When referring to them, I will identify them by name.] Whenever the term "Evangelical" is used by itself in this study, and unless otherwise noted, it will refer to these Latin American Protestants. Pentecostals and Charismatics are distinguished by their belief in the currency of the gifts of the Spirit as outlined in the New Testament: speaking in tongues, prophecy, and healing, among others.

***A note on the dissertation's title: "Serpent-doves" refers to Jesus Christ's command to believers living among hostile nonbelievers: "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves." (Matthew 10:16, New American Standard Bible, Chicago, Moody Press, 1973). "Sons of Thunder" refers to two of

discuss the scope of the research, the rationale for undertaking it, and a brief word on the methods used.

The research is a study of Mexico which uses comparisons with several other Latin American countries to promote understanding of the Mexican case. The focus is on several issues regarding religion and its influence on political activity in the region. My objective is to concentrate on politics and how Evangelicals relate to it by a study of history, law, politics, societal conflicts, and certain key individuals of the Evangelical leadership, their statements and writings about doctrine and theology, and their recent activities. I do not intend to analyze Protestant growth in the whole region, or spend undue effort relating the history of Protestants in the region, or attempt what would be a near impossible empirical study of the attitudes and activities of the mass of Latin American Evangelicals. Instead, the study will discuss these topics as is necessary but only as they advance the dissertation's overall objective: to explain why Mexican Evangelicals, unlike other Evangelicals in Latin America, have been withdrawn from politics for most of this century.

Why have they not been participating? Some points need to be made at the outset to set up the argument made in this

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Christ's boldest disciples, James and John. These analogies are appropriately applied to Mexican Evangelicals, indeed all Latin American Evangelicals, because of the precarious position they have endured in their authoritarian and majority Roman Catholic societies.

study. There are similarities as well as differences among Latin American nations. Although Mexico is similar to other Latin American countries in that the Spanish crown and Roman Catholicism controlled society for over 300 years, and liberals and conservatives vied for power for another 100 years, Mexico is nevertheless significantly different in at least two ways which are dependent upon history for explanation. First, liberal--one might say radical--democratic reformers and many of their values actually governed Mexico for the latter part of the 19th century, and this destroyed much of the Catholic Church's temporal power. Second, the political party that has ruled Mexico since the 1920s utilizes a unique blend of corporatism, centralism, authoritarianism and some democracy to rule Mexico, so much so that it has precluded any meaningful activity on the part of interest groups or individuals who are not members of the official ruling elite; moreover, the party also has been able to prevent outside ideologies or philosophies it deems undesirable from influencing the politics of the nation. In sum, Mexican Protestants, as well as Catholics, have lost much of the influence they might normally have over politics. Mexican history and its current political system is rather unique among Latin American states.

I will argue, then, that because of these differences between Mexico and other Latin American countries religious groups in Latin America have had varying experiences with the

political arena. For Evangelicals in several Latin American countries, the political arena has been open for participation and they have often participated eagerly and successfully; the same usually holds true for Catholics in these states. However, Mexican Evangelicals have not enjoyed much access to politics, nor have they shown much interest over the last sixty years in particular. It is these differences in political and social history which account for the varying levels of Evangelical political activity in Latin America. But how, specifically, do they account for the varying levels of activity? This study attempts to provide a detailed explanation by positing that several barriers or constraints have been erected in Mexico which block Evangelical political activity--such constraints may even have altered doctrinal and theological views. I argue further that these constraints either have not been present in other Latin American states, or if they have been present they have not been as potent as they have been in Mexico. For example, Guatemala provides the most revealing contrast with Mexico.

Many Guatemalan Evangelicals have been quite involved in politics for several years, particularly during the 1980s. They have been politically active with such zeal and purpose that in 1991 they captured the presidency of the republic. Their successful movement was based upon a broad and loose coalition of Evangelical denominations. President Jorge

Serrano,[2] a professing Evangelical, is a former cabinet minister, diplomat and prominent businessman. He is also a member of a large and popular charismatic church. Churches such as his figure prominently in the Guatemalan Evangelical political movement and are characterized by conservative theology and political attitudes. Evangelicals comprise twenty to thirty percent of the population of Guatemala. This fact is extremely significant in that Guatemala, like most of the Latin American states, has a Roman Catholic religious tradition, as well as the religious traditions of the various indigenous peoples conquered and colonized by Spain almost 500 years ago.[3]

Unlike in Guatemala, Mexican Evangelical churches are very active in their spiritual ministries, but not at all in politics. Moreover, there are some Mexican Evangelicals who have prominent positions in society, even political positions, but these persons usually are not politically active as Evangelicals. The average Evangelical in Mexico tends to be from the lower and middle classes, depending upon the region in question, and these persons, too, usually are uninvolved in politics.

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[2]See Chapter Eight for a discussion of his 1993 demise.

[3]Other countries, such as Colombia, Bolivia, and Peru share similarities with Guatemala in terms of Evangelical involvement, and so they will also be used in comparisons with Mexico. Comparisons like these will help to explain the Mexican Evangelicals' unique circumstances and the constraints that have kept them out of the political arena.

Simply put, these Mexicans have had either no desire or no ability to engage in politics, and I will argue in the following chapters that they have been constrained from involvement in politics by several factors related to Mexican history, politics, societal conflicts among religious groups, and Evangelical doctrinal views.[4]

However, the study is more than an attempt to explain Mexican Evangelicals' lack of political involvement, so it is divided into two sections: 1) a treatment of the constraints, and 2) a discussion of the dissolution of several of the constraints and what may be the recent beginnings of an apparent Mexican Evangelical political awakening. These constraints are dissolving insofar as laws have been changed, doctrinal attitudes have been altered, and the ruling political party's political system is opening somewhat in a search for legitimacy. Combined with the falling away of

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[4]One might ask if Mexican Evangelicals would normally be engaged in political activity if the constraints were not present. I think that they would, especially if their leaders did not discourage them from activism. As Chapters Six and Seven will reveal, the leadership's views are the key determinant of Evangelical political attitudes and behaviors in my estimation. As evidence, I would note that all constraints existed in the 1970s and 1980s almost everywhere in Mexico except the doctrinal and theological constraints--as a result, a few rural Evangelicals acted as the average citizen might when they engaged in political activity in behalf of their economic interests, primarily I believe because their leaders encouraged them to do so. Nevertheless, this question will not be directly addressed in the study as I simply take an affirmative answer as a given--that is, absent the constraints, particularly the doctrinal and theological constraints, Evangelicals will normally be inclined to engage in politics.

these constraints is the rapid expansion of Evangelical numbers in Mexico. Most research regarding Mexican Evangelicals reveals that Mexico contains relatively few Evangelicals, especially in comparison with other Latin American states: estimates range from a low of three to five percent to a high of ten percent of the population[5]. However, the movement is growing.

In addition to organizations designed to spread Evangelicalism such as CONAMEX and MILAMEX, other groups have been formed in recent years for the express purpose of promoting Evangelical interests vis-a-vis the state, such as the Foro Nacional de la Iglesias Cristianas Evangelicos (The National Forum of the Evangelical Christian Churches), and the Instituto Mexicano de la Libertad Religioso (The Mexican Institute of Religious Liberty). Although the majority of Evangelical organizations seek primarily to promote evangelism, some of their members have also engaged in advocacy, such as reporting on persecution against Evangelicals, noting antiEvangelical press bias and presenting

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[5]One of the most recent estimates for Mexico is given by Luis Scott, author of Salt of the Earth: A Socio-Political History of Mexico City Evangelical Protestants, 1964 to 1991; he puts the figure at 10% of the population. For estimates of the number of Evangelicals in the various Latin American states, and an estimate for the entire region, see David Stoll's Is Latin America Turning Protestant?, (Berkeley: University of California Press) 1990, p. 9. Most researchers posit a figure of at least 25%, and many current news articles suggest a figure as high as 30%. See also Bastian's most recent article in Latin American Research Review, vol 28, #2, 1993, pp. 33-61.

Evangelical views to the government. These activities were practically unheard of or at least extremely muted before the dissolution of the constraints. Significantly, some of the members of these groups are very much interested in encouraging Evangelical political activity, and so they counsel other Evangelicals to be involved in politics. Since the changes in the Constitution in December of 1992, Evangelicals (and Catholics) have much more freedom to express their religion publicly. They are beginning to seek access to radio and television for evangelization purposes; they are also beginning to respond to their leadership's calls for political action. In sum, as the constraints dissolve and the numbers grow, Evangelical political activity appears to be increasing. Much of this research will be an effort to determine the theological and political views of the Evangelical leadership. Finally, Chapter Eight, the Conclusion, will be comprised of a brief review of the constraints, a discussion of the relative influence of each, and speculation as to the future of the Evangelical political movement in Mexico and Latin America generally.

Below is a more detailed description of the dissertation's contents.

Organization of the Research and Chapter Outline

The constraints I have discussed--around which the first part of this study will be designed--can be divided into two

categories. I maintain that Evangelical political involvement in Latin America is dependent upon causes that are 1) internal, that is, they are causes indigenous to the Evangelical community, such as theology, doctrine, and the guidance of pastors and lay leaders; and 2) external, that is, they are causes exogenous to the Evangelical community, such as state power, law, and conflicts with other religious groups. Each constraint is treated in turn as the subject of a chapter, followed by the second part of the study which deals with recent changes in Evangelical attitudes and behaviors.

Following are brief discussions of the contents of each chapter. Chapter One, of course, is the Introduction.

Chapter Two

This chapter reveals a constraint of sorts, an indirect one. The political and religious history of Mexico is filled with conflict and turmoil, and not a little violence, none of which has been lost on Evangelicals. To understand how the other constraints have come to be, one must have a grasp of Mexican history and the role Evangelicals have played in it. To make clear the Evangelical situation, comparisons are made with Evangelicals in other Latin American states.

Briefly, Mexican Evangelicals have had few opportunities to be involved in Mexican society, much less the political life of the nation. Only during the Liberal Reform of the

19th century have they enjoyed a prominent role and access to the political system, and even then they labored under onerous legal restrictions. By the 1930s, they faced a harshly anticlerical constitution and a decimated but antagonistic Roman Catholic Church. However, in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and other states, Evangelicals have played more prominent roles with fewer restrictions on their societal involvement: most significantly, they have been engaged in the political lives of their nations. The argument in this chapter is basically that Mexican Evangelicals have learned from history that the public arena has not been accommodating, and that for Evangelicals to enjoy social peace, their best bet has been to stay uninvolved.

Chapter Three

Chapter Three focuses on the traditional political culture of Mexico as it acts as an external constraint on the Evangelical community. (There is less emphasis in this chapter on the other Latin American countries used in the study although the common thread of authoritarianism in Latin America is discussed.) It is the contention of the study that Mexico's unique political culture hampers Evangelical involvement because it discourages would-be political activists from mobilizing outside the official governing party's structure. The reverse appears to be true of some

other Latin American states, perhaps as long as one does not mobilize from the left.

I argue that Mexican Evangelicals do not participate in politics because they are not normally inclined to such activity. This is a result of the internalized political culture of Mexico produced by a 70-year-old closed and rather authoritarian political system. It automatically discourages Mexicans from "unofficial" activism. It has been simply unthinkable for most Mexicans to mobilize from outside the PRI, even though there is now more political and religious freedom than there has been in the recent past. Various scholars have commented on this topic, pointing to the corporatist, authoritarian, and centralist traditions in Mexican politics.

Chapter Four

This chapter focuses on the laws of Mexico as they constitute a constraint on political activity; this constraint is also external in nature. Until 1991, there was a considerable lack of religious freedom in Mexico, especially when compared to the West and even other Latin American states. Church property was owned by the state, not the congregations, so religious practices could be obstructed rather easily by the state. The Mexican Constitution prevented religious leaders and groups from participating in the political life of the nation, so Evangelicals feared the

consequences of mobilizing. Moreover, the presence of Protestant missionaries and Evangelical use of the airwaves for evangelization have long been either discouraged or banned. (These laws were changed in 1992, and this reform will be the subject of the latter section of the study.)

A few points should be made to further clarify the contention. Mexican Evangelicals have not mobilized as a block and not participated in politics apparently because any such private group organized for political action has been subject for the last 70 years either to cooption pressures by the state and ruling party or perhaps to outright repression by the state. Mexican Evangelicals may have feared a loss of their scant privileges if they were to mobilize politically and in doing so threaten the hegemony of the governing party. The might ask rhetorically, "If we are already persecuted by other sectors of society, why should we also incur the wrath of the government?"

The chapter contains comparisons with other Latin American states. For example, in Guatemala almost the reverse seems to be true: government and constitutional restriction of Evangelical proselytizing has been almost non-existent for years, and there has even been some official encouragement of it (See Sexton, 1978). As far as the Guatemalan Catholic Church is concerned, some of its members' and priests' past associations with revolutionary politics have weakened it, to the benefit of Evangelicals. The state has officially

sanctioned some of the political activities of Evangelical groups, and adherents to liberation theology are perhaps the only religious group facing difficulty in mobilizing politically. It would seem that Guatemalan Evangelicals are politically active because the government has either left them alone or perhaps even dealt favorably with them. In sum, the argument here is that Mexican law has barred any religious group or person from influencing politics for the past 70 years, while in other Latin American states such a situation has not obtained.

Chapter Five

Chapter Five focuses on the external constraint of societal actors such as the Roman Catholic Church and the popular news media. These institutions exert pressure, through intimidation and sometimes violent force, that discourages Evangelicals from making their presence known in society, much less involving themselves in politics. There are reports of violence levelled at Evangelicals by local Catholic militants and "caciques" under their influence; usually this violence occurs in rural villages but there have also been reports of attacks on preachers and laymen in Mexico City.

The press has historically been unfavorable toward Evangelicals, and many news articles and editorials castigate

the churches, alleging that they are lackeys of the United States.

Data for this chapter was drawn from several missionary news organizations, U.S. and Mexican newspapers, and the scholarly work of some Latin Americanists. The most important argument made in the chapter is that whether the reports of violence and bias are entirely accurate, Evangelicals perceive them to be; therefore, they are constrained from social and political activity for fear of provoking more attacks, both verbal and physical.

Chapter Six

Chapter Six is a discussion of Evangelical theology and doctrine and how they have constrained political activism; these beliefs and the attitudes they produce comprise an internal constraint.

The focus is first upon theological and doctrinal views among Latin American Evangelicals generally; next, is a look at how Mexican Evangelicals have articulated their specific positions; not surprisingly, the majority of Evangelicals hold conservative positions. Finally, I include a discussion of Guatemalan and other Latin American Evangelical views to show that these have often encouraged political activism.

To clarify, I argue that Mexican Evangelicals are not involved in politics because their doctrine and their religious leaders teach them that it is a sin to involve

themselves in worldly affairs, especially the political world which they see as the quintessence of corruption. Many other Latin American Evangelicals, in contrast, are involved in politics because their doctrine and their leaders teach them that they can and should be involved in politics in order to bring about a more just government. In their view, the corruption of politics should be cleaned up by Evangelicals.

A key factor in determining whether an Evangelical group will feel compelled to political activism or withdrawn from it is the views and teaching of the leadership, especially of the pastors. These have considerable influence in the lives of the average Evangelical; in particular, they help them develop their political point of view. They help the masses formulate opinions about the proper support, if any, that they should give to politicians. Some of the questions I have asked are: What do you believe is the proper role of an Evangelical in politics? Can a Christian involve himself in politics? If so, why is it acceptable or appropriate, and how should one conduct oneself in politics? If it is not appropriate, why not?

Chapter Seven

This chapter begins the second portion of the study; it is a discussion of the recent and dramatic changes that have occurred in Mexico in the last few years regarding the legal status, attitudes, and behaviors of religious groups and

leaders, particularly among Evangelicals. There is little comparison made with other Latin American states since the focus is on what has changed since this study was begun in earnest in the late 1980s.

Specifically, some of the onerous laws discussed in Chapter Four--which kept religious groups on the fringes of society and out of politics--have been changed; constitutional reforms were pushed through the federal legislature and implemented in 1992. These allow for Evangelicals and the other religious groups to assume a more active role in society and to address politics. Also, the attitudes and behaviors of some church leaders and members have also changed significantly: more and more of them are encouraging voting and running for office among their followers, as well as making their views known to politicians and government officials. Such activities and attitudes are unprecedented, especially in the last 70 years since the PRI has controlled Mexico; something on the order of an Evangelical political awakening is underway, much like in the United States when the Moral Majority and other such groups were formed in the mid-1970s, and as in Guatemala when its Evangelical political movement commenced in the 1980s.

This chapter includes data gathered from publications and interviews of various Evangelical leaders.

Chapter Eight

This is the final chapter; in it I draw conclusions and implications from the research. The constraints are reviewed briefly, and I show how they have combined to keep Evangelicals out of politics. Next, based upon the information contained in Chapter Seven, I speculate as to the future of the apparent Evangelical political awakening, where it might lead and how it relates to the increasingly more open and democratic nature of Mexican politics.

Rationale for the Study

There are various reasons for political scientists to pay more attention to the impact of religion on politics in general, and to Latin American church-state issues in particular. The world was shocked into awareness of the strength of this impact with Iran's Islamic revolution in 1979. Since then, the power of Islam to challenge secular rule or to take outright control of a government has increased dramatically. In many areas of the Middle East the Muslim clerics would rule if it were not for the repression of the secular state. The United States also has seen a resurgence in political activity among conservative Christian Evangelicals, especially in the presidential races of the 1970s and 1980s. In sum, the supremacy of the state, or at least the supremacy of secular forces over government, is being challenged by religious forces in many states.

With the democratic opening that is occurring in Mexico, and the increased concern for greater civil and political rights, research on the role of religion in politics is quite timely. Most importantly for this study, the recent activities and statements of some Mexican Evangelicals indicate that there may be a nascent political awakening among them and such a situation may portend conflict for the future as Catholics and Protestants vie for spiritual converts and a place at the political bargaining table.

In any event, Latin Americanists are beginning to see the Evangelical movement as a true alternative to the leftism of the liberation theology movement which captured so much scholarly and media attention in the 1970s and 1980s, especially because of the former's phenomenal growth. Throwing light on the Evangelical movement, therefore, should expand research on the region's politics. Perhaps it has already begun: the 1991 convention of the Latin American Studies Association played host to several panels dealing with the region's Evangelical movement.

Research Methodology

Research was conducted according to the following four methods:

Literature Review

I conducted a literature review in the United States and in Mexico. In addition to specific research on Mexican Evangelicals, I have also researched the history of Latin American religious groups generally, the national policies and laws governing religion in public life, and the history of Evangelical and governmental interaction.

In-depth Elite Interviewing

I have interviewed several Mexican religious and political leaders. The former include government office holders and party leaders. The latter include pastors, evangelists, seminary professors, and missionaries.

Participant Observation

I observed Evangelical communities in Mexico. These communities differ in levels of political activity and societal influence. They also differ in their political attitudes and doctrinal beliefs. This portion of the research includes observation of families, church congregations, and other relevant social structures of Evangelicals. I attended church worship services, and other church meetings, and meetings of political leaders.

I.

CONSTRAINTS ON EVANGELICAL POLITICAL ACITIVITY

CHAPTER TWO

The Role of Evangelicals in Latin American History with Particular Emphasis on Mexico

Although Mexico has a rich history of conflict between the religious and political spheres that primarily revolves around the Catholic Church, there have been significant historical events which had and continue to have a direct bearing on current Evangelical political activity.[1] For one, Evangelicals have had a limited role in political affairs since the time of Independence. This role and related activities of Evangelicals are worth reviewing on their own merits, so the present chapter puts into historical perspective the role Evangelicals have played in Mexican history. Although always a small minority, they have played both key supporting and opposing roles in their relations with the government, and at other times have been simply ignored by the political elites. Some authors referred to in this

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[1]The next chapter will focus more specifically on the Catholic Church's role in politics, in Mexico and other Latin American states, in order to reveal how various states in the region have reacted to the political activity of religious groups. The argument will be that the Mexican state's harsh reaction to Church involvement in politics produced a chilling effect upon any religious groups contemplating political involvement.

chapter have discussed Evangelicals (often referring to them as Protestants) in the entire Latin American region while others concentrate on Mexico only; the goal of the chapter, however, is to show how Mexico's unique history of political and social upheaval and domination by colonial powers and dictators has shaped Evangelical politics or produced a lack thereof. In addition, this history reveals how Mexico's unique political system and culture of the past four hundred years have prevented sustained Evangelical involvement in politics, while different circumstances in other Latin American states may be argued to have produced different results: namely, more activist Evangelical politics. Comparisons with other Latin American states will be provided in the final section of this chapter.

In Mexico as well as in other states that are more authoritarian than democratic, groups founded upon unique ideologies which challenge official ideology for supremacy find that access to the political arena is limited if not completely non-existent. The particular characteristics of the Mexican case will be clarified with contrasting examples from other Latin American countries. In Mexico, a traditionally Catholic society where perhaps only 10% of the population is Evangelical, Evangelicals who engage in politics can endanger their social, civil, and economic well-being. Evangelicals in Mexico have for the most part over the last

sixty years been reluctant to engage in politics specifically as Evangelicals for fear that they might antagonize the state and other groups, such as the Catholic Church and a suspicious press. Only during the time of the 19th century liberal reform governments and during the Revolution of 1910 have Evangelicals had considerable success in the political arena. while Catholic-Evangelical tensions and journalists' biases will be discussed in later chapters, the history of the tensions between the state and Evangelicals, including the colonial period, will be discussed here.

Protestants in the Colonial Period

The geographic area now known as Mexico was first conquered and colonized by Spain in 1521. The Spanish brought with them the Catholic religion and attempted to convert all of the natives to Catholicism.[2] The conquerors obtained mixed results. Although there are certainly many traditional Roman Catholics among the mestizos today in Mexico and the rest of Latin America, the Catholicism of the Indians is a syncretic form for the most part. It is not necessary to recount the colonial history in its entirety; what is important is that although Catholicism was installed as the dominant religion,

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[2]For the best review of Mexican history, this author would suggest Michael C. Meyer and William L.Sherman's The Course of Mexican History, 3rd Edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 1987. See also, for a review of Church history in Latin America, Penton in Historia de la Iglesia en Mexico, 3rd Edition, by Mariano Cuevas, S.J..

Protestants did manage to make their way to New Spain--most often Lutherans--the Spanish crown's decrees notwithstanding. Most of these Protestants were traders or settlers (Penton, 12). Those who openly proselytized were persecuted and subjected to the Inquisition (See Penton, 14-17; Baez Camargo, 46-48). Nelson notes that Mexico is known as one of the most Catholic of the New World colonies and its Inquisition as one of the harshest; the influence of this Inquisition was felt until the time of Independence (Nelson, 1984, p. 8). In any event, for most of the colonial period Protestants had very little room to maneuver; as long as Spain remained in power, its Church was dominant, at least to the point of preventing any Evangelical awakening in New Spain. Toward the end of the colonial period in the early 19th century, the Inquisition became less active, and the Catholic Church entered a period of decline. Also, the philosophical ideas and the literary work of the Enlightenment began to reach the elites of Mexico. Luis Scott notes that this new philosophy aided Protestants in Europe and elsewhere because the Enlightenment championed religious tolerance (22).

The Ascension of Liberalism

Independence from Spain in 1821 meant the end of the Spanish crown's ability to keep out Protestantism; but the conservative forces (traditional elites of Spanish heritage) that ruled until the Reform of 1857 continued to support the

dominance of the Catholic Church. The Catholic priests who had begun the independence war had been accused of "Lutheranism" and having adopted the "great evils" of Protestantism--such criticism becoming a staple of the anti-revolutionary forces. After Independence and before the liberal reformers took power, Protestants did manage to increase their presence and activity in Mexico. The masons established lodges, and the British and Foreign Bible Society came to Mexico. The groundwork of Protestantism was laid, especially with this latter activity, as Bibles were circulated and sold. Dr. Jose Maria Luis Mora worked to translate the scriptures into Spanish and various Indian languages, and his writings urged the government (to which he was an advisor) to practice religious tolerance (Scott, 23-25). However, the Catholic hierarchy's opposition was intermittently successful in thwarting expansion of the Protestant efforts.

Another boost to Protestantism was the secularization of higher education that began in the 1820s and 1830s. Clerical control was broken, and course offerings and philosophies of education became more suited to preparing graduates for service in a modern state and society (Lee, 48, 59-72).

For most of the period 1833 to 1855, Santa Anna ruled Mexico, and for most of that time the Catholic Church managed to retain most of its power as it battled the liberals of Mexican society. After the overthrow of Santa Anna in 1855,

a bona fide liberal government came to power. Benito Juarez, an Indian, was appointed Minister of Justice, and Miguel Lerdo de Tejada was made Secretary of the Treasury. These men were to become the Catholic hierarchy's worst enemies. They began their opposition to the Roman Catholic hierarchy by instituting several laws to curb Church power, the most stringent being the "Ley Juarez," which subjected the clergy to civil courts instead of Church courts, and the "Ley Lerdo," which forced the sale of Church lands and investments except for its ministry buildings and sanctuaries. The Church was duly compensated. These laws became a part of the 1857 Constitution, and they greatly reduced the clergy's power over society. Although a law instituting religious toleration was not specifically codified, the effect of the new Constitution was, for the first time in Mexican history, to provide Protestants with the ability to operate freely in society.

Catholics, of course, were outraged, and the Pope himself condemned the Constitution. The conservatives in Mexico ultimately took up arms and overthrew the government: the President fled and Juarez assumed the office, taking his government into temporary headquarters in Guadalajara. The three-year War of the Reform ensued, and liberals who had not been decidedly anti-Catholic became so. Much stricter reform laws were passed at the urging of Juarez. These laws stripped the Church of all property without compensation, closed male orders and many churches, and took away Church control of

marriage and burials. More importantly, Juarez opened the door to the Protestants and decreed religious freedom in 1860. This was not to last, however, because French and Spanish forces invaded Mexico, ousted the Juarez government and installed the Austrian Archduke Maximilian as Mexican Emperor, all done at the behest of Napoleon III. These events were possible because the United States was in the midst of its Civil War. After 1865, American pressure against Napoleon forced him to withdraw his troops that were propping up Maximilian; the Empire fell on June 19, 1867, and Maximilian was executed by firing squad.

Upon returning to Mexico City, Juarez not only reignited his Reform of Mexican society and politics, but he also encouraged Protestantism more strongly than before. At one time he had encouraged a purely Mexican Catholic Church independent of Rome's domination. He even found political support among a few of the lower clergy who supported the Constitution of 1857; these formed a "schismatic church" that Juarez supported after his return to power. This new Church eventually found temporary support from the Episcopal Church of the United States. In addition to supporting a purely Mexican Catholic Church, Juarez was quite optimistic as to the good that Protestantism could do for Mexico, remarking that "the future happiness and prosperity of my nation depend on the development of Protestantism." Juarez also said, "I could wish that Protestantism would become Mexican by conquering the

Indians; they need a religion which will compel them to read and not to spend their savings on candles for the saints" (Scott 1991, 29-30; see also Baez Camargo and Grubb 1935, 89, and Mondragon 1991, 63-64). In addition to the schismatic church, several Protestant groups organized churches in the 1860s Reform period. The Baptists organized churches, and the American Bible Society also became active in Mexico.

Sebastian Lerdo de Tejada became president in 1872 after Juarez's death, and as Catholics feared, he continued the Reform and implemented policies relevant to church and state issues which were based upon the same philosophy as his "Ley Lerdo." He was, in fact, very supportive of Protestant efforts (Scott 1991, 30). Several U.S. churches and missionary associations of various dominations found the doors open to evangelization in Mexico, because the "Mexican government had broken the chains of Rome, abolished the convents, established religious freedom and confiscated all of the properties of the Church except those used for worship."[3]

The Porfiriato and Revolution

The reform years were some of the worst for the Mexican Catholic Church and some of the best for Protestants, but once the Porfiriato was in place--the dictatorship of General

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[3]Scott 1991: 31, quoting the "35th Annual Report of the Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church in the USA to the General Assembly" celebrated in Detroit, Michigan, May 16-29, 1872.

Porfirio Diaz which lasted from 1876 to 1880 and again from 1884 to 1911--the Church found a more sympathetic state. Perhaps because he began his political career as a liberal, Diaz did not repeal the reform laws or banish Protestantism, but he did allow the Church to regain much of its lost property and power in society. Diaz did not effectively enforce the anti-clerical laws, especially after he began to abandon liberalism and secure his dictatorship. However, neither did he move against the Protestants; in fact, he favored them by encouraging missionaries to come to Mexico and by allowing Protestants to pursue their activities openly. During the Porfiriato, over twenty denominations were active in Mexico, opening new churches and founding private Christian secondary schools for all classes of Mexican society. These circumstances effectively limited the power of the Catholic Church, even though the Church was stronger under Diaz than under any of the other liberal reformers (Scott 1991, 31-32; see also Mecham 1966, 376-379).

Scott provides interesting data pointing to the divisions that existed among Protestants in Mexico--both U.S. and Mexican--regarding their diverse evaluations of the Porfiriato. Many Mexican Protestants were opposed to Diaz and expressed their opposition openly, while most U.S. missionaries thought highly of Diaz and said so in their reports to their home offices. With revolution impending, there was likely to be tension within the bi-national

Evangelical sector of Mexico. Even more likely was the prospect that--based upon their outspoken criticism of the Porfiriato--Mexican Protestants would have a significant role to play in the Revolution (Scott, 1991, 32-33)[4]. Indeed, for the second time in Mexican history Protestants played a significant, and controversial role.

One of the most recent works dealing with these events and others in the history of Protestantism in Mexico is Deborah J. Baldwin's Protestants and the Mexican Revolution: Missionaries, Ministers, and Social Change. This work focuses on the role of Protestants during the revolutionary period. She recounts the divisions among Protestants as they chose sides, either as advocates or combatants[5]. Most of the North American missionaries went home to the United States; those Mexican Protestants who opposed Diaz did so out of nationalist support for the liberal cause. They had a desire for a better

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[4]Scott provides excellent primary sources on these issues, namely, the reports and other writings of missionaries. See his notes on pages 32-33 of Salt of the Earth.

[5]Scott (p. 33-34) cites several examples of Evangelicals who had close relationships with Madero, the Revolution's first leader, such as the Methodist Andres Osuna [See Andres Osuna, Por la Escuela y por la Patria, (Mexico City: CUPSA, 1943). Moreover, most Evangelicals who fought in the Revolution fought for Madero's successors [Jean-Pierre Bastian, Protestantismo y Sociedad, (Mexico City: CUPSA, 1983), pp.146-47], and those who took a position in writing supported the revolutionary generals [Gonzalo Baez Camargo, "Los Protestantes en la Revolucion Mexicana," Estudios Ecumenicos, (November 1971), p. 14.

state based upon the ideals of the 1857 Constitution; those ideals provided for "economic support for middle class development, educational reform to make political and economic transformation possible, and an appreciation for Protestantism" (Baldwin 1990, 176). In other words, they felt that on the political and economic front, Porfirio Diaz had shown concern only for the rich. They were attracted to Francisco Madero, the Revolution's first leader, and they later joined Venustiano Carranza, who led the Constitutionalists after Madero was killed. There were several Mexican national Protestant leaders of the revolutionary cause, many of whom had been educated in U.S. mission schools in Mexico or in the United States at religious universities.

Before 1905, many of these men had supported Diaz because he had allowed mission work in Mexico. However, according to Baldwin, their ideology and philosophy allowed them to take the significant step of revolting; they rationalized this revolt against Diaz when he discontinued his favorable activity toward Mexican Protestants and mission work near the end of this dictatorship. Once Diaz was driven from power and the Consitutionalists were in power, at least nominally, Protestants supported the Constitution of 1917, even though the document restricted missions. Baldwin indicates that Protestants believed a freer state would provide better economic opportunities for them.

In general, there were two groups of Protestants who supported the Revolution. First were former Catholics of the Juarez era and before, those who had supported his Reform and his liberalism. These dissident Catholics left the Church, as noted above, and joined the Protestants who shared their social and political agenda, emphasizing economic progress and education. Second were the Mexican nationals converted by the work of the North American missions. These missions emphasized the Second Great Awakening. Part of the philosophy of this movement was the notion that Mexican Catholicism was distorted Christianity, evidenced by rampant superstition, syncretism, and continuing Aztec paganism practiced by self-proclaimed Catholics.[6] The conversion of Mexican nationals resulted in an indigenous movement, produced in part by the tensions between missionaries and nationals; as nationals became more educated they increasingly sought independence from missionaries and U.S. influence over their work. During the Revolution, there were more Protestants involved in revolutionary activities in the north rather than

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[6]For a similar and more recent analysis of Mexican Catholicism, see J. Edwin Orr's Evangelical Awakenings in Latin America (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Christian Fellowship, 1978). This book is reviewed by Cornelia Flora in Hispanic American Historical Review, vol. 59, #3, August 1979. Orr is a non-denominational Irish-American evangelist. He laments Christianity's loss of opportunities to win souls in Latin America, but is encouraged by the prospects now that the Catholic hierarchy is supporting Bible study and evangelism, and that there is more Catholic-Protestant interaction; he is also encouraged that charismatic Catholicism is on the rise. This is not a scholarly work as far as methodology is concerned, but rather is more impressionistic.

in the south of Mexico because there had been more mission work there and more educated Mexican Protestants.

Baldwin emphasizes economics more than politics or ideology as reasons for Evangelical revolt. She suggests that although Protestants were never more than about two percent of the population up until the time of the Revolution, they were rather successful economically, and they saw their advances as being related to Protestantism. Their adoption of revolution was a matter of evolution: since they had already broke with the traditional religion of Mexico, it was not so difficult to break with the traditional political structure and values of Mexico associated with the Porfiriato, especially since they were not acting alone but in conjunction with other societal forces. Moreover, the teachings of the social gospel current at the time pushed many toward rebellion; such teachings were especially attractive to the younger North American mission leaders who were not so concerned with maintaining an apolitical stance as their older North American mentors counseled. These Americans did not fight alongside their Mexican colleagues, but they did give speeches in favor of Mexican Protestants taking up arms. Baldwin maintains that both advocates and combatants were true liberals, but not radicals (1990, 176). Once the Constitutionalists were in power, several Mexican ministers were given positions in the administration as a reward for their support.

The Advent of Pentecostalism to Latin America and Mexico: a Common Thread

Other authors have discussed the historical role of Protestants in Mexico by focusing on specific denominations and specific regions of Mexico. Often these authors are seminarians discussing church growth activities from a historical perspective, and they usually refer to these church builders as Evangelicals. For example, Donald McGavran's Church Growth in Mexico recounts the early successes of all Protestants, both Pentecostal and mainline denominations, in the southeastern state of Tabasco. The study serves to show how active Evangelicals have been in post-Revolution Mexico, despite the harsh laws of the 1917 Constitution. Mexican Evangelicals have a history of expanding their numbers while having simultaneously to bear the brunt of official persecution.

McGavran maintains many Evangelical successes were due in part to the Catholic Church's abandonment of the masses in southeastern Mexico, and the fact that the Catholic clergy tended to live among the wealthy and societal elites (79-80). His study is of Presbyterians in Tabasco, most of whom lived in cities and towns until 1930. Between 1930 and 1935, Governor Garrido Canabal resolved to wipe out all Christianity

from his state, and he was somewhat successful. He closed all churches and ousted all clergymen, as well as burned many Bibles. Only an underground church remained. The Catholic Church was in shock as it had grown used to maintaining some of its privileges in the post-Revolution Mexico, especially in this region of many committed, if not always traditional, Catholics. [By the 1930s, the anti-clerical laws of the 1917 Constitution were not being enforced very effectively, much as in the time of Diaz.] The clergy obeyed Garrido Canabal's directive to burn icons, close their churches and discontinue masses. The Evangelicals, however, were used to such persecution in this region and so continued to meet in secret and evangelize surreptitiously. Gov. Canabal's efforts resulted in the spread and the intensification of the Evangelical movement in the rural areas. The movement was mostly led by unlettered laymen. From 1936 to 1947, after the Canabal persecution, there was continued growth in Evangelical numbers, but now the persecution was at the hands of the Catholic Church rather than the government. Evangelical churches were burned on occasion by Catholic radicals (McGavran 81-82).

McGavran's study of Presbyterianism recounts not only the persecution of this group, but also describes the type of converts and their societal positions and relations. After the Revolution, Mexico settled into a period of stabilizing population growth and limited economic growth; and as new

villages were formed, Evangelicals planted churches. They had been quite successful in gaining converts among the neglected small landowners in the 1920s. These successes continued after the turbulent years of the Revolution. The churches formed tended to be rural, attractive to the masses, and very Mexican; that is, their leaders, especially among the Presbyterians in Tabasco, were rural laymen (85-91).

Conversion for Indians in Tabasco, anywhere in Mexico for that matter, is extremely difficult. Indian communities are very tightly knit, and syncretic religion is as much a part of a villager's life as agriculture. So then, to convert to Protestantism is to abandon the ancestral faith and folkways. In some ways, one is severing communal ties. But the converts find new community in the Evangelical movement. Once the number of converts reaches a significant level, about one thousand, others begin to join with the view that they are part of a movement that will promote the progress of the nation. McGavran notes that just as strong family ties kept the traditional community together, they also keep the Evangelical communities strong. Rapid economic progress is also evident among many such communities. He also reports on the growing strength of the Independent Evangelical Pentecostals (94-99).

McGavran maintains that the largest Protestant movement in Mexico is the Pentecostal movement. [Note that he was writing in 1963, yet his statement rings true today.] By the

1970s they were about 200,000, still growing and attracting some members of the middle class. He describes the Pentecostals as being very different from the mainline denominations and the mission church movements of the late 19th century. The Pentecostals have had little U.S. missionary involvement and money. As an example, he cites the success of La Iglesia Apostolica de la Fe which was organized in 1916. By 1962 it had 9000 members and 100 ordained ministers (113-115).

Local leadership characterizes the Pentecostals. They maintain that their independent churches are "free in the Spirit" as long as their activities are not contrary to the "mind of Christ" or Scripture. Their worship services are boisterous and emotionalistic by mainline denominational standards. Leaders are qualified by their spiritual rather than simply educational qualifications. Leaders are not separated from their congregations by clericalism: pastors are elected from within and by their congregations and are closely identified with the people before and after ordination. Churches are self-supporting through tithing and by pastors working in non-clerical lines of work (McGavran 117-120). These circumstances are in sharp distinction to the way the Roman Catholic Church operates.

Pentecostals have been most successful over the years in the rural areas where there is a paucity of Catholic clergy, and especially where government action has broken down the

hegemony of the Catholic clergy and upper class Catholic elites. The Pentecostals forge strong familial networks, as well as relationships among labor sectors that are conducive to spreading the Gospel. Normally, their more frugal lifestyles--free of expensive vices such as drinking and tobacco use--and their tithing lead to more prosperous families and churches, perhaps as Benito Juarez would have advocated. Church buildings tend to be well-built, well-cared for and paid for solely by Mexicans. McGavran notes that although there have been and are some outstanding upper class converts, most converts are from the lower class. In fact, the lower class responds more readily and in greater numbers even though throughout most of history the thrust of most evangelization has been toward the upper classes (McGavran 122-124).

Christian Lalive d'Epinay provides more information on Pentecostals by presenting a typology of Latin American Protestants. His work reveals how a large and growing group of Evangelicals lives according to a rather "unMexican" culture. He notes that the growth of Protestantism in the region was given a real boost at the turn of this century after the Pentecostal Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles, California. These American converts began a movement that spread to Mexico and other Latin American countries. By 1960, 80% of Latin American Protestants were Pentecostal. These

religious persons are worth special attention in that they are present in large numbers throughout Latin America, are the fastest-growing, and tend to be the most inclined to political activism currently. Their history in all of Latin America provides an interesting comparison and contrast with their history in Mexico.

D'Epinay stresses that the Pentecostals are very different from the Protestants converted by the 19th century missionaries. From a sociological point of view, the organization of the Pentecostal groups is much more democratic, much less hierarchical. As to worship activities, Pentecostals center on not only salvation and justification, but also conversion to a moral and ethical lifestyle, and such concepts as the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit," which produces speaking in unknown languages and a "loss of consciousness in the Spirit." There is a strong emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit. These "rites of possession" either are not emphasized by mainline denominations or not accepted as legitimate Christian practices. Says D'Epinay: "In brief, Pentecostalism synthesizes Protestantism (Cristo-centricity, biblicalism, union of faith and ethics) with a form of spirituality which is distinctive of the 'popular' religions (emotion, rites of possession, collective participation)" (1968, 9).

Most of the churches spawned by Pentecostalism were indigenous at their inception; they became autonomous very

soon from the other indigenous churches that founded them. Some even became autonomous at the outset as indigenous converts went into a new village and started a church with their families (D'Epinay, 7-9). D'Epinay could easily be describing current Pentecostal growth.

D'Epinay compares the modern indigenous Methodists and Presbyterians with the Pentecostals. He finds that the former have an obviously "imported" culture and organizational structure. The latter, whether born of national or missionary efforts, "always seem to be well acclimatized and blended into the local setting" (10).

Another more comprehensive and general work on the history of Protestants in Latin America is Historia del Protestantism en America Latina, by Jean-Pierre Bastian; Mexico is treated, but it is not the only focus[7]. The study recounts the development of Protestantism in the region from colonial times until the mid-1980s. Bastian's research, some of the only work dealing with the last forty years of

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[7]Jean-Pierre Bastian, born in Switzerland, is a student of Mexican Protestantism who has also taught in Mexico. He received his doctorate in history from El Colegio de Mexico. His many works concerning Mexican Protestantism indicate his prominence in the field. See also, Protestantismo y sociedad en Mexico, (Mexico: CUPSA, 1983; Los disidentes, Sociedades protestantes y revolucion en Mexico, 1872-1911, (Mexico: El Colegio de Mexico-Fondo de Cultura Economica, 1989); Protestantes Liberales y Francmasones: Sociedad de ideas y modernidad in America Latina (Mexico: Siglo XIX-Fondo de Cultura Economica, 1990). (CUPSA is Casa Unida de Publicaciones, SA).

Evangelical history in Latin America, helps to explain the historical experiences which either encouraged or discouraged Evangelical political activity. His historical analysis of Evangelical organizations is particularly relevant to this study because it allows the reader to see Evangelicals conducting their internal operations as well as their relations with secular society. In some of his analysis it is possible to see how modern Evangelicals, especially those in Mexico, might be able to conduct themselves if they had more political freedom as other Latin American Evangelicals have had.

He notes several epochs in Latin American history and recounts the activities of Evangelicals during these epochs, how they dealt with colonial restrictions, Catholic and conservative opposition, the liberal reform, the Revolution, the World Wars, Populism, the Cold War, and finally, what he calls Latin America's dependent capitalism. Importantly, Bastian notes that for the most part in Latin America, Protestants were protesters against the status quo of the state. [An exception would be the holding of high governmental positions by Mexican Protestants during the Reform and after the Revolution.] However, he argues that in recent years, Protestant groups have been coopted by the authoritarian state in most countries, having abandoned their historical role of antagonists against the state and its social and political policies. Bastian calls this the

"Latinamericanization" of the Protestants. As a whole, Protestants are no longer the intellectual and moral reformers of society, but are simply another religious group in society with a millenarist, rather than an activist approach to society and politics. It is important for the purposes of this dissertation to review some of Bastian's historical contribution and how he arrives at his "Latinamericanization" analysis.[8]

Bastian notes that by 1910, Protestantism had become firmly implanted as a societal minority in most of Latin America. From 1880 onward there were many denominational conferences and assemblies throughout the region which set the tone for a rather democratic sector within some rather undemocratic societies. [A reference to Mexico in this section of Bastian's work is particularly informative.] Bishops and other such leaders were chosen via elections; conferences, convocations and the like were fundamentally representative in nature. They were in a sense a prominent manifestation of Latin American liberalism. Moreover, as the new century arrived, more and more of the denominations were becoming independent of their North American missionary mentors (1986, 151-152). Some of the North American missionaries who did maintain ties with Latin American Protestants were advocates of democratization of the Latin

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[8]We should keep in mind that this analysis is somewhat dated when we consider the current surge in Evangelical political activity.

American states, speaking out for what Bastian calls "bourgeois democracy" and against totalitarianism of the left and the right (1986, 169).

Throughout most of the first half of the twentieth century, Protestants in Latin America were actively involved in democratization in some states, and in general participated in society by advocating reform. However, by 1949, the liberal and reform project of Latin American Protestants had come to an end with that year's First Latin American Evangelical Conference (CELA I). The Protestants began to focus almost exclusively on biblio- and Cristo-centered living and the transformative power of Christianity. Secondary and perhaps tertiary was concern for the disaffected and the poverty-stricken and miserable masses. To underscore this change, in 1956 the first Congress of Mexican Churches recognized the end of the liberal project which had been led by the North American and European missionaries. These Evangelical mentors had been building and staffing the hospitals and schools: now these duties were given over to the government. The churches would now be free to concentrate on evangelization, looking for a revival of the Holy Spirit and unity among their numbers. They became more fundamentalist in their outlooks and less interested in the ecumenical activities and philosophy which had dominated Protestant activity since the 1940s. The ecumenicists became the minority among Latin American Protestants while the

fundamentalists and Pentecostals began their ascendencies (1986, 200-202).

There was one prominent political component, however, to the new direction: a strident anti-communism. The fundamentalists spoke openly of their opposition to the primary proponent of ecumenical work, the World Council of Churches because its "liberalism" [defined as leftism] and associations with other societal groups without the benefit of biblical legitimation were unacceptable to this new majority of Protestants, as well as its open courting of the Roman Catholic Church (Bastian 1986, 203).[9]

As far as the sacred work of the new majority, they concentrated on evangelizing, most importantly, huge crusades in the tradition of the American evangelist Dwight L. Moody. The Evangelicals also began to utilize radio and printed material to proselytize. Names such as Juan Isais, Israel Garcia, and Eliseo Hernandez became well-known among Latin Americans. Billy Graham made a visit to the Caribbean region and Central and South America in 1958, addressing about one million persons and generating over 80,000 conversions. By

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[9]One of the starkest divisions among Protestant groups in Latin America is that between ecumenical groups who have fellowship with the Catholic Church and those who do not. While conducting research in Mexico, I found this to be the case even today: the fundamentalists see the Church as their greatest enemy. A later chapter will deal with the violence Evangelicals have suffered at the hands of militant Catholics which bolsters the former's the position of the more conservative Evangelicals: they tend to be the target of such persecutions because their numbers are increasing the fastest.

1960, an organization called Evangelism in Depth was founded to address what Evangelicals saw as a great opportunity for evangelism. Publishing houses were also founded by fundamentalist groups to supply the printed material of evangelization, such as Evangelical Literature for Latin America (LEAL). The publishing houses of the ecumenical groups, many of them having been around for several years, lost access to much of the Evangelical world (Bastian 1986, 204).

Bastian, like D'Epinay and McGavran, notes the unique impact of Pentecostalism on Latin American Protestantism, its indigenous and democratic characteristics. During the 1950s, the Pentecostal churches began to grow quite rapidly. But unlike the non-Pentecostal Evangelicals, mostly mainline Protestants, this movement was the quintessence of indigenous movements. It was, according to Bastian, a "purely Latin American" movement. As in the United States, these believers were characterized by their exuberant worship and tongues-speaking. This kind of worship was readily acceptable to Latin Americans since it in many ways fit their personalities. Further, preachers and other leaders were elected and called to their positions: no foreign mission board or hierarchy placed them into positions of authority. Though usually quite powerful, the pastors of Pentecostal churches are elected by local churches in most cases. Their revivals and camp meetings soon were recognized as

significant, even phenomenal events in terms of the numbers participating and the wave of conversions which followed such gatherings. According to Bastian, these events pushed the Pentecostals "to the front of the Evangelical scene" (1986, 204-205).

As the 1950s drew to a close, there was a profound and obvious split among in Latin America between the denominations founded by the faith missions of North America and Europe, and the fundamentalist Pentecostals. The more liberal mainline denominations lost their role as leaders of the non-Catholic groups, while the fundamentalists--rapidly increasing their numbers--began to direct the majority of Protestants who were now more often identified as Evangelicals. The fundamentalists, in their great opposition to communism, even modified their stance toward the Catholic Church regarding the issue of a communist threat: in the words of one prominent fundamentalist leader: "Rome is changing; we should side with Rome against communism." Accordingly, many of the conservative Evangelical groups allied themselves with the Latin American military and national security dictatorships of the 1960s (Bastian 1986, 206).

But not all Protestants did, however. Although a minority in most cases, some Latin American Protestants refused to submit to the national security governments and demonstrated their open sympathy for land and political reform movements in some states. Bastian notes the examples of

Guatemala and Colombia. In these countries the large landowners were favored by the state and the Catholic Church, and so the politically liberal Protestants--though very few in number--who supported the agrarian reform movements faced persecution at the hands of the two most powerful societal groups in Latin America. There was much violence and some deaths, in addition to the closing of churches and schools. These Protestants were usually labeled communists, or U.S. imperialists. In Guatemala in particular, some of the rural, ethnically-Indian Protestants engaged in armed struggle even though the Evangelical leaders of the capital--steeped in the U.S. Cold War mentality, according to Bastian--were encouraging neutrality on the part of all . Bastian maintains that by encouraging neutrality, the leaders were in effect supporting the status quo: the landed oligarchies and their national security regimes. Cuba also experienced some of these conflicts. In the 1950s many Protestants held positions in the Cuban government, and these persons opposed the dictatorship; some were even involved in the armed rebellion of 1953 and later served with Castro in his triumphant revolution in 1959. However, after Castro revealed his Marxist-Leninist intentions, most of the Protestant leadership and middle class followers fled the island (Bastian 1986, 219). Castro's persecution of Protestants also encouraged their flight. In sum, Bastian's analysis reveals that Protestants in Cuba, Guatemala and Mexico were able to be

agents of change, at least to a degree. But in Colombia, they were reduced to suffering persecution and attempting simply to survive under the national security regimes (1986, 206-213).

Bastian ends his work by discussing and analyzing the final epoch of Latin American Protestantism: that of Protestants in the "crisis of dependent capitalism, between resistance and submission." One of the main characteristics of Protestantism after 1960 is the great number of groups; between 50 and 200 denominations or associations are active and compete for converts. Both the Catholic Church and the area's governments are fully aware of the Protestants' presence and growth. The state in particular entertains the idea of gaining their support, according to Bastian.

Bastian notes the work of D'Epinay and his sociological typology of the Protestants, stressing that there are basically two groups of Latin American Evangelicals: the progressive reformer groups, legacy of Protestant liberals; and the conservative fundamentalists who are more likely supporters of the political status quo in their respective nations. But that is not the only division: there is also the division between the rural groups and the urban ones. Middle class Protestants congregating in the cities have continued to be the minority in Latin America, but have retained some leadership over the masses in the rural areas. The rural Protestants were and are generally lead by the "called" and elected leaders who nevertheless have tended to exert a more

traditional, "cacique" authoritarian control over their congregations.

In terms of national and regional leaders, the moderately conservative CELA leaders were eventually overshadowed by the leaders of the Latin American Congress of Evangelization (CLADE) in 1969. This even more conservative group became the dominant force among the region's Protestants. By the 1980s, the two groups were represented in the main by the progressive/liberal Council of Latin American Churches (CLAI) which supports political and social reform, and the conservative Latin American Evangelical Fraternity (CONELA) which Bastian maintains explicitly supported the national security regimes. These divisions continue today, as do the theological and political disagreements between the two groups (1986, 215-223).[10]

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[10]As a reference point, we should note that these divisions are similar to those in the United States. In the United States, the fundamentalist and conservative denominations are the larger and fastest-growing, and they tend to be as politically conservative as they are theologically conservative, while the mainline denominations are losing members and their leaders tend to hold politically liberal views. Perhaps we can speculate that these divisions are reflected in Latin America because of the influence of U.S. Evangelical groups, as Bastian suggests (1986: 217); however, we should not too hastily come to that conclusion since Latin American Evangelicals think for themselves. Moreover, the United States did not invent such political divisions between left and right as these divisions characterize Latin American politics. For an excellent commentary on this subject, see Margaret E. Crahan's "Religion, Revolution, and Counterrevolution: The Role of the Religious Right in Central America" located in The Right and Democracy in Latin America, edited by Douglas A. Chalmers, et al. I caution that this work does tend to rely on journalist reporting and at times may strike some as cynical regarding

The liberal groups who espouse the "social gospel" and leftist causes are not dead by any means, nor are the ecumenical groups; however, they continue to be the minority among Latin American Evangelicals. During the 1960s and 1970s, while the national security regimes were in power, many of the conservative Evangelical leaders enjoyed close relationships with the military dictators. These ministers enjoyed the reputation of professional middle class men having breakfast and dinner meetings with government officials. Leaders used church growth strategies to increase the number of converts, as well as the Evangelism in Depth (EVAF) project. Bastian notes that many of the EVAF crusades featured an anticommunist theme. Evangelicals were exhorted not to be involved in revolutionary politics or movements because "it is unChristian" and "distances one from God" to do so. What Bastian refers to as the "urban elite" of the conservative Latin American had been trained in fundamentalist and conservative seminaries. They were well-prepared to help organize and participate in the crusades of Billy Graham and "the Latin American Billy Graham," Luis Palau (1986, 223-225). Chile and Guatemala are examples of two countries where many Evangelical leaders supported and were supported by the military regimes. The "North American

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church activities; the reporting also may appear to be biased against Reagan administration policy for the region. These issues, and these theological and political divisions, will be more fully discussed in Chapter Six.

electronic church" also aided these and gave support for the regimes. Bastian cites Pat Robertson's Virginia-based Christian Broadcasting Network, and Jim Bakker's PTL network as examples. Robertson, in particular, argued against the Panama Canal Treaty and in favor of U.S. arms sales to the national security regimes of the region.[11]

While the grew in number--and in some places in the favor of military regimes--some Catholics in states such as Chile, El Salvador and Brazil frequently were criticizing these regimes for their human rights violations. The political leaders, then, could see a clear demarcation between the two religious groups in terms of potential support for the regime. Evangelical leaders, gathering in Peru for a 1982 congress on evangelization, responded to the various problems of Latin America which some Catholics were pointing out by saying that the suffering was due to sin, an unbiblical relationship with God, "opposition to the Lordship of Jesus Christ," and the presence in the world of "the spirit of Anti-Christ." These Evangelical leaders also affirmed that "the struggle against the reign of the Anti-Christ...is not [waged] by criticizing the government in religious language,

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[11]In all fairness to Robertson, we should note that his political views were basically the same as those of the Reagan administration at the time. Robertson was and is a staunch anti-communist, opposing the Treaty and supporting military regimes because he felt them both to be likely to aid communist subversion in Latin America. Moreover, through CBN he has consistenly aided the poverty-stricken of the region, both spiritually and materially--with aid valued in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

but by confronting the values and attitudes that have made it possible for our people to be [tamed, subjugated] by propaganda; [further, the struggle] is not to be waged by opposing the official myths with other secular myths, but by demonstrating the justice of God [and not attempting to] construct the Kingdom of God without God." [Author's translation.] The leaders were clearly taking a critical view of the work of the liberal Evangelicals.

Bastian calls this "dual religion" whereby the conservatives [i.e. fundamentalist Evangelicals] were espousing the biblical call for justice but were in actuality giving legitimacy to all those regimes, no matter their character, which were defending Christian and Western civilization against Marxism and communism. He maintains that some of the urban Evangelical leaders had been the privileged agents of the "North American imperialists", and that they had been creating a civil base of support for the military regimes which were effectively destroying "all popular autonomous organizations." As an example of the close relationship between conservative Evangelicalism and the national security regime, Bastian notes the statue General Pinochet erected in a Chilean public park honoring an Evangelical preacher (1986, 225-226). But for dissident and leftist Evangelicals who criticized the regime, General Pinochet and others like him in Latin America offered only repression. The repressed groups included those advocating socialism, liberal or leftist

economic policies, liberation theology, and those ecumenical Evangelical groups affiliated with the World Council of Churches (Bastian 1986, 227-230).

The last section of Bastian's work is a comprehensive analysis of the activities of Protestants in their efforts to support either the status quo or opposition political movements in Latin America. Bastian provides clear-cut case studies of 20th century Evangelical involvement in Latin American politics. He sets the stage for his case studies of Nicaragua and Guatemala by reviewing what he calls the ideological struggle on the part of the conservative Evangelicals to oppose the Catholic Church and to support the governments that they believed would best aid their causes. He cites several groups of conservative such as Campus Crusade for Christ, the Theological Fraternity, and others, including the student-oriented movements which evangelize in the universities and on the beaches (1986, 233). The leaders of these groups have overseen a tremendous growth in their numbers, and this has substantially effected politics in the region. [The latter part of this dissertation will discuss the current effects of this growth on the political scene.]

One of Bastian most important contributions is to refute the notion of U.S. "cultural imperialism" that critics of the Evangelicals allege, and to reveal the diverse political views Evangelicals in Latin America hold no matter which end of the political spectrum makes up the majority. Noteworthy is the

fact that these were religious groups operating in society and expressing themselves politically in these countries even if the authorities cracked down on them specifically for their political views. Through his use of case studies, he maintains that the exogenous factors promoting the spread of Evangelicalism have been overestimated while the indigenous factors and the degree of diversity among Evangelicals has been underestimated and under-reported (1986, 235). Bastian reports on politico-religious circumstances in Nicaragua and Guatemala to set the stage for his contention that the growth in the numbers of and their rising fortunes in the political arena, especially among Pentecostals in the rural regions, have lead to a counter political power, opposing the Catholic Church's dominance and the dominance of the Catholic conservative landowners. This counter political and cultural power is not controlled by U.S. imperialists, the Catholic Church, nor the central government power and the urban Protestant leadership (1986, 236-237). [He refers to the large Evangelical populations in the state of Puebla and the Sierra region of Mexico as other examples of this phenomena. However his most extensive analysis concerns Central America.]

Bastian's study reveals that Central American Evangelicals not only are active in society, but they are also not homogenous in their political views--they hold both leftist and rightist political positions. Nicaragua and Guatemala are good studies in contrast. Such a comparison is

important in one sense in that it reveals the weakness of "conspiracy theories" as to the origin of Latin American Evangelicalism. In other words, it is difficult to maintain that the phenomenon of rapidly expanding Latin American Evangelicalism is caused by U.S. imperialists when a significant number of the Evangelicals in certain states, Nicaragua for example, are decidedly leftist in their political orientation (Bastian 1986, 239ff.). Certainly not all Nicaraguan Evangelicals were pro-Sandinista; some refused to join the Revolution and so suffered state-sponsored persecution. But many mainline denominations did actively oppose Somoza by joining the Sandinista Front, and many remained loyal to the Sandinistas to help form the new government when Sandinismo came to power. Far from being simply proxies of U.S. imperialist powers, these Evangelical groups acted independently to a great degree as indigenous interest groups.

Bastian believes that in order to understand such variety among Evangelicals in Central America, we must look at the history of Church-state relations there (1986, 240ff.). In the second half of the 19th century, Protestants in Central America became divided over the Church-state question as political liberals forced both legal and actual military battles to become commonplace. In other words, as classical liberalism swept the region, Protestant missionaries were more welcome than they had ever been. By way of further

illustration, Bastian uses the Mexican case in the same way that D'Epinay and others have. Protestants were especially welcomed by liberal regimes such as that of Benito Juarez in Mexico because the Evangelicals were a counter-force to the Catholic Church which supported the conservative forces. Liberal governments, and often their constitutions, protected these "alternative religious societies." Therefore, the politics of Evangelicals of the latter half of the 19th century was one of support for the liberal regimes. A type of liberal corporatist state evolved of which the Protestants were an important group, opposing the Catholic Church both in the religious realm and in the civil realm. The liberal state and the Evangelicals clearly used one another, although Bastian sees the Evangelicals as clients of the state, helping the state to oppose the penetration of the Catholic Church. These circumstances in part help to explain the Catholic Church's cautious opposition to capitalism since it was often identified in the 19th century with anti-clerical liberal democracy. (The Catholic Church also has historically opposed socialism for its ties to anticlericalism as well.) (1986, 241). Bastian reveals that similar historical circumstances have obtained in Nicaragua and Guatemala.

The Evangelical population in Central America experienced explosive growth between 1965 and 1980. Bastian records that by the mid-1980s the Evangelicals numbered between 10% and 20% of the population of Central America. In particular in

Nicaragua and Guatemala, they make up about 15% and 19%, respectively. [Other authors have cited higher figures.] In recent years they have been migrating to the cities in large numbers, an activity common in the economically troubled times of Central America. Most of them are fundamentalists; most are also Pentecostal. Similar figures obtain for Nicaragua so that about 90% of the Nicaraguan and Guatemalan are fundamentalist and premillenialist, and according to Bastian, anti-Catholic.[12] These preach the imminent second coming of Jesus Christ, the destruction of Satan, this world and its evil (1986, 244-246).

Bastian, relying on the analysis of Dominguez and Huntington, does allow that much of the growth during these years is due to the support of North American missionaries and their evangelization organizations which spent over one billion dollars and sent upwards of 1500 missionaries to the region. [One billion dollars may be a questionable figure.] Most of the missionaries were fundamentalist and included a

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[12]This author would advise caution in the use of the term "anti-Catholic" because of the misunderstanding associated with it. Fundamentalist Evangelicals in Latin America have certainly been anticlerical, especially through the years as they joined the political liberals' struggles against the powerful and entrenched Catholic Church, and as they have endured persecution at the hands of militant lay Catholics encited to violence by lower level clergy. However, the fundamentalists are not anti-Catholic in the sense that they hate Catholics and want to see them destroyed. Fundamentalists are anti-Catholic in the sense that they oppose what they see as Catholic perversion of Christianity and the Catholic Church's hold over society, especially in rural areas. Fundamentalists engage in evangelization of Catholics on a large scale when possible.

strong anti-communist message in their evangelization activities; this was especially true of the Latin American Mission. During the 1970s, when evangelization was in full swing, leftist and Marxist guerrillas were beginning to put great pressure on the authoritarian and oligarchical regimes of Central America. But again Bastian points out the heterogeneity of the Protestants in Latin America. He cites several examples of Evangelicals supporting reformist regimes and movements, as in the case of El Salvador in 1932 and Guatemala under Arbenz in the 1950s. [Some students of U.S. foreign policy towards Guatemala during this time period would argue that regimes such as that of Arbenz were bordering on communist. In any event the Evangelicals who supported Arbenz were clearly not following a pro-U.S. stance.]

Most prominent are the cases of Nicaragua and Guatemala in the 1970s and 1980s, and Bastian seeks to determine why the Evangelicals in each country behaved so differently in the political arena when they have common roots and a similar make-up. He begins by evaluating the impact of political instability and the natural disasters such as the earthquakes which struck the region, as well as the intellectual leadership of the movements in each country. According to Bastian, the disasters and the political instability were a sign to the premillenialists that the rapture of the saints and the coming of the Kingdom of Christ were imminent. Moreover, these circumstances and theology resulted in an

absence of a coherent political view for Evangelicals. Therefore, there was further atomization of dissident religious groups and further marginalization of them. Nevertheless, after the earthquakes, Evangelicals in both countries formed national relief networks which unified the Evangelicals to a degree, but this unification was based upon a clientalism relationship between the dominant religious society and state-patron in each country (1986, 246-248). [This argument may be questioned, but it provides the basis for Bastian's reasoning as to why in the two countries took varying political positions.]

In the case of Nicaragua, many Protestant leaders and their followers joined the Sandinista Front, supporting its opposition to the dictator Somoza and the relief efforts it engaged in to help earthquake victims and gain legitimacy with the people. This relationship continued through the revolution of 1979 that toppled Somoza and put the Sandinistas in power. Additionally, 1982 saw significant growth in the numbers of Nicaraguan Evangelicals. But with the Sandinistas in power and pursuing their course for a Marxist-Leninist state, many Evangelicals rethought their alliance with the Sandinistas. Their opposition was met with rather severe persecution at the hands of the Sandinista "defense committees." Among other acts, the persecution included occupation of churches by Sandinista radicals. In most cases, the Jehova's Witnesses and Mormons suffered the greatest

persecution since they were the most vehement opponents of the Sandinista regime. Those Evangelicals who continued to support the regime were protected and supported with public assistance and praise for playing a "positive role...in the process of national reconstruction." Several Evangelical leaders also received positions with the government (1986, 249; see also Crahan, 1992).

The Guatemala case is rather different. Bastian notes that after the earthquake of 1986, Evangelicals also banded together to provide assistance, and this gave them a greater political presence and power. However, only one group benefited politically: the conservatives. [Bastian calls the leftist or liberal Evangelicals "progressives."] Five months after the earthquake, the conservative Evangelicals, operating through the Evangelical Alliance of Guatemala, revealed their political leanings by taking a public position against the Catholic-Protestant ecumenicism of the World Council of Churches and its "meddling in extraneous matters which have nothing to do with Christianity." At the same time the group "affirmed its respect for the constitutional authorities and its desire to intercede before God for the authorities." They also pledged to collaborate with the government for solutions to the economic problems, as well as the moral, spiritual, and social problems. These pledges of support allowed Evangelicals to win the favor of the regime at the expense of the Catholic Church. This is because the Catholic Church had

been under suspicion for its opposition to the regime for several years. Beginning in 1977, the military began repressing certain sectors of the Catholic Church for refusing to bestow its blessing on the regime.

Also at this time, Evangelicals were winning many converts among the middle classes and the army. The most prominent church was the Iglesia del Verbo, or the Church of the Word (known simply as "El Verbo"), and its best known convert at the time was Efrain Rios Montt. It was founded by the California-based organization Gospel Outreach which helped greatly in the aftermath of the earthquake, and the church had great success among the military, journalists and other professionals (1986, 250-251). Its work continues today, and many current leaders of Guatemala, including the President, are affiliated with El Verbo. This church will be referred to again in Chapter Six.

Conclusion

Bastian and the other authors reviewed here have demonstrated how certain aspects of the history of Latin America have affected the role of Evangelicals in politics; and conversely, how Evangelicals have affected politics. The politics and cultures of the indigenous pre-colonial peoples, of the Spanish governments, of liberalism, of the various dictators, of the revolutionary leaders, have all played a great role in shaping the politics of Latin America; during the last

sixty-two years, Mexican politics have been no less affected. In short, these influences have had an affect on who engages in political activity in Mexico. One can argue that these influences have constrained the activity of those who are "unofficial," those who don't have an official place in the PRI[13] and those who organize for activism from outside "official" channels. Evangelicals have fallen into the "unofficial" category in terms of the PRI system. While they have had considerable success influencing politics in some countries (e.g., Guatemala, Peru, Colombia) as well as sporadically in Mexico; and while many continue to have some influence today in some countries of Latin America, the current situation is rather varied. As was noted before, several countries allow for Evangelical political participation, but in Mexico there is rather little involvement comparatively. It is important to keep in mind these historical influences as this dissertation moves forward to discuss other influences on the Mexican political system. The current chapter emphasizes the historical and traditional circumstances which have helped produce this political system and culture. It sets the stage for a discussion of other forces acting to constrain activism on the part of and Mexican religious groups in general.

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[13]The PRI is the Institutional Revolutionary Party; it gets its name from the leaders of the 1910 Revolution who founded the party to "institutionalize" the revolutionary values they fought for in their struggle against dictatorship.

So then, with this chapter, the dissertation advances the goal of explaining the role of Mexican Evangelicals in the political arena, and more specifically, the reasons they have or have not been involved in politics. The following chapter reveals specifically how the PRI-created authoritarian political system, and the authoritarian political culture which it has encouraged, have constrained Evangelical political activity.

CHAPTER THREE

Corporatism, Authoritarianism, and Centralism: Systemic Constraints On Dissident Political Activity:

The previous chapter dealt with the role Evangelicals have played in Mexican history, and to some degree the role they have played in the histories of other Latin American countries. Having demonstrated how limited and sporadic their role has been in Mexico, the study moves ahead to discuss the specific reasons why Evangelicals have been restrained in their political activity in Mexico. Therefore, this chapter is a discussion of the first constraint, the systemic one. The political system of Mexico effectively constrains dissident political activity.

It is the contention here that Mexico's political system, reinforced by legal and traditional factors, discourages would-be political activists from mobilizing outside the official governing party's structure: thus it has hampered evangelical involvement in politics. The reverse often appears to be true in some other Latin American states, both in the past and currently. Other Latin American countries will be noted in this chapter when appropriate to clarify the specific features of the Mexican case, to reveal how unique characteristics of the Mexican system make for a more closed political arena. Various historical arguments and analyses

will be examined to reveal similarities and differences between Mexico and other Latin American states.

The thesis for the chapter is: Political systems reinforce different expectations in different countries about political participation that correspond to different levels of political participation by Evangelicals.

The political system of Mexico automatically discourages Mexicans from "unofficial" activism. It simply has been unthinkable for most Mexicans to mobilize politically from outside the ruling party's official structures and expect to attain any political power. It especially has been unthinkable to mobilize without or within the party from a religion-based agenda, even though there is currently more political and religious freedom than there has been in the past. In contrast to Mexico, some Guatemalan, Peruvian, Colombian, Nicaraguan and other Latin American Evangelicals are involved in politics (and sometimes revolution) because they feel that they can and should affect government simply as citizens in democracies that are increasingly more participant (See Stoll, 1990; Bastian, 1986). These other Latin American Evangelicals, unlike Mexican Evangelicals, live under political systems which at the least allow some Evangelical political activity, and in some cases these systems encourage it. As an example, recent Guatemalan history includes a dictatorship led by an evangelical (Rios Montt), the participation of the Christian Democrat party, as well as

openings for most non-leftist groups to involve themselves in Guatemalan political life since the late 1980s (Fauriol, 1988). While Guatemala has had a history of continuing political repression, it is safe to say that there is an emerging political system that encourages more activist politics for many groups. Perhaps the best testimony to the greater openness is the fact that Guatemalans were able to choose among many candidates for the 1990 presidential election, and they chose a well-known Evangelical Christian, Jorge Serrano.

Because of the authoritarian nature of Mexican politics--from its beginnings as a colony, an independent state, an empire, a liberal democratic state, an empire again, a dictatorship, and finally a quasi-liberal democratic state with considerable authoritarian characteristics--many groups, not just religious groups, have been shut out of politics. Other Latin American states have allowed for religion to influence the public life for the entire histories of the states in question; in fact, some Latin American Christian Democratic parties have long held or shared power, and the Roman Catholic Church has not been repressed or silenced in the public arena via legal measures.

Although there are many analyses of the Mexican political system, the work of several Latin Americanists is particularly relevant to this study. Many of them discuss Latin America in general, focusing on the common characteristics of Mexico and

other Latin America states. These authors certainly do not characterize Mexico as a pluralist state, but as more of a closed, sometimes repressive, centralized state. In short, they view Mexico's political system, and the political culture which it engenders and reinforces, as either corporatist, authoritarian or centralist. Indeed, sometimes they describe Mexico as being a combination of two or all three of these characteristics. Authors usually differ in terms of degree and definition, as is common in most social science research. However, reviewing some of these works produces a description of the Mexican political system that explains in part why religious groups have not entered the political arena in Mexico, and why other Evangelicals have had access in other Latin American countries.

Corporatism and Authoritarianism as Constraints

While most students of Mexican politics would probably label the Mexican system authoritarian (Malloy, 1977; Stevens, 1977),[1] others maintain that it is more corporatist (Wiarda,

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[1]In addition, see Reyna and Wienert's Authoritarianism in Mexico; Middlebrook's "Political Liberalization: Mexico" in Transitions From Authoritarian Rule in Latin America; and Schmidt's The Deterioration of the Mexican Presidency. The latter includes a discussion of the past magnitude of the executive's authoritarian control and how it has been weakened somewhat and replaced by the strength of the party and the bureaucracy. Schmidt makes a strong case also in chapter six for the strength of the business interests in negotiating with the government and ruling party. Middlebrook discusses the stable and evolutionary nature of the Mexican authoritarian system, and how it is opening slowly, in contrast to the other Latin American states. One of the most interesting and recent

1978): but definitions of corporatism vary. It is helpful to review this concept at the outset, and see how it applies to Mexico. Philippe C. Schmitter, perhaps the premier scholar of corporatism (1979), states that corporatism is a concept of economic planning (and by definition political planning) which is not pluralist nor syndicalist, fascist nor repressive, but consists of the "decisional structures of the state" and the "associationally organized interests of civil society" who together plan and direct an economy (Schmitter, 8-9). There is certainly no grand consensus on how much interest representation and government control of society must exist to declare a state corporatist, but Schmitter does provide a widely used working definition of corporatism designed for use in comparative studies:

> Corporatism can be defined as a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, non-competitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on

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articles about Mexican politics is that of Viviane Brachet-Marquez of Mexico ("Explaining Sociopolitical Change in Latin America: The Case of Mexico," Latin American Studies Review Fall 92). In this piece the author discusses several approaches currently used to discuss Mexican politics and the positive and negative aspects of each.

their selection of leaders and articulation of demand and supports. (p. 13)

Schmitter's definition of corporatism is specifically designed to contrast with pluralism, and his operational definition is to be applied to any political-economic situation that it may fit, regardless of the political culture or historical factors: it is not bound to any geographic area, such as the Iberian Peninsula or the Mediterranean region (10-11). In fact, Schmitter maintains that similar forms of corporatism exist in Latin America (Mexico) and Europe (21-23).

Those who would adopt this definition for Mexico must take into account the last 65 years of Mexican history during which one political party has greatly restricted the role of all other groups in public life; that is, there is no such thing in Mexico, in Schmitter's words, as "the 'decisional structures of the state' and the 'associationally organized interests of civil society' [coming] together [to] plan and direct an economy (Schmitter, 8-9). Only the ruling party, the PRI, does the planning and directing through the state which it controls; the organized interests have no real power. [This control is not only at the federal level, but at every level including the state and municipality. In some ways, local caciques affiliated with the PRI have more power, relatively speaking, than the national party leaders.] Neither business groups nor private associations such as religious groups have had much say in policy-making; moreover,

most associations such as the trade unions are sponsored and controlled by the PRI. Unlike what Schmitter defines, the party (which for all practical purposes is the state) allows no autonomy whatsoever for these organizations--they are not allowed to make decisions contrary to the party's wishes; they exist at the party's discretion and have at most an advisory role.

By contrasting Mexico with Schmitter's ideal, one can see another difference: Schmitter's type of corporatism includes a policy-making role for private associations such as the Catholic Church and business; and Schmitter's labor unions and business groups may be state-created, but they are not absolutely controlled by the state as they are in Mexico, much less by one party. Further, in Schmitter's definition, the organized interests, whether state-created or not, are on an equal footing in the decision-making process with other organizations and the state. This is not the case in Mexico, and that is the point of difference: the Mexican associations have no real power to sway the state since it alone has the real authority. There is no agreement, traditionally understood to exist or actually documented, whereby the organized interests and the state "bargain": only the state, i.e. the party, can make a decision and back it up with force if necessary.

Schmitter's corporatism, then, may be a constructed type that describes non-pluralist political economies, but it is

difficult to apply it to Mexico without adapting the type to clarify the more closed nature of the Mexican system. The contribution that Schmitter's type makes to this study is that it highlights the limited role of state-created organizations as well as the limited role of the non-state organizations in Mexico. But if Mexico cannot be considered a perfect example of Schmitter's corporatism, then it is perhaps more authoritarian; and perhaps the political culture is rather authoritarian as well. Authors have certainly suggested this, combining the concepts of corporatism and authoritarianism, and some of these authors will be discussed in this chapter.[2]

Howard J. Wiarda maintains in many of his works that most of Latin American politics can be characterized as corporatist, including the politics of Mexico. In his general treatment of Latin America "Corporatist Theory and Ideology: A Latin American Development Paradigm" (1978), he emphasizes some of the more authoritarian characteristics of Mexico's corporatism, even though in many aspects Mexico is similar to the rest of Latin America. Drawing upon a historical

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[2]See Almond and Verba, 1963, and Thompson, et al., 1990. The former is the authors' classic and groundbreaking work on culture wherein they discuss several countries and the characteristics of their cultures. In Mexico, they discuss the authoritarian aspects of the political system and find the population to be rather complacent and accepting of the authoritarian system, so much so that the general political culture is one that affirms the system and legitimizes the closed system. Thompson and Wildavsky do similar work, building upon the work of Mary Douglas. They revisit the data and theory of Almond and Verba, questioning some of their conclusions, but they generally accept the thesis that Mexico has a closed, quasi-authoritarian system.

analysis, he proposes a specific theory of corporatism for the Iberian peninsula and Latin America that he believes is the appropriate paradigm for the region. It will be reviewed here in order to apply it to Mexico and to point up Mexico's unique situation. Wiarda finds this corporatism to be the ideological base for many regimes of the last twenty or thirty years; indeed, it "forms an integral part of Iberic-Latin political culture and tradition with roots deep in the past." It is an agent of change and control, "a twentieth century adaptation of a prevailing historic model and developmental pattern," distinct from fascism, liberalism, and Marxism. His theory addresses not only the problems of emerging capitalism, but also "anomie, alienation, and mass society" (1978, pp. 39-40). Wiarda believes that Latin American corporatism may represent a "fourth world of development...a peculiar way of managing the great transformations of modern times that [has] not yet received the attention it merits" (1981, p. 52). His analysis provides further evidence of a closed political system and political culture which discourages unofficial activism.

One of Wiarda's main points is that Latin American nations are "a part of a general 'corporatist tradition' whether or not they adopted the more manifest corporatist institutions of the inter-war period" which were widely adopted in Europe and many of which remain today. In such corporatist systems, the elites, or leaders of the various

societal sectors, maintain a hierarchical order by implementing carefully designed corporatist structures. These structures are then "manipulated for class or political advantage" (Wiarda, 1978, 31-32). Wiarda provides a detailed analysis of the origins of corporatism in Latin America. What he says about Latin American corporatism speaks directly to the concept of the closed and non-pluralist political system that has existed in Mexico. And unlike Schmitter, he does discuss historical factors which may account for the more authoritarian nature of Mexican politics.

Wiarda enumerates four main currents of thought that form the foundation of the Latin American corporatist tradition. Because Mexico was ruled by Spain for over 300 years--a European nation heavily influenced by these currents--they have been quite present in Mexico and their influence remains. The first current is the influence of Greco-Roman thought. Herein are found the origins of civil society with emphases on social organization, professional associations, notions of order and hierarchy and the organic unity of state and society, and the idea of society as a "reflection of its 'natural' corporate bodies." The Roman influence is the structure of "colegios" and the system of professional, military, and religious institutions. These were monopolistic associations, having legal standing; some were class-based; all were subject to the moral authority of the state which

governed their inter- relations. The state controlled society by using a hierarchy of laws and group rights.

The second current is the Christian-Thomistic influence and the influence of the Iberian and Latin American Catholic Church. These institutions developed several foundations for a corporatist system: property understood to have a social function, fair wages (presumably set by the state), a hierarchy of laws and men, a state based upon Christian doctrines of mutual rights and obligations, and functional social organizations (Wiarda, 1978, 32-34). By noting the religious aspect of Latin American corporatism, Wiarda reveals the unique role of the Latin American Catholic Church and the influence of Roman Catholicism in general on society. This current is particularly relevant for Mexico, known as one of the most Catholic of the New World colonies, even having its own Inquisition, the influence of which was felt until the time of Independence (Nelson, 1984, p. 8).

Feudal-medieval influences make up the third current. The Medieval Church favored the monopolistic guild system because the Church hierarchy disapproved of the ruthless nature of unbridled competitive commercial enterprise. The guild system encouraged cooperation rather than conflict between master and worker. Wiarda maintains that the guild system performed the same functions as the corporate structures of today and so helped eliminate "the need for divisive political parties and class associations" (1978, 34).

Under Spanish rule, the hacienda system as well as other monopolies were set up by the Mexican state to monopolize commerce in favor of the crown and its designated Mexican and Spanish-born elites. There was no exact feudal system along the lines of Europe's, but the hacienda system provided for the control of the masses by a few elites.

The fourth main current is the influence of the political philosophy which evolved during the consolidations of Spain and Portugal, between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. The resulting model was based on the guild system, municipalities, nobles and other classes, all of which were related to one another by the authority and control of the monarchy. This is the most paternalistic and bureaucratic element of the four to directly shape Latin American corporatism. Some change took place as the elite class was slowly widened by the admission of only those new corporate units which demonstrated their loyalty to the crown, even if there was very little of a strict noble class structure in the New World. Power was exercised paternally. The economy was also structured in a hierarchical fashion, with special privileges awarded to the deserving only (Wiarda, 1978, 34-35). Mexico was no different from other Spanish colonies: the paternalistic state allowed only compliant groups to have a voice in society, but all voices had to be subservient to the state. Regarding religious groups in particular, only the Catholic Church was recognized because it was loyal to the

crown and enjoyed the status of a protected religion. The clergy carried out many of the duties and obligations owed to the royal state. Because the Mexican Church was quite involved in administering state affairs and was particularly effective in discharging these duties, the Mexican case is perhaps the most extreme of Latin American states in this regard.

Interestingly enough, the above-described political-cultural tradition was not overthrown in most of Latin America by the advent of liberalism to the Iberic-Latin regions. Liberal laws based upon the individual may have been written, but the old system remained intact. In Mexico, the Church suffered a huge loss during a few brief liberal reform years, but most of its rights and privileges were returned when the liberals were overthrown. Wiarda maintains that the corporatism which he has outlined was meant by its advocates to be a middle way between the designs of the traditionalists (strict monarchists and anti-liberals) and those of the liberals. All those involved did recognize the need for change with the advent of liberalism, but order and hierarchy were to be maintained at all costs (1978, 36-37). As evidence, Wiarda notes that historians concur that the 19th century wars of independence in Latin America were not truly social revolutions because the old elites basically maintained power and control of the political system (1981, 55). Corporatism was developed to be the key to achieving the

necessary compromise. The agreed upon definition formulated by Catholic social thinkers (who were most influential at this time) was as follows:

> [Corporatism is] a system of social organization that has at its base the groupings of men according to the community of their natural interests and social functions, and as true and proper organs of the state they direct and coordinate labor and capital in matters of common interest. (1978, 39)

The new middle and working classes which emerged with the rise of industrialization, although still weak by 20th century standards but prone to seek independence and engage in political agitation for what they wanted, would be coopted and brought into the system in a slow and non-disruptive manner. The political elites believed that only in this way could they control them. This was the case until the advent of the more aggressive workers unions run by workers themselves. By the time the Great Depression had arrived, corporatism was being offered as the only salvation and the third way between Marxism and liberalism. Corporatism sprang up all over Europe, and a more authoritarian variant in Latin America--the populism of Brazil's Getulio Vargas and the "justicialismo" of Juan Peron's Argentina--took root. Nationalistic sentiments were strong and corporatist structures worked well in that setting without overly upsetting the more traditional elites (1978, 37-44). These elites valued order above all. In

effect, "three evils" were avoided with corporatism: Marxism, liberalism, and the fascism of Germany and Italy. Mexico, in particular, avoided these fates because of the history of its own brand of corporatism, dictatorship, and the emergence of the unique and dominant PRI. This last factor is the key to Mexico's uniqueness--the all-powerful party--and represents a major difference between Mexico and the rest of Latin America. In fact, once the PRI assumed control, Mexico differed again from many other Latin American states because the Church's power in society--and that of organized religion--was greatly reduced.

Indeed, Wiarda warns that the Latin American corporatist systems were not fascist, although fascism is an extreme form of corporatism. This is demonstrated in part by the fact that corporatism still exists in the region while fascism does not, and by the fact that the region's traditional corporatist political culture had so much influence upon the systems that developed. He maintains that to dismiss Latin American systems as fascist will cause scholars to fail to take into account the importance of corporatism in the Iberic-Latin tradition (1978, 44-45). For the present discussion, Wiarda's analysis allows one to understand the closed Mexican system without resorting to fascist characterizations which clearly don't fit.

When the post-World War II period arrived, corporatism was so entrenched that the perennial battle between liberals

and conservatives was not about whether corporatism would be implemented--that was a given--but over what form it would take. Wiarda asserts that this fact may reveal that corporatism is an "ongoing characteristic" and not confined to a specific region or time period. But no matter what form it took, the varieties of corporatism continued to share common characteristics; for example, distrust of: liberalism's system of independent and divisive parties, Montesquieuian checks and balances, and the "one man, one vote" principle that could disrupt unity and challenge the authority of the political elites. The answer was to use a cultural nationalistic argument which drew upon the four main currents discussed above. The goal was not to produce a totalitarian state, says Wiarda, but an admittedly authoritarian one. [Wiarda uses the Linz definition of "authoritarian" as Linz applies it to Spain: it is a "distinct political form, neither liberal nor totalitarian" (1981, 99).] There would be no checks and balances in most of the newly independent Latin American states, but there would be limits on state power provided by a system of state capitalism which retains private property ownership, adherence to a higher moral law in the Catholic tradition, and the inherent rights of the corporate groups. The philosophy of Thomas Aquinas and corporatist theory also provided for the right of rebellion when the authoritarianism becomes totalitarianism. As far as specific economic theories were concerned, Latin American leaders were closely following

Lord Keynes (1978, 45-50). In the case of Mexico, Catholic higher law may not have been specifically or directly adhered to--some argue that it was indirectly (Coleman and Davis, 1978; also Schmitt, 1984)--but clearly the corporatist and authoritarian elements which Wiarda describes have been present in Mexico. However, in contrast to the rest of Latin America, the benefits of this corporatist and authoritarian legacy accrued to one political party: the PRI and the political elites (the Revolutionary Family). Losing out were: 1) any chance of group autonomy of any sort, 2)groups not sponsored by the state, 3) the concept of pluralism, and 4) the private sector.

Wiarda's analysis includes a description of the current status of Latin American corporatism, although it may need refining in some aspects due to the renaissance of free market capitalism sweeping Mexico and the rest of Latin America; otherwise--bearing in mind the noted unique characteristics of Mexico--he paints a rather accurate portrait of Mexico. He says the individual in these systems has a standing as a member of a group that is in turn part of one of the constituent units: church, army, trade union, employer group, peasant/farmer group, and various others. Political rights may be weak, but these and the economic and social rights are to be secured through the corporatist system (1978, 51).[3]

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[3]It is worth noting that the average Mexican citizen might complain about how well his economic and social rights are being secured.

Wiarda notes that all of the systems that were implemented after World War II in Latin America had as their goals "social justice." "Inappropriate foreign models" had to be replaced with indigenous ones which would provide for "national social, political, and economic development." [The "inappropriate foreign models" refers to Marxism, capitalism, and fascism.] Thus, the public sector that was created became "a huge 'social security' system" (1981, 63), with the related goal of modernization (1981, 99). According to Wiarda, "the corporatist conception was by no means wholly reactionary or elitist" (1978, 53). Supposedly, "corporatist pluralism" exists to guarantee a certain measure of "contractual" independence from the state for each constituent unit. Says Wiarda, "A state is pluralist in the corporate sense insofar as it allows and safeguards associations other than the state: municipal government, corporate associations, and the like" (1978, 51). But group rights take precedence over individual rights; the "general will" comes before the individual's particular interest (Wiarda, 1981, 62). Ultimately, constituent groups are to be protected from state encroachment by their "charters of autonomy." Moreover, levels of organizational representation extend all the way down to the grass-roots level, not to represent private and unofficial special interests, but to further integrate public or group interest with the state (1978, 51-52). It should be noted, however, that the Mexican state controls and directs "all

associations, holding the power not only to grant or withhold juridical recognition...but also access to official funds and favors, without which any sector is unlikely to succeed or survive" (Wiarda, 1981, 62). This system that has evolved in Mexico has been a result of the PRI's domination, and it serves the party well: all of the official constituent groups are mobilized to vote for the PRI at all elections. So then, the societal and political system that is enforced by a dominant party and state serves them by perpetuating their power.

The present study is in agreement with Wiarda, and would emphasize that the Mexican system deviates somewhat from the rest of Latin America because of the uniqueness of the PRI. New groups brought into the Mexican system by cooption may seek to influence the system, but they are not allowed to challenge the authority of the state and its party or seek to topple them (Wiarda, 1981, 62).

Corporatism varies among Latin American countries due to the respective levels of capitalist development and class structure. Therefore, the model Wiarda describes won't fit all Latin American nations, and it certainly can't explain all of Iberic-Latin social behavior; but it does provide a foundation for discussion, and Wiarda uses it to remind scholars to carefully consider the importance of corporatism for understanding Latin American development, popular developmentalist literature notwithstanding (1978, 54-56).

Wiarda gives us an idea of how politics in Latin America has been conducted, how political and societal constraints have produced political systems which are more closed than that of the U.S., for example. But in order to fully understand the closed nature of the Mexican political system, it is important to reiterate that group rights do take precedence over individual rights; and the resulting associational structure of the political system is guaranteed by tradition and law. Moreover, the key difference between Mexico and most of the rest of the Latin American democracies is that the Mexican ruling party controls the system for its benefit via the state which it controls absolutely. It alone makes the rules and grants recognition to approved groups; for all practical purposes, no other party or entity is able to work its will. Political rights are indeed weak, and they remain so because of the hegemony of the ruling party.

In sum, Wiarda's description of the Latin American corporatist society--with noted exceptions and adaptations--applies rather well to Mexico. But we should note that the Mexican political system and the political culture it has encouraged and sustained are criticized by other authors as being more than corporatist: the ruling party so controls society to the point that the Mexican system is at least a combination of corporatism and authoritarianism (Purcell, 1977), and perhaps it is outright authoritarianism (Stevens, 1977).

A seminal work on Latin American authoritarianism and corporatism is James M. Malloy's edited volume Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America. In this book, John and Susan Purcell argue in "Mexican Business and Public Policy" (pp. 191-226) that the Mexican system should be seen as authoritarian; their analysis is based upon four characteristics of the Mexican regime. First on their list is the authoritarian control of the all-powerful president. He is arguably the most powerful elected executive in the world and he wields a bureaucracy with powers unheard of in most democratic countries of the West. His courts and legislature for the most part do not challenge him, although for about two years after the 1988 election, when the ruling party came close to losing the presidency and a majority of the federal legislature in elections widely believed to be fraudulent, the President found it more difficult to have his programs passed.

Second, the Purcells augment Wiarda's analysis by noting the limited pluralism of Mexico. The Purcell's contribution is to emphasize this lack of pluralism by describing the status of interest groups in Mexico. There are very few interest groups and those that exist do not represent a wide range of societal interests. In contrast to the official interest groups of the PRI, those groups independent of the government and ruling party are small and usually not very effective: their role is more one of suggesting and sometimes asking for legislation rather than real bargaining. The

PRI-sponsored groups are usually well-funded and have significant access to decision-making processes. After all, these strictly controlled groups are the source of the PRI's electoral victories. One in particular, the national Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM), has been instrumental in helping to choose among the PRI contenders for the presidential race, although its influence appears to be waning under the more independent President Salinas, currently in office.

Unofficial groups are coopted and thus made official, or are rendered ineffective simply by being ignored, and the average citizen is used to seeing his officially recognized group mobilized only when the PRI needs him to combat opponents or an unruly "corporatist" sector, according to the Purcells. All but the smallest (and ineffectual) business groups have been controlled until recently because they must join one of two peak organizations sponsored by the government if they are to have any voice in public policy. In the past, independent groups, such as those that have arisen in the labor sector, were discouraged, coopted, or repressed. The key to the hegemonic system of the ruling party has always been the coopted leaders of the groups who mobilize the masses when the ruling party needs a show of support, either for votes or demonstrations. For example, an "unrevolutionary" business sector group (referring to private groups not toeing the official line of the revolutionary value system) may be

demonstrated against by the mass of PRI supporters in a highly orchestrated event. In addition, the state holds a financial trump card. The state-controlled development banks can easily withhold credits from dissident businessmen; moreover, the cabinet-level finance minister is directly controlled by the president, and together they have sweeping powers over the national treasury and economic activity in general (Purcell 1977, 191-201).

In addition to the personalism of the system emanating from the executive, the Purcells argue that patrimonialism continues to guide the system to a great degree, apparently a holdover from the colonial days. All areas of public life--politics, economics, social life--are steered by hierarchical, patron-client relationships. Party leaders and official interest group leaders provide access and upward mobility to loyal clients while also handing down official rules and interpreting official values to the clients. Little initiative flows upward through the power structure. Political issues are disaggregated and rules are applied by the technocrats of the bureaucracy in a discretionary manner. As the government benefits from this situation, so does the PRI (Purcell, 215). These circumstances demonstrate how the political system is designed to thoroughly mix politics, labor and business: whatever the societal activity, the state and its party have preeminence and the ability to decide who may participate.

The Mexican political elites of the Revolutionary Family have established and continued to control all of the peak associations. The leaderships of the associations and the groups are almost docile where the government's will is concerned; if a leader steps out of line, he faces the same cooptative or repressive measures that an unofficial movement would. The "state interest" is the guiding principle for the political elites: the state orders all activity according to it. State interest is enunciated by the elites in order not only to maintain control, but also to engage in nationalistic development, and to implement "social justice." All sectors who follow these plans are rewarded. Because state interest is used partly for political control, the state interest is not necessarily in the interest of the general public. The ideal of social justice is pursued for legitimization purposes through such measures as price and rent controls, and the undercutting of private firms' profits when the state feels it must extend more subsidies to the poorer groups. The latter may come about via the state's staging or encouraging a protest against a business sector, as mentioned above. In this situation, the state engages in what is called the "mobilization of bias," the use of a prevailing national ideology, in order to force compliance and thwart opposition. Protest might be allowed, but only when and how the government says it can be done. Business is allowed to make a profit if economic growth is achieved, and in return the state will not

allow this activity to be thwarted by a too active citizenry. The masses may only "blow off steam," as it were (Purcell 1977, 198-200). Again, the political system is designed along these lines to allow the PRI preeminence over much societal activity.

In their attempt to explain why this closed and controlled political system exists in Mexico, the Purcells are generally in agreement with Wiarda and others who point to the historical nature of Mexican authoritarianism. They emphasize the Spanish colonial heritage where security was derived from "vertical, patron-client relationships rather than from horizontal ties of common interest or universally applied legal and individual rights." Logrolling, non-zero sum politics, and distributive politics bargaining take place only at the highest level in Mexico, within the Revolutionary Family, in order to maintain control and avoid conflict. Real political decision-making takes place only at this level. Contrary to the U.S. and other Latin American systems, where bargaining and distributive politics take place at all levels, including the lower levels (local political elites, congressional committees and decentralized agencies), the Mexican system prevents such activity and keeps any potential conflict within the realm of the elites to control (Purcell 1977, 206-207).

The Purcells conclude with the observation that the balance of power in the Mexican system is tipped

"considerably" toward the state. Relying on the example of the business sector, they note that even though the state must rely on business for economic growth, the latter is severely restricted as to how it may pursue such growth. It may accept cooption and then be free to make profits which serve its and the state's interest, or it may resist and face repression or ruin. Therefore, the authors believe that the Mexican system may be placed upon a continuum of capitalist systems toward the end that would be labeled "stricter government control." They, like Wiarda, see no need in labeling the system fascist or anti-capitalist; indeed, they have no problem labeling such an authoritarian system as capitalist. But clearly, the Purcells paint a Mexico that is not pluralistic, neither in its economics nor in its politics (Purcell 1977, 232-233).

Other authors label the Mexican system as purely authoritarian. Evelyn P. Stevens' contribution to this discussion is a historical account of how the Mexican ruling party came to be and how revolutionary circumstances affected the design of the political system. The origins of the party reveal the foundations of the modern state that Mexico has become.

The party was first organized as the National Revolutionary Party and later became the Institutional Revolutionary Party. Because the nation was unstable after the long and bloody Revolution of 1910, in 1929 President Plutarco Elias Calles founded the party by gathering together

revolutionary leaders who had regional groups of followers and who could deliver loyalty as well as expertise. Ideologues were not welcome; what was sought was the creation of a cohesive leadership unit to control the nation for the good of society. Stevens notes that by 1933, Calles had made two important changes: one, having consolidated his leadership on this foundation of regional loyalties and the personalism of generals who had formerly been his rivals, he then abolished the regional groupings so that all the leaders would be directly dependent upon the national leadership's personalistic network; and two, he removed the candidate selection process from public view so that party leaders and candidates would be chosen at the highest levels. He sought to avoid the distraction and bickering that often go with party politics in a democracy (Stevens 1977, 228-231).

Calles successor, Lazaro Cardenas, known as a populist with ties to communists, actually took the most direct steps to implement hegemonic but somewhat corporatist structures. He organized four PRI created and controlled sectors: peasant, labor, popular, and military. Strong ruling party control was not the only unique feature of Mexican "corporatism": the Church was banned from any public activity--secular or spiritual activity--so it was not a recognized voice in decision-making as it often has been in other corporatist systems. The military sector was designed more as a vehicle to keep the army in check than it was to actually obtain

military input. The leaders of each of the groups were coopted to go along with the state's designs, and repression was used when necessary to force conformity, especially in the early years of post-Revolutionary Mexico. The composition of the labor, peasant, and military groups is obvious, but the popular sector--created after these three and eventually replacing the military in importance--is made up of the millions of Mexicans and Indians who do not fit in the other three: for example, small shopkeepers, professionals, and the civil servants and bureaucrats who eventually have come to dominate this group (Stevens 1977, 232-234). Stevens notes that the labor and peasant sectors have the least influence of the sectors in the system because of strict state control of them, while the popular sector is allowed a much greater participatory role, due in large measure to the fact that it is dominated by the technocrats and educated persons who serve the state at the behest of the powerful president: their position as members of the PRI serving the PRI leader (the president of the country) and their knowledge of the system enable them to assert their will at times (Stevens 1977, 244).

The system that Cardenas instituted did not provide a place for the business sector, especially the industrialists, to truly influence public policy; in fact, they were not even represented in the triad of labor, peasant, and popular. However, Cardenas (and those who succeeded him in office, as has been noted by the Purcells) understood the need to provide

business with enough room to generate profit and therefore, economic growth. Under Cardenas, the two peak associations representing labor and industry--the latter not having an official place in the party or governmental decision-making--were created so that these sectors would have some form of representation, though only in a consultative role with no real input or ability to make the system take note of their demands. With each successive administration, the cooption and repression continued, corruption was allowed among the labor and peasant sectors (the leaderships were allowed considerable illegal perks and graft), and the business sector was allowed to promote economic growth (Stevens 1977, 235-237). Throughout these years and indeed until today, the government and the PRI continue to preach revolutionary values and insist that Mexico is governed by such values.

It is worth noting that Latin Americanists disagree as to the level of freedom that exists in this system. Stevens appears to disagree with the Purcells as she asserts that the business interests have had considerable leverage over the state in economic policy-making. For example, she notes that U.S. economic influence over the Mexican agriculture sector allows domestic business interest to skirt state authority. In any event, all of the authors reviewed here, including Stevens, agree that the Mexican system serves the state's and

thus the PRI's interest first and the nation's economic needs second.

The formation of the party in the 1930s and 1940s produced in great part the institutionalization of these controlling and corporatist structures, and it continues to play a significant role as it sustains the system and supplies its leaders. In fact today, the duties required of the party officials and government officials are often performed by the same person; Mexican politicians who also work for the bureaucracy move back and forth freely between party and state roles, often several times daily (Stevens 1977, 241).

Centralism as a Constraint

The authors previously discussed in this chapter have discussed Latin American political systems as closed and non-pluralist. It has been shown that while there are similarities among the Latin American states, Mexico in particular has been affected by historical and cultural factors which have allowed a dominant party to emerge, and that party has imposed an authoritarian political system with corporatist trappings. Particularly in this century, many of the other states in the region have allowed greater political freedom than has Mexico, albeit intermittently for some states such as Brazil, Peru, Nicaragua, and Guatemala: at various times--and currently--two or more parties contest elections and generally have access to and influence over the political

arena. The Mexican ruling party, moreover, has augmented and sustained to its benefit an authoritarian political culture which is conducive to its political system. But another student of Latin America has attempted to explain why the Mexican and other political systems in the region have evolved as non-pluralist and authoritarian. In The Centralist Tradition of Latin America, Claudio Veliz argues that the states of the region are best described as centralist; that is, they are to be distinguished from North Western Europe in their social, economic, and political characteristics. Europe's social, economic and political experiences have not produced models which are "precisely applicable to the peoples of the southern regions of the New World." He adds: "I am also convinced that the proliferation of authoritarian regimes during the past few years is not an aberration of moral and political taste, but a manifestation of a style of political behavior, a secular disposition of Latin American society that under different forms--of which the military may well prove most transient--will be with us for some time yet" (3). His characterization of Latin America as centralist is quite appropriate for Mexico since the PRI has made itself the center of all political life and much of society in general.

Veliz argues that Latin America differs from North Western Europe and North America specifically because of what does not characterize Latin America and because of what circumstances have not obtained there. First, there was no

feudal society with all of its cultural and societal constructs. Second, there was an "absence of religious nonconformity" and there was the "centralism of the dominant religion." Third, and perhaps most importantly, Latin America did not experience the ideological, social, and political development forces of the French and Industrial Revolutions and the Enlightenment. In other words, Latin America was passed up by these Revolutions and "their most significant consequences" (3). The political cultures of Mexico and other Latin American states were not influenced by these historical events.[4]

There is, however, a shared characteristic among Latin American societies: the bureaucratization and rationalization of society, or the centralism which Veliz discusses throughout his work. Importantly, these same characteristics came to North Western Europe via the Revolutions, but in Latin America these characteristics "have a distinct preindustrial origin and temper" (4). Veliz uses the work of Parsons, Marx, and Hobsbawm as he describes the consequences of the revolutions in Europe, and argues that all of these consequences were either absent or already present in a similar form in Latin America.[5]

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[4]Note Veliz's apparent disagreement in part with Wiarda as discussed above.

[5]See Talcott Parsons, The System of Modern Societies, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1971, pp. 1, 74; Eric J. Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution: Europe from 1789 to 1848, London, 1962, p. x.; see also Veliz's footnotes on pages 5-6 for his citations

Veliz purposely does not define "centralism" because he does not believe such an endeavor to be the proper approach for his study. However, he does put one qualification upon centralism as he is using the term: it is not patrimonialism, which in practice is sometimes even "antithetical to the bureaucratic temper of Latin American centralism." In other words, centralist authorities need not always rely on ancestry, heredity, or personality, as is the case with patrimonialism. For Weber, patrimonialism is "traditional authority" while centralism is the Weberian "rational" type of domination. The point is that for Veliz the concept of centralism still satisfies the Weberian condition for a "modern bureaucratic establishment," but with the important distinction that it refers to the office, not the man (7). Another important distinction is that Latin American centralism retains a preindustrial and nonegalitarian character (8).

Throughout the last 500 years, Latin America has been oscillating between stages of increasing centralization and the relaxation of the same. But for most of this century centralization has been strengthened, regardless of which end of the political spectrum the governing political elites are on. Moreover, Veliz notes as examples three great revolutionary upheavals: those of Mexico, Bolivia, and Cuba.

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regarding the Industrial and French Revolutions and their impacts upon Europe.

All of these resulted in one party systems and centralist politics. Unlike most of Western Europe and the United States, where traditional arrangements have resisted centralism to varying degrees, in Latin America "the centralist mood is supported and strengthened precisely by a political tradition that has always been centralist and has only exceptionally departed from that course (8-9). Veliz's argument appears to support the argument of this chapter, that the political system of Mexico and other Latin American states is of a non-pluralist, "centralist mood," and that a centralist political culture has helped to maintain the political system.

Veliz discusses a significant historical event: the Renaissance. He maintains that different interpretations of it produced different political systems in North America and Latin America. Says Veliz:

> Britain's North American colonies proved a rewarding ambit for the realization of one of the most significant private utopias of modern times; they provided a 'tabula rasa' on which Puritanism was able to develop relatively freely without the interposition of extraneous factors.' The Indies afforded as much freedom for the unimpeded construction of one of history's great public utopias; there the fledgling Renaissance state of the crown of Castile was able to bring into being a centralized political structure without the hindrance of feudal

> traditions or the opposition of a barronal periphery. As Maravall has felicitously put it, the prowess of the Indies was an incomparable Renaissance feat of inventiveness; [Latin] America was invented by sixteenth-century Spain. The Indies were created...by political minds who contemplated the Renaissance from Madrid, the imperial capital of a nation full of confidence after great military victories, and ruled by a bureaucratic establishment carefully designed to prevent any encroachments on the central power....Castile had evolved an efficient form of centralized government, a reasonable well-organized bureaucratic establishment, a settled relationship between Church and state, and a system of laws sufficiently developed and complex to be imposed wholesale over a conquered people. It was on these civilian and bureaucratic foundations that the Castilian crown erected its imperial edifice; this is why very early after the military invasion of the Indies, "the conquistadores, adventurers, crusaders quickly gave way to administrators, lawyers, and judges." (10-11)

After the conquest, "the consolidation and institutionalization of the imperial hold was accompanied by the emergence of a centralist, civilian, bureaucratic, and legalistic style of politics from which neither the imperial Indies nor the independent republics of Latin America have ever departed with much conviction or success" (11). When

there has been a relaxation of centralism, it has been due to default, such as the 17th century decline of Spain which lead to its temporary inability or lack of concern for maintaining its imperial hold; and the "liberal pause" of the 19th century, a result of an "outward-looking nationalist surge" that attempted to reject everything Spanish and import the more popular and attractive British and French cultures. In sum, the liberals viewed centralism and authoritarian as strongly tied to and imposed by colonialism and so liberalism would have to replace them. The liberals were strongly supported by the commercial exporting agents and the intellectuals of Latin America. But these episodes notwithstanding, three hundred years of a "vast centralist social conglomerate" have strongly resisted the pretense of Europeanism and the activities of certain intellectual and political leaders (12).

Veliz provides a valuable analysis of politics in Latin America; and what he describes as centralism has certainly been present in Mexico given Mexican history, religious traditions and the pronounced interest of the Spanish crown in Mexico. The political system developed by the PRI can be understood to be a direct product of the centralist tradition. Moreover, the political culture obtaining in Mexico and supported by the PRI is both a result of the Spanish centralist government and has served to maintain the legitimacy or at least the control of Spanish and Mexican

political elites. The PRI itself has taken advantage of the centralist tradition in Mexico and used it to maintain its powerful control of political life. It is arguable that, unlike other Latin American states, the centralist tradition of Mexico is defined and maintained by the PRI; not the Church, not liberal democracy or its advocates, nor any other social group.

Civil Religion as a Constraint

Still other authors, such as Kenneth Coleman and Charles L. Davis--who assume the authoritarian nature of the Mexican political system--shed light on some specific ways by which the political elites control politics in Mexico. They note the state and the PRI's use of religion to secure their hegemony. Because they were fully aware of the power of the conservative Church, the victorious Constitutionalists moved to make it powerless in post-Revolution Mexico; their Constitution refused to recognize the Church as a juridical person, thus leaving it with no real rights or protections. However, the state and the party did not rid themselves of a very useful device of social persuasion and legitimization, according to Coleman and Davis. They have used aspects of the Church and religion to their advantage. In "Civil and Conventional Religion in Secular Authoritarian Regimes: The

Case of Mexico," the authors analyze these aspects of religion and politics.[6]

Coleman and Davis state that the PRI takes advantage of a civil religion produced by the legacy and leaders of the Revolution. This civil religion appeals to the many Mexicans who continue to identify with the traditional Roman Catholic Church. The personnel who emerged triumphant from the Revolution--many as national heroes--as well as their successors, developed and maintain a value system; one might call it a world view which informs political and social philosophy and activity for many Mexicans. This value system capitalizes on the continuing cultural strength of the Catholic Church, and so a form of civil religion has been developed. Only during the Catholic revolt against the anti-clerical components of the 1917 Constitution (known as the Cristero Rebellion) did the state and Catholic Church engage in all-out war or prolonged serious antagonism. Otherwise, although strained at times, the relations between the two spheres have been characterized by cautious accommodation and tolerance. Moreover, the PRI in particular

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[6]See also Wayne A. Cornelius, "Urbanization and Political Demand-Making: Political Participation Among the Migrant Poor in Latin America" in American Political Science Review, 68 (Sept) 1974, pp. 1125-1126; also Susan Kaufman "Decision-Making in an Authoritarian Regime: Theoretical Implications from a Mexican Case Study" in World Politics, 26 (Oct) 1973, pp. 28-54. These authors also note the sacralizing of Mexican politics.

has been adept at capitalizing on the average Mexican's religiosity.[7]

Drawing their conclusions from a 1973 study of 346 residents of Mexico City, Coleman and Davis maintain that the masses in Mexico, especially the poorer but also the more religiously committed of all classes, have tended to "sacralize" the state. These persons see in the state an extension of the Catholic Church, so much so that reverence and obedience to the sacralized secular authority are an obligation for all Mexicans to fulfill. The patron-client associations that have developed in Mexico are maintained by the PRI for its benefit, so the party has no qualms about encouraging deference to such associational constructs on the part of the masses. The PRI, in effect, has replaced the Spanish "crown-Church axis", according to the authors. The PRI benefits from such a relationship with this huge block of voters because religious persons tend to be more loyal to the state than do the irreligious (Coleman 1978, 56-60). Their devotion to the state and their acceptance of it and the PRI as the sole arbiters in society provide the state and party with a valuable tool for legitimizing the authoritarian political system they have constructed.

Coleman and Davis argue several reasons for why the PRI and the state are able to capitalize on the cultural strength

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[7]In Chapter Seven, I will reveal just how cordial Church-state relations have become since 1990.

of the Roman Catholic Church. To begin, Latin American Catholicism is different from traditional European and American Catholicism. The Latin American brand cannot promote "an ethically based criticism of social institutions" and is unable to "bind members into a spiritual community" (Vallier, 1970). The priests of Latin America are treated more like shamans than beloved brother-leaders. These factors combine to produce in the masses a "clientelistic world view" with inter-personal relations based upon hierarchy and not equality. Therefore, a Catholic Church which continues to promote such a culture may continue to inculcate a similar political culture, especially with a dominant party that assumes a patronizing civil-religious role. "The patron-clientelist exchanges of religious life have a direct analogue in political life in the invocation of symbolic visions of the future by Mexican political elites who seek to contain political behavior within the 'proper' channels. It cannot hurt the political elites to have religious elites reinforce tendencies toward the acceptance of deferred gratification and acceptance of established authority (Coleman and Davis 1978, 70).

Coleman and Davis's central hypothesis is that conventional religiosity produces various levels of support for political institutions and authorities. This hypothesis leads them to put forward the following theory: "Mass support for political institutions is generated indirectly through

conventional religiosity. Conventional religiosity leads individuals to be more receptive to the regime's symbolic reassurances. Receptivity to such reassurances in turn generates a proportional amount of political support for secular authorities." (Coleman and Davis 1978, 61). They add that this conclusion applies mostly to the lower class, because the considerable number of irreligious persons of the upper class tend not to accept deferment of gratification no matter what the state may attempt to "teach" them via the civil religion. The upper class may be considered to be divided, however, since a number of them are more conservative and loyal to the Catholic Church (64-65).

Coleman and Davis provide details as to how the PRI goes about "preaching" the civil religion on a day-to-day basis. The authors juxtapose the symbols manipulated by the state and PRI leaders. First is the religious trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit which Coleman and Davis compare with the political trinity of social justice, democracy, and economic growth. These terms are ever-present in a politicians's speeches. Second is the religious sacrament represented by the many acts of obedience and worship compared with the political sacrament of voting for "one true revolutionary party." For being a good adherent, one avoids the penalty of being labeled deviant, one may get a modest benefit, and one is assured that "the millennium is coming." Over and over again, the PRI intones that the Revolution is for all, even if

some prosper more now than the lower class thinks they should. To get along well in such a system, one must accept the state's authority structure in exchange for "modest material or psychic gratification, as well as for symbolic vision or millennial events." Coleman and Davis are in effect arguing against the notion of a totally secular authoritarian regime, the Constitution of 1917 and the more anti-clerical members of the PRI notwithstanding.

While Mexican elites have been, and some still are very anticlerical, they have not been so foolish as to do away with the benefits of promoting a civil religion. They have not sought the Catholic Church's blessing on their regime, but they have coopted and encouraged the culture's demand for a patron-client ordering of societal relations, thus in some measure legitimizing the political system (Coleman and Davis 1978, 70-71).

Several scholars have noted that repression may result from failure to petition the state in a "prayer-like" fashion, or when constituents express doubt, cynicism, or attack and criticize the state for its actions. Coleman and Davis refer to such dissident activities as "heresies" against the state.[8]

Finally, according to the authors, secular authoritarian

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[8]For other views on protest, see also Bo Anderson and James Cockroft, "Control and Cooptation in Mexican Politics" in International Journal of Comparative Sociology, vol. 7, (March) 1966, pp. 11-28; Pablo Gonzalez Casanova, La Democracia en Mexico, (Mexico, D.F.: Ediciones ERA, 1967); Evelyn P. Stevens, Protest and Response in Mexico (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1974).

regimes stand on secular principles but may garner support by appealing to the culture of a conventional religion--thus a civil religious mode of governance evolves. Citizens "comfortable with conventional religious structures," then, are loyal to this kind of regime (1978, 72).

Coleman and Davis's findings provide further evidence of an authoritarian political system in Mexico which has its roots in history, culture and religion. The state and the PRI have been able to develop their hegemony over Mexican politics and maintain it with the aid of the Spanish religion and Mexico's unique revolutionary struggles. Unlike other Latin American states-- where the Church has not been outlawed and for most of history has supported the state--Mexico has experienced rather severe repression of the Church and Church opposition to the state. However, the Mexican political elites took advantage of their almost total hegemony over society and enhanced it by combining the powerful force of patriarchical religion with political power. The result has been a state that has been able to legitimize its actions in the eyes of much of the citizenry for many years, even though it has repressed an important symbol of authority to which it indirectly appeals. Not all Mexicans accept the state's claim to legitimacy based upon its subtle appeal to religious symbols, but certainly many of the lower class do. Such a situation has served the ruling party well, and has perhaps accounted for the rather low frequency of state-sponsored

violence that might otherwise be necessary to further the Mexican state's purposes. For most of the PRI's rule, the Church has remained largely compliant with only a few examples of dissident bishops opposing openly the government. Because Mexico's political elites repressed the Church like no other Latin American country did, one might expect the Mexican Church to have had no influence in society. Ironically, due to the PRI's political maneuvering, the Church (or at least its culture and traditions, if not its personnel and structures as in other states) has helped perpetuate the PRI's rule.

Conclusion

This chapter opened with the statement of a thesis: namely, that political systems in different countries reinforce different expectations about political participation that correspond to different levels of political participation by Evangelicals. The goal has not been to compare Mexico to all other Latin American states, but to review the common history of much of Latin America so that the unique aspects of the Mexican case may be noted. Having completed this review, it can be argued that Mexico's political system, by virtue of Mexican history and culture, is quite closed to all would-be activist political groups. In several other Latin American states, which in terms of history and culture are quite similar to Mexico, the political systems often provide openings for the participation of many groups. That is,

unlike Mexico, they have not restricted political participation to only those groups sanctioned by a single hegemonic party which absolutely controls society, ostensibly in perpetuity. Mexico has just such a party. While other Latin American states have had closed political systems in the past and may still practice some repression, many of these states have moderated or changed markedly over time: the "justicialismo: of Peron eventually gave way to democracy; the Brazilian military's rule gave way to civilian rule; and the Sandinistas of Nicaragua gave way to opposition democrats, their former enemies, via free elections. Mexico, on the contrary, still endures much of the legacy of Spain and has been governed for most of this century by one party--a party which has built and maintained a closed political system for its own benefit.

Whether one views the Mexican system as corporatist, authoritarian, centralist, or a combination of all three, the fact remains that the system is closed to groups not officially sanctioned by the all-powerful PRI and its agent, the state. These groups include not only dissident business and labor elements, but also any religious groups, no matter the faith or denomination. For most of this century, religion has played a highly restricted and indirect role in public life. Therefore, Mexican Evangelicals, while few in number and often divided, have had little chance to participate in politics outside a few instances in the past when the state

favored or tolerated their participation. [This discussion is not intended to rule out the fact that some Evangelicals have been consistent voters in the past. Later chapters will shed more light on this issue.] Simply put, the Mexican political system is designed to restrict access to all but a few chosen groups, and Mexican evangelicals are simply not one of the chosen groups. Other Latin American states have allowed various groups to participate, even Evangelicals, in systems more pluralist than Mexico's, even to the point that Guatemala has elected an evangelical to the presidency, Peru has an Evangelical vice president, and Bolivia has Evangelical legislators.

In the following chapters, this study will discuss other constraints on Evangelical political participation, such as constitutional and legal constraints, conflicts with Roman Catholics and local caciques, journalistic bias, and the constraint of Evangelical doctrine itself. The latter section of this study will focus on the growth of Evangelicals congregations, their increasing economic prosperity in some quarters, and the current status of Church-state relations, specifically, how the legal changes of 1992 have provided greater access to the political arena for Evangelicals.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Lingering Affects of Anticlericalism: Legal and Constitutional Constraints

In addition to the systemic constraints working against open political participation in Mexico, there is another type of constraint, an institutional one: the laws and Constitution of Mexico, and the historical anticlericalism directed against the role of the Catholic Church in Mexican politics. Until 1992, the Constitution contained five articles dealing specifically with religion; these legal measures are at best restrictive where religion and public life are concerned, and in the opinion of most Westerners the laws would be considered repressive and violative of civil rights.[1] Other Latin American states, such as Guatemala and Colombia, have not placed such restrictions on religious groups. In many such states the constitutional structure either establishes Roman Catholicism as the state religion, supports the maintenance of a public role for religion, or is at the least benign in its treatment of religious group political activism.

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[1]The reader should be aware that all five of these articles of the Mexican Constitution of 1917 were amended in 1992. The constitutional changes go to the heart of the circumstances surrounding the hypotheses supporting this study. In the second section of this study I will discuss these changes and the effects they may have on Evangelical political participation.

So then, a fundamental difference between Mexico and other states is the historical role of the Church: it has not been treated the same in all Latin American countries. The Church's continual involvement in Mexico's politics and economics, to which the victorious Liberals responded harshly once they gained power, have lead in large part to the restrictive legal measures taken against religion in post-independence and post-revolutionary Mexico. A constitutional regime and an attendant atmosphere have obtained in Mexico which do not invite religion-based political groups to participate. Where it has been constrained, as in Mexico, it has been denied any significant public role (and by extension, a political role). In most cases, all religious groups--Catholic and nonCatholic--have suffered the loss of their political rights. The argument here is that, with few exceptions, where the Church has been constrained in politics, a general constraint on all religious group political activity has been in effect. While Chapter Two of this study recounted some of the history of Mexico regarding the role of Protestants in Mexican history, in this chapter it is necessary to reiterate briefly and expand, but with an emphasis on the role of the Catholic Church in Mexico's politics during the 19th and 20th century; in this way the rationale for the anticlerical laws becomes clear. In order to clarify the unique Mexican circumstances, similar and

contrasting examples from other Latin American states will be discussed.

During Spanish colonial rule of the Americas, the Roman Catholic Church was extremely powerful, even as its power in Europe had been waning for years. Catholicism and royal authority were linked, and the Church was "as effective as the army in conquering the New World" (Mecham, 36). This comment was made by J. Lloyd Mecham, whose work, Church and State in Latin America: A History of Politico-Ecclesiastical Relations, although dated is an exhaustive study of the role of the Church in Latin American society, particularly its role in politics and the reaction thereto of secular political elites, whether liberal reformers or conservative oligarchs. He chronicles the Church's attempts to maintain its privileges after independence: by law and tradition the Church was well-ensconced in a politically and financially powerful position. In some states it maintained its privileges; in others it suffered severe persecution in addition to losing privilege. Mecham reviews each country's circumstances. So then, drawing heavily upon Mecham's work, this chapter begins with an analysis of Mexico and concludes with a discussion of other states.

The Mexican Church was wholly opposed to independence until it realized that the radicalism of Spain, having restored its liberal Constitution of 1812, was a worse threat than Mexican independence leaders. In fact, those

pro-independence priests who took up leadership positions in the war were castigated and labeled "Lutherans" by the hierarchy. The hierarchy soon began to view separation from Spain based upon a constitutional monarchy as a way to save the Church's privileges. They hoped to heavily influence such a monarchy. What they did not want was a republic which would produce a much more leveling effect on society. The Church got what it wanted from the first post-independence government: a Conservative-led empire which provided the Church with the same legal and societal privileges to which it was accustomed, controlling education, the civil register, and in many areas overseeing political activities. The hard-fought war had resulted in a "liberal independence" being exchanged for "a conservative independence" (Mecham, 341-2).

Nevertheless, for much of the century Liberals and the Conservatives battled for control of the state with one of the primary issues being the status of the Church in politics and society. Liberal reformers were seeking to end Church "meddling" in the political affairs of the nation; Conservatives wanted to keep their Church allies in a prominent role. In the end, the Liberals would win the battle for reform.

One of the most profound differences between Mexico and other Latin American states is this fact that reforms won a lasting victory. A very powerful and truly reform-minded group of Liberals was able to lead the nation for a time and

promulgate a liberal constitution modeled on those of France and the United States. This Constitution allowed religious freedom and completely broke the Church's power in politics and society, and its effects have been permanent.

The reforms came about because of the overthrow of the erstwhile Liberal reformer Santa Anna in 1855. He was replaced by a bona fide Liberal government dedicated to changing Mexico. Benito Juarez, a full-blooded Zapotec Indian, was appointed Minister of Justice, and Miguel Lerdo de Tejada was made Secretary of the Treasury. These men more than any others were responsible for breaking the power of the Church. They began their opposition to the hierarchy by instituting, among other laws, the "Ley Juarez," which subjected the clergy to civil courts instead of Church courts, and the "Ley Lerdo," which forced the sale of Church lands and investments--with compensation--except for its ministry buildings and sanctuaries. These laws became a part of the Constitution promulgated in 1857, and they greatly reduced the clergy's power over society. To add insult to injury, the law did not specifically enshrine religious toleration, but it did allow Protestants to practice their religion.

The Pope condemned the Constitution, as did the Mexican hierarchy. Conservatives took up arms and forced the President from office; Juarez assumed the office and formed a government-in-exile in Guadalajara. For three years the War of the Reform ensued, and many Liberals became more stridently

anti-clerical as they observed the partisanship of the Catholic hierarchy. The Church financed much of the Conservative war efforts and called the struggle a holy war. Juarez had his exiled government pass stricter reform laws stripping the Church of all property without compensation, closing male orders and many churches, and taking away Church control of marriage and burials. He decreed religious freedom in 1860. Although he had returned to power after defeating the clergy and the military Conservative alliance, Juarez's reform agenda was interrupted again by French and Spanish forces sent by Napolean III and at the Church's request. The clergy were willing to sacrifice Mexico's independence to ensure their privileges. The European forces invaded Mexico, ousted the Juarez government, and installed the Austrian Archduke Maximilian as Mexican Emperor. Napolean was able to take control of Mexico by these means because the United States was in the midst of its Civil War. But after 1865, American pressure against the French Emperor forced him to withdraw the troops propping up Maximilian; the Empire of Mexico fell on June 19, 1867, and Maximilian was executed by firing squad.

For his part, Maximilian had tried to play the middle between the Conservative forces defending the Church and the Liberals who wanted the Juarez reforms to stick; he succeeded in alienating all and pleasing none.

Upon returning to Mexico City in triumph, Juarez continued to push for anticlerical reforms to once and for all rid politics of Church meddling. He found political support among a few of the lower clergy who supported the Constitution of 1857, and these even went so far as to form a "schismatic church" with Juarez's support. Juarez again rubbed salt in the wounds of the traditional Roman Catholic Church by speaking openly of the virtues of Protestantism and the inadequacies of the Roman Church (Scott 1991, 29-30; see also Baez Camargo and Grubb 1935, 89, and Mondragon 1991, 63-64).

The drive for anticlerical reform was strengthened under Sebastian Lerdo de Tejada, who assumed the presidency in 1872 after Juarez's death. As Catholics feared, he continued to push for laws similar to his earlier "Ley Lerdo." He, too, favored Protestant efforts (Scott 1991, 30). Several U.S. denominations and missionary associations found the doors open to evangelization in Mexico, because the "Mexican government had broken the chains of Rome, abolished the convents, established religious freedom and confiscated all of the properties of the Church except those used for worship."[2]

Such were the circumstances the Catholic Church faced when the dictator Porfirio Diaz took power. He formerly had been a Liberal but by his second term had created a de facto

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[2]Scott 1991, 31, quoting the "35th Annual Report of the Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church in the USA to the General Assembly" celebrated in Detroit, Michigan, May 16-29, 1872.

dictatorship. Diaz was in some aspects a rather Liberal dictator because of his interest in economic reform; however, he did not remove the anticlerical legislation from the books. Catholics took some solace from the fact that much of the legislation was not enforced, neither against them nor the Protestants. Amicable Church-state relations would not last, however, as Mexico faced another round of Liberal-Conservative battles.

When revolution broke out in 1910, the Catholic hierarchy again sided with the conservative forces. As at the time of independence, the Church feared that the initial victor in the Revolution, the Liberal reformer Francisco Madero, would enforce anticlerical legislation. He never got the chance because he was killed by reactionary forces lead by the antirevolutionary general Victoriano Huerta. Huerta, who assumed the presidency, had the support of the hierarchy. Conservative proclerical forces formed a National Catholic Party to champion their cause. They were not able to consolidate their power because from 1910 to 1917 a bloody civil war raged among several regions and ideological factions. Revolutionary generals took turns gaining the upper hand while the Church continued to side with Conservatives:in the end its fortune was decided along with the reactionaries of the old order. Mecham notes that, as in times past, the Church's support of reactionary forces caused its downfall when Conservatives lost power (381).

The Mexican Liberal who was able to obliterate the Church's temporal power for good was general Venustiano Carranza. Near the end of the Revolution he consolidated his hold on power and formed the first lasting post-Revolution government. He and his supporters, after much heated debate among themselves, promulgated the Constitution of 1917, which lasted until 1992. It codified the harshest and strictest controls on religion to date. Conservatives and their Church allies lost conclusively this time.

Before discussing the restrictions on religious persons and groups contained in this Constitution it is important to reiterate that such restrictions were the political response of the Church's opponents. Most of these opponents were not so much anti-religion or antiCatholic as they were anti-clerical: they sought to end the Church's inordinate power in politics and society in general. However, many argue that the reformers went too far, and in fact sought to remove any religious influence from public life. The following discussion will treat in turn each passage of the Constitution which deals with religion in public life.[3]

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[3]All citations to the Mexican Constitution will be to Constitution of the United Mexican States, 1917, as amended (Washington, D.C.: Pan American Union, General Secretariat, Organization of American States, 1964). For commentary on Mexico's constitutional history, see Jorge Sayeg Helu's El constitucionalismo social Mexicano: La integracion constitucional de Mexico, 1808-1853 (Mexico: Cultura y Ciencia Politica, A.C., 1972); see also Jesus Reyes Heroles' El liberalismo Mexicano: La integracion de las Ideas, Tomo 3, Mexico: Universidad Nacional de Mexico, 1961). This work contains a discussion of Liberal philosophy as it regards

Title I, Article 3 mandates that education be imparted by the federal government, and that such education "shall be maintained entirely apart from any religious doctrine and, based on the results of scientific progress, shall strive against ignorance and its effects, servitudes, fanaticism, and prejudices." With this article, the revolutionaries took education away from religious associations and put it solely in the hands of the state. (Section II allows any private person or group to educate, but only with state permission which can be refused or revoked without any appeal process. If permission is granted, private and religious educators must follow state guidelines.) Section 4 of the article makes clear the legal restrictions on religious education; it states:

> Religious corporations, ministers of religion, stock companies which exclusively or predominantly engage in educational activities, and associations or companies devoted to propagation of any religious creed shall not in any way participate in institutions giving elementary, secondary and normal education and education for laborers or field workers.

Having removed the Church's influence from this societal sphere, the revolutionaries moved to restrict the Church's

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Church-state issues. Another work which touches on the subject of the Church and its privileges in terms of its wealth is Jan Bazant's Alienation of Church Wealth in Mexico: Social and Economic Aspects of the Liberal Revolution, 1865-1875 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

general public presence. Although Article 24 states that each citizen 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," it also declares, "[e]very religious act of public worship must be performed strictly inside places of public worship, which shall at all times be under governmental supervision."

These restrictions were part of the Constitution of 1857, but they now were expanded, and for several years to come they would be enforced; Article 27, Section II codified further restrictions: Religious institutions known as churches, regardless of creed, may in no case acquire, hold, or administer real property or hold mortgages thereon; such property held at present either directly or through an intermediary shall revert to the Nation, any person whosoever being authorized to denounce any property so held. Presumptive evidence shall be efficient to declare the denunciation well founded. Places of public worship are the property of the Nation, as represented by the Federal Government, which shall determine which of them may continue to be devoted to their present purposes. Bishoprics, rectories, seminaries, asylums, and schools belonging to religious orders, convents, or any other buildings built or intended for the administration, propagation, or teaching of a religious creed shall at once

become the property of the Nation by inherent right, to be used exclusively for the public services of the Federal or State Governments, within their respective jurisdictions. All places of public worship hereafter erected shall be the property of the Nation. The subsequent section of the Article placed similar restrictions upon religious charitable organizations, thus curtailing the Catholic Church's ability to provide humanitarian assistance which boost its reputation in society. Restricting such activities reduced further the Church's role in Mexican society, a goal of the revolutionaries.

By far the most restrictive article was Article 130. The final product went beyond what Carranza had originally intended the law to be, but the Constitutional Congress was determined to smash the Church's powers and influence. Regarding what the Church would be allowed to do, the Article began with a declaration similar to one in the U.S. Constitution: "Congress cannot enact laws establishing or prohibiting any religion." However, most of the rest of the passages were legal setbacks for the Church. Specifically:

> **The federal government and its designates will exercise supervision over religious activities including worship. Marriage will be a civil contract, as are all other acts of a civil nature (funerals, etc.);
>
> **Oaths are not to be religious in nature (another blow at the Church's societal influence);

**The law does not recognize "any personality in religious groups called churches" (Therefore, churches are unable to sue in the courts or protect their legal, civil, and political rights.);

**Ministers of denominations will be treated as members of a profession and subject to such laws as government deems necessary the state legislatures will have the power to limit the number of ministers of denominations as "necessary for local needs";

**To practice any ministry, one must be Mexican by birth (The Catholic Church relied heavily upon foreign priests to augment their numbers.);

**"Ministers of denominations may never, in a public of private meeting constituting an assembly, or in acts of worship or religious propaganda, criticize the fundamental laws of the country or the authorities of the Government, specifically or generally. They shall not have an active or passive vote, nor the right to form associations for religious purposes." (Again, the state was seeking to curtail the Church's ability to influence societal views of politics and law--prior restraint in the pulpit would make for a powerful state tool.);

**Newly-built public places of worship cannot be dedicated without permission from the Secretariat of Government and the government of the state. Each church building must appoint a representative to be responsible

to the authorities for seeing to the fulfillment of these and other laws regarding churches. (This passage is quite detailed; it requires fines for violations.);

**Seminary degrees and courses of study will not receive official recognition: such study is not to be recognized by state authorities;

**"Periodical publications of a religious character [defined broadly]...may not comment on national political matters or public information on acts of the authorities of the country or of private persons directly related to the functioning of public institutions.";

**"The formation of any kind of political group, the name of which contains any word or indication whatever that it is related to any religious denomination, is strictly prohibited. Meetings of a political character may not be held in places of worship.";

**No trial by jury for violation of any of the above provisions; and finally,

**There would be no diplomatic relations with the Vatican.

Given their past battles with the clergy, the constituents felt these restrictions were necessary and that it was important to their cause to go beyond the anticlerical laws of the Reform period. The Church, however, viewed the laws as "the 'Jacobin' contribution to the body of Mexican anticlerical legislation." It is interesting to note, as

Mecham points out, that the denial of the right to a jury trial reveals how unpopular the legislation was. His commentary on the laws is revealing:

> The evident intention of the 'Jacobins of Queretaro' [where the Congress was held] was to drive the Church out of politics, destroy its social influence, and to confine it strictly to the field of religion. To accomplish this they contradicted the guarantee of religious freedom and put the Church under the domination of the State. The Constitution of 1917 went far beyond that of 1857 in its curtailment of clerical power--indeed, if strictly executed, the very existence of the Church would have been threatened. (Mecham, 388-389)

It seems reasonable to conclude, then, that a clear message was sent to all religious groups, Catholic and nonCatholic--stay out of politics, do not directly or indirectly attempt to influence society; furthermore, do not associate any political activity with religious activity or make it known that political positions are informed by religious beliefs. With its Conservative political benefactors decisively defeated by the revolutionaries, the Church was in no position to put up much protest. Indeed, there was little conflict immediately; it was not until the mid-1920s that trouble arrived. Another Revolutionary general who became President, Plutarco Calles, was committed to

enforcing the provisions, especially those governing public worship.

The Church's reaction to the strict enforcement was unequivocal. In particular, a 1926 statement by the Archbishop of Mexico criticized the anticlerical laws sharply. The statement was a political bombshell, itself an obvious violation of the Constitution. The prelate argued that the laws violated Church teaching [presumably by taking away the Church's societal role]; he stated further that a campaign would be set in motion to combat the offending articles. The government charged him with sedition and he withdrew the statement. But the Mexican Episcopacy later issued a similar statement while contesting the charge of sedition. Mecham notes that some evidence points to a conclusion that the Pope encouraged the Mexican Church to take such action (392-93).

A major conflict ensued from these events; eventually it would come to be known as the Cristero Rebellion because of the cry of "Christ is King" shouted by the Church's partisans. This conflict, which took place seventy years ago, is a vivid memory for many older Mexicans and part of folklore for others. All religious persons and groups suffered during this bloody period which saw numerous atrocities committed on both sides, including murder, arson and torture.

Calles ordered enforcement of all constitutional regulations governing religious activity; he called upon all state governments to enforce the laws. Immediately, all

foreign-born clerics were expelled, including foreign-born Protestant ministers. There is some evidence that the President expelled the non-Catholic ministers reluctantly; Calles stated at the time that the Protestants "are working in Mexico without harming anyone, for they have always adjusted themselves to the law" (393).[4] Nevertheless, the enforcement was quite thorough. All religion-based educational institutions were closed, and riots attended some of these closings. All vestiges of religion were wiped out of any educational enterprise--not even a religious painting was to be allowed on a school wall.

One of the harshest regulations, one that struck at the Catholic Church most harshly, was that which placed quotas on the number of priests. The Constitution had allowed for the states to take this action, and now it was to be undertaken with a vengeance by some of the more radical governors. These quotas severely hampered the Church's ability to even maintain a presence in some states, much less have any influence in society. In the view of Mecham, such quotas were a "de facto" violation of the constitutional principle of religious liberty. Some states allowed only one priest per ten thousand citizens. It should also be noted that the quota system was de facto discrimination against the Catholic Church in favor of the non-Catholic churches: the latter were allowed the same

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[4]This quote comes from the Mexico City daily, Excelsior, August 10, 1926.

number of ministers as the former even though there were far fewer Protestants (395).

After suffering this broadside which began in 1926, the Catholic hierarchy went on strike: all services were ended until the government saw fit to end its war on religion. It is an irony that at independence the Church was unwilling to allow tolerance for all denominations; one hundred years later it was to be found begging not for a role in politics but simply for the right of religious associations to exist (Mecham, 396-398).

As has been noted, the most radical of the Catholic Church reacted with the Cristero Rebellion, a campaign of violence against the government that would not to cease until 1929. The hierarchy maintained that it had not instigated the armed rebellion (there appears to be no evidence that priests actually engaged in combat) but argued that it was justified as a last resort. The hierarchy labeled those priests who obeyed the government actions schismatics. The apex of the violence was the shooting of the incoming President, Obregon, who had promised to continue the enforcement of the laws. The assailant was a Catholic religious fanatic.

Emilio Portes Gil took office in 1929 in the place of the slain Obregon. President Obregon had held out an olive branch of sorts to the Church: "No religion will be persecuted, nor is the government guilty of any persecution of any sect. Liberty of conscience will be respected as heretofore. The

Catholic clergy, when they wish, may renew the exercise of their rites with only one obligation, that they respect the laws of the land as the ministers of other denominations are doing".[5] A "gentleman's agreement" was worked out between the Church, the Mexican President, and the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, Dwight Morrow. Although the Church would not regain any of its political power and was to continue to be under rather severe restrictions, the Church won a few concessions with the government of Portes Gil, a remarkable feat given its general weakness against a powerful and determined state. The laws would not be enforced as harshly as they had been the previous three years; the Church and not the government would identify which priests could be active; clerics could offer religious education but only in churches; and local governments would have to defer to the federal government regarding legislation over religious matters, thus protecting the Church from several radical local authorities. After a three years suspension, masses were again celebrated in Mexico (Mecham, 399-403).

The peace would be broken once more, however, before all Catholics would submit to a role of docility and dependence. Some activist priests exceeded the bounds of the law, organizing Catholic Action groups and becoming heavily

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[5]This quote is from the New York Times, May 2, 1929, and was cited by Elthan Ellis in "Dwight Morrow and the Church-State Controversy in Mexico," Hispanic American Historical Review, vol. 38, #4, November 1958, pp. 482-505. Morrow was the U.S. ambassador to Mexico.

involved in education. In response, zealous local governmental authorities again cracked down, and again the Church faced quotas in many areas. By 1935 there were less than 500 priests in the entire nation; in half of the states there were none. Clearly, the Church could argue again that the constitutional guarantee of freedom of conscience was being violated (Mecham, 403-404).

Responding to this civil rights violation, the Pope instructed Mexican Catholics not to engage in armed resistance, but to use the legal means of petitioning. One might assume that private citizens offered these petitions since religious organizations and religious authorities had no constitutional standing to address the government (Schmitt, 375). In any event, the courts hearing the petitions were under the political control of the ruling party (a forerunner of the PRI) and so naturally handed down verdicts unfavorable to the Church. The justices said that they had found no violation of religious liberty regarding the enforcement of the laws. In particular, the Church had argued that by denying it the right to participate in education, the state was in effect destroying the Church. The Church argued further that it was in peril because of the "integral relationship" between early education and the presentation of the tenets of faith and salvation.

The hierarchy also argued that teaching laicism in the public schools was tantamount to "antireligious education": as

an example, the prelates pointed to a 1934 amendment to Article 3: schools were to become "active forces in moulding public opinion towards a better understanding and an acceptance of the ideals of socialistic government."

The main reason for the conflict over this particular issue was that both the Revolutionary leaders and the Church understood the importance of influencing the Mexican youth (Mecham, 405-06). Sanchez notes the efforts of an official group led by President Calles to "curb intellectual opposition to the Revolution." The President stated in 1934: "It is necessary that we enter into a new phase of the Revolution which I shall call the psychological revolutionary period; we must enter into and take possession of the minds of children, the consciences of the young, because they do belong and should belong to the Revolution.... It is absolutely necessary to drive the enemy out of that entrenchment where the clergy has been, where the Conservatives have been--I refer to education" (El Nacional, Mexico City, July 21, 1934). Calles "Six Year Plan," put out under the auspices of the National Revolutionary Party called for state control of all primary and secondary education and end to all religious instruction at these levels. This new approach was founded upon "the socialistic doctrine of the Mexican Revolution" ("Plan sexenial de Gobierno del Partido Nacional

Revolucionario, 1934-1939," p. 85).[6] The Article which offended the Church, Number 3, was thus amended to declare the following:

> Education imparted by the state shall be socialistic, and in addition to excluding all religious doctrine shall combat fanaticism and prejudices, for which purpose the school shall organize its teachings and activities in a manner to permit the creation of a rational and exact concept of the universe and social life in the mind of the youth.
>
> Only the State--the Federation, the States and Municipalities--shall impart primary, secondary, and normal education. (Diario Oficial, Mexico City, December 13, 1934)

Not even seminaries would be allowed to operate. The Church had no choice but to train priests in the United States, and when possible, secretly in Mexico. Protestants submitted to the law fully and closed their many mission schools. It is no wonder that they were so acceptable to Calles.

The Catholic clergy insisted that Catholic parents not commit a mortal sin by sending their children to the government's schools to be indoctrinated with antireligious education. Further, they argued that "fanaticism" and "superstition" as terms used by the state, in reality meant

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[6]For more information on this subject, see Mexico, A Revolution by Education by George I. Sanchez (New York: 1936, p. 101).

Catholicism, and that the state's goal was to destroy the Church.

Although it was not clear what "socialistic" meant in terms of economics and politics--the revolutionaries and school directors seeking to obey the law adhered to several definitions among them--it was clear that anticlericalism was to be an important focus of the new educational policy. Most telling is the loyalty oath required of teachers in four states:

> I declare that I am an atheist, an irreconcilable enemy of the Catholic, Apostolic, Roman religion, that I will endeavor to destroy it, detaching consciences from the bonds of any religious worship, and that I am ready to fight against the clergy anywhere and wherever it may be necessary.[7]

Some classroom instruction included lessons on class warfare and the Church's alleged opposition to the poor.

With their protests ignored, the Church attempted to teach in homes. Laicized nuns and dissident public school teachers risked their freedom and property to engage in this clandestine education; by the same token, teachers who obeyed the government risked attacks by zealous Church defenders. For some, it meant mutilation; for others, murder.

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[7]For more information, and the citation of this quote, see Chaos in Mexico: The Conflict of Church and State (New York: 1935, pp. 70-71).

But the government went further: in 1935 it issued a decree expropriating all buildings used for educational purposes, including homes, chapels and bookstores. Another decree prohibited the use of the mails for publications containing any religious propaganda. The authorities used the radio airwaves to encourage atheism. Children were taught the rhyming sing-song "Uno, dos, no hay Dios" (literally, "One, two, there is no God") (Mecham, 405-410).

Government policy would change again, however. In 1936, the new President, Lazaro Cardenas, asserted that the state's functions should be improving the economic and social programs, not engaging in antireligion campaigns: "The Government will not commit the error of previous administrations.... Antireligious campaigns would only result in further resistance and definitely postpone economic revival." Cardenas did not suspend the anticlerical laws or amend the Constitution, but he did order that they not be prosecuted zealously, that the Church not be provoked, and that state and local authorities not limit the numbers of priests to the point that the liberty of conscience was violated. At this time a new more moderate Archbishop and hierarchy were appointed. The Pope issued an encyclical on Mexico in 1937 which called upon the Catholic clergy to turn its attentions more toward addressing the needs of the poor; he also praised efforts such as that of Catholic Action as a substitute for violence. Moreover, he called upon the

Catholic laity to take up the defense of the Church's rights and its political interests, thereby keeping priests out of illegal activity. Says Mecham: Rome was calling for a policy of flexibility instead of the traditional doctrinaire rigidity with which Mexico's clergy previously had approached the problem of Church-state relations." The new relationship was cemented with the hierarchy's endorsement of Cardenas' expropriation of U.S. and British oil fields. Relations grew even warmer when the next president, Avila Camacho, took office. He assumed the presidency with the unprecedented statement "Soy creyente," ["I am a believer"] (Mecham, 406-410). But Camacho would still have a balancing act to perform.

In order to "keep the Church on probation" and to avoid arousing the extremist revolutionaries, Camacho left the offending laws in place. However, his goal was clearly to take action which would benefit the Church. He made it known that he frowned upon any persecution of the Church. He forced the ruling party, by then known as the PRI, to forsake much of its anticlerical agenda. Camacho also amended Article 3 again; he eliminated the ban on religious education in seminaries and universities although it remained in force for elementary and secondary levels. He reiterated firmly that freedom of conscience was inviolable in the Republic of Mexico. Tellingly, the anticlerical laws were not enforced; religious garb, masses, pageants, and parades of saints,

although still illegal, were all allowed in public. Catholic schools operated openly with impunity, although the hierarchy wisely changed the names of the schools from those of saints to those of Mexican patriots. The Camacho administration ignored the complaints of radical anticlericals. The new detente flourished, and a new political alliance of sorts was established: the next PRI candidate for president, Lopez Mateos, campaigned as a Catholic and appeared in public with a priest. He made the statement that "Catholics are voting for the Revolution." As President, he declared that "having religious ideas does not mean being an enemy of the Revolution" (Mecham, 410-11). The foundation for the PRI's tenuous alliance with the Church and its habit of legitimizing itself by using religious symbolism, as discussed by Coleman and Davis, appears to have been established about this time.

Between the 1940s and the present, the Catholic Church generally refrained from political activity. The hierarchy did put out a pastoral in 1956 urging Catholics to support political candidates who work for the good of the Church and the nation; however, only a few of the PRI complained while most did not consider such a pronouncement to be meddling. For the most part, the Church, like its Protestant counterparts, refrained from challenging the state. The National Action Party, known by its Spanish initials as the PAN, defended the interest of the Church but not at all overtly. It is not a clerical or Christian Democrat party--such would clearly be

illegal--and the Church has steadfastly avoided any association with it (Mecham, 412).

Although relations between the Church and the government over the last fifty years have been reasonably peaceful, anti-clericalism is by no means a dead issue. Government control of education has been a sticking point. For example, the textbooks which all educational institutions must use and which are provided free of charge by the state contain anticlerical sentiments. They do not present a balanced view of the role of religion in society, especially regarding its role in history. There were again some tense moments, this time in 1962 when parents and teachers protested the mandatory use of these texts. They objected to the materials as leftist and anticlerical. Some priests and prominent businessmen also became involved. Their protests were to no avail, however, since the government refused to withdraw the books or the law enforcing their use. In another instance fraught with tension, the Church spoke out against the communist government of Fidel Castro. This incident is noteworthy not only because the Church made a political statement but also because the Mexican government has been one of the few staunch and consistent defenders of Castro's regime (Mecham, 412-414).

Mecham closes his analysis of the Mexican Church by citing an irony: the Catholic Church is amazingly strong in a country where the government has constrained it for so long; moreover, the clergy are more loved than in many other Latin

American states (414). One might argue, then, that the state's efforts have failed in large measure. The revolutionaries' goal of a secular state has been realized only partly, and this may be due as much to the Church's own failings as to governmental action. The efforts of the anticlericals have served only to destroy the Church's overt political and societal power. But it retains enough prestige to cause the government to dress official activities in quasi-religious symbolism while it also overlooks the obvious violations of civil law. And as will be discussed later in this study, the Church is now seeing the anticlerical laws amended or removed entirely.

This irony notwithstanding, the foregoing has painted a picture of a Church under siege, reeling from the onslaught of a state seeking to reverse centuries of political meddling by religious forces. Lest we conclude that the Church has fared well, it is important to reiterate how onerous has been the "punishment" for past Church politicking. By the standards of Western democracy, during the Revolution the Mexican state made an unacceptable and permanent hypercorrection which repeatedly violated basic human rights; by the standards of Church-state relations in most other Latin American states, the Mexican state committed not only transgressions against democracy, but a "sin" against a natural and basic element of society. For as will be shown in the next section of this chapter, other former Spanish colonies have either put the

Church on an established and protected pedestal, or at the very least have allowed it the freedom to influence society for most of the past 170 years. Few have ever treated it as the Mexican state has. In these states--whether through some form of corporatism or traditional paternalism--the Church has at least retained its political influence if not its political preeminence. Far from suffering perennial persecution almost to the point of destruction, as in Mexico, some Latin American bishoprics have retained state-Church status and a heavy influence in politics. Moreover, regarding the focus of this study, the general constraint operating against the involvement of religious persons and groups in politics--as it exists in Mexico--does not exist in these states. Consequently, Catholics and Protestants are involved in the political arenas of these nations.

The Venezuelan Church, even though it suffered the ups and downs of liberal-conservative battles, has never been outlawed for as lengthy a time as the Mexican Church. In fact, it retains its protected status even today. Like the Mexican Church, it cannot participate overtly in politics; but unlike the Mexican Church, the Church in Venezuela has been able to educate privately and in public schools at parents' request; has full authority in religious matters; has maintained its juridical personality; receives a small subsidy; and Catholic Action has been free to operate. The Church enjoys an

"intimate relationship" with the state, so much so that it is a "de facto if not de jure" state Church. Even though it is a relatively weak force in society, both politically and economically (Mecham, 106-113; see also Mary Watters, 1933) one can argue that because the Venezuelan Church has not suffered as the Mexican Church, it has been able to influence the moral and political climate of the nation.

The Colombian Church, one of the strongest in the region, provides a sharp contrast with Mexico. Like so many others, it suffered persecution and excessive government control after independence, but it "found a savior and champion" in liberal President Rafael Nunez. One of his main goals was to restore the Church to its pre-independence power and prestige; he was largely successful. The Constitution of 1886 was centralist and proclerical, with a preamble proclaiming "In the name of God, the supreme source of all authority...."[8] Title IV of

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[8]See Constitution of the Republic of Colombia, 1886 (Washington, D.C.: General Secretariat, Organization of American States, 1971). See also William Marion Gibson's The Constitutions of Colombia (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1948). For a discussion of the current conditions of Catholicism in Latin America and how the Church is adapting to modernity and addressing social concerns, see two works by Daniel H. Levine: Popular Voices in Latin American Catholicism (1992) and Religion and Politics in Latin America: The Catholic Church in Venezuela and Colombia (1981). In these works, Levine discusses the progressive attitudes and activities of the Church in several countries of the region. See also, Ivan Vallier's Catholicism, Social Control, and Modernization in Latin America (1970). Another work dealing with the Colombian (and Chilean) Church and its approach to modernity is David E. Mutchler's The Church as a Political Factor in Latin America, With Particular Reference to Colombia

the Constitution, titled "Religion and the Relations Between Church and State," states that "The freedom of all sects that are not contrary to Christian morality or to the laws is guaranteed. Acts contrary to Christian morality or subversive of public order that may be committed on the occasion or under the pretext of worship are subject to the general law." In addition, the government may conclude agreements with the Holy See, but the Church is to remain independent. "Priestly functions are incompatible with holding public office; Catholic priests may, nevertheless, be employed in the fields of public education or charity." In Colombia, therefore, the Church has no direct control over politics, but it is nevertheless a significant force in society. The 1887 Concordat between the government and the Vatican assures such.

This very favorable Concordat ensured the Church of many privileges and rights which are unique in Latin America, and certainly its position sharply contrasts with that of the Mexican Church. Article 1 of the Concordat states "The Roman Catholic Apostolic religion is the religion of Colombia, the public powers recognize it as an essential element of the social order, and they are bound to protect and enforce respect for it and its ministers, leaving to it at the same time the full enjoyment of its rights and prerogatives."

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and Chile (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971). The work deals specifically with the Church's political involvement, motivated in the latter part of the 20th century by its sense of survival. Finally, see, Robert H. Dix's commentary on Colombian politics entitled The Politics of Colombia.

Article 2 ensures the liberty of the Church in spiritual matters, while Article 3 assures the Church that the government will respect canon law and not contradict it. Juridical personality is ensured by Article 4, extensive Church private property rights by Articles 5 and 6.

President Nunez wanted religious education in the public schools because he believed religion and morality to be indissoluble; therefore, three articles of the Concordat were dedicated to providing the Church with an extensive role in all levels of education: providing obligatory instruction in religion at all levels; censoring textbooks on religious, moral and other subjects; and dismissing teachers and faculty members for improper instruction which offends Church teaching (Mecham, 125-28). Article 21 declares that all Church services will include the prayer "God save the President and the high just authorities." Finally, according to Article 25, the Church is to receive a moderate state subsidy. Judging simply by these laws it is quite obvious how privileged the Colombian Church is, and how different Colombian Church-state relations have been from Mexican Church-state relations.

The Concordat has been modified a bit, and was overturned briefly in the 1930s when the Conservative proclerical forces lost power; but the main text of the Concordat remains and continues to bolster the Church's societal position. Not long after the first drafting, the Liberal and Conservative forces came to terms on the position of religion in societal and

political life; there was and remains agreement between the two political parties on this question (Mecham, 134).

Nevertheless, extremist groups have disturbed the social peace over this matter. During the period of civic unrest from 1950 to 1953, referred to as "La Violencia," the Conservatives came back to power and were led by the more extreme of their group. A fanatical wing of the Church took this opportunity to involve itself extensively in politics by denouncing Liberals and their candidates. More serious, however, was their persecution of nonCatholics in a fit of "lawlessness and religious fanaticism." Two Conservative administrations created a favorable atmosphere for Catholic extremists to persecute Evangelicals and foreign missionaries. Fanatical mobs burned churches, closed schools, and murdered missionaries and indigenous converts. Presumably the hierarchy objected to the violence but was ignored by extremist priests. Where violence was not used, the government still discriminated contrary to constitutional dictates. According to government agreements with the Catholic hierarchy, Evangelicals were prohibited from working in much of the country; their mission work was simply shut down by state order. In an attempt to legitimize this civil rights violation, the Catholic extremists and their government protectors labeled nonCatholics "communists" and "revolutionary bandits," thereby making a religious disagreement into a political and national security concern.

This example clearly reveals how much political power the Church has enjoyed.

By 1960 the extremists had lost power; the new and more moderate government ignored the anti-Evangelical decrees. A new Archbishop came to power seeking a new approach to relations among denominations. He convened meetings with all Protestants to put forth a joint Christian defense against communism. He expressed a desire to solve the "problem" of drift to Protestantism by increasing Catholic education for the public; in other words, violence should be replaced with a Catholic evangelization program. He also encouraged more social concern on the part of the clergy. This activity eventually led to the Church advocacy of a political solution to poverty: land reform. This 1961 proposal resulted in a Conservative land owner backlash, and since then the Church from time-to-time has engaged in political acts by speaking out against dictators and other Conservative forces in Colombia (Mecham, 134-136).

Colombia continues to be known as the most Catholic of Latin American nations, having a very numerous and active clergy. This is not surprising, given its constitutionally privileged position and the existence of its political benefactors since Independence. Dix makes this observation:

> Regarded as an essential element of the social order throughout most of Colombian history, the Church has been accorded explicit corporate powers over important

> social functions while in other ways remaining dependent on, or limited by, government. (139-140)

Dix explains Church strength in Colombia relative to other states in the region by noting that the very proclerical Conservative Party dominated the state between 1886 and 1920. This is quite significant when we recall that these were the years that most of Latin America was disestablishing the Church. Moreover, this party was leading an economic expansion, so with the Church in tow--sitting on boards of directors, national commissions, etc.-- there was no "natural enmity" between modernizers and the Church. Such was not the case in other countries where Liberals attempts at modernization were often fought by the Church and the Conservatives who were out of power. And unlike other Latin American states, most notably Mexico, the Colombian Church has had a great role in matters such as urban and peasant labor concerns; has maintained a press and radio programming; has overseen training and research institutes; and has extended health care and welfare assistance where government programs were inadequate. The numerous priesthood has allowed for a strong tradition of "cultural Catholicism," affording the clergy the role of spiritual and secular adviser. Such Church power was evidenced by its support of a 1953 coup that brought a Liberal-Conservative coalition to power. In sum, it has been almost as much of a political player as it has been the spiritual pillar of society (Dix, 141-143). These

circumstances underscore the difference between Mexico and Colombia regarding Church-state relations.

Peru is another Latin American state where the Church has been and remains a strong presence in society. There is a complex interdependence between Church and state, and unlike Mexico, there has been no interruption of friendly relations between the government and the clergy since the Church was established in 1835. Moreover, there has been little overt anticlericalism and almost no violence. Mecham notes the contrast: "Despite the fact that the Peruvian colonial background (political, economic, and ethical) was very similar to that of Mexico, it is remarkable that the histories of the Church in the two countries have been so different" (160).

As the patriot armies drove out the Spanish forces, much of the pro-Spanish clergy, especially the higher clergy, were expelled or fled. The lower clergy which remained were generally pro-Independence and found favor with the revolutionary generals. The provisional Constitution of 1821 contained a statement declaring a state-Church, but it provided Protestants some leeway to practice their religion:

> The Apostolic Roman Catholic religion is the religion of the State; the government recognizes as one of its first duties that of maintaining and conserving it by all means that are within the bounds of human prudence. Whoever attacks its doctrines and

> principles, either in public or in private, shall be severely punished in proportion to the scandal he may have caused.
>
> Others who profess the Christian religion but who dissent in some principles from the religion of the State may obtain permission from the government, with the consent of the Council of State, to make use of the right which may be theirs, provided their conduct is not prejudicial to public order.
>
> No one may hold public office who does not profess the religion of the State.[9]

General San Martin, who promulgated this decree, was a faithful Catholic, but like other Latin American leaders he was open to Protestant mission work. He invited a Scottish Baptist minister to found a public school system, much as this minister had done in Argentina and Chile. Surprisingly, he encountered little resistance from the Catholic clergy.

When the constitutional Congress was convened in 1822, some of the most liberal members were the clerical constituents. But by 1823 it had been decided that only Catholicism could be practiced in Peru. However, not all of the Independence leaders were of the same mind. The great Liberator, Simon Bolivar, ruled Peru almost completely by

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[9]Mecham references for this citation Juan F. Olivo, Constituciones del Peru, 1821-1919, p. 15. (Lima, Peru: 1922). For more information, see Ruben Vargas' Historia de la Iglesia en el Peru (Burgos, Spain: Ugarte, SJ, Imprentade Aldecoa, 1961).

decree until 1826 since the Congress had not finished drafting the Constitution. He did not want the Church to retain all of its traditional privileges. He curbed some of them, but these mostly had to do with the monies the Church collected from supplicants and with hierarchical appointments. He was not anticlerical, but neither did he allow the Church a free hand. He earnestly sought to conclude an agreement with the Vatican since he viewed the Church as a helpful and necessary political ally. Therefore, when the Constitution of 1826 was promulgated, it made Catholicism the state religion and allowed others to be practiced also. This situation would not last however; the next several constitutions prohibited the exercise of any other religions or dissident denominations. Indeed, it was not until the 20th century that the liberal provisions of San Martin and the Liberator would be reintroduced.

Even though they were unable to decree religious freedom for the next several decades, the Liberals who achieved dominance over the government were able to break some of the Church's powers and reduce its political influence. For example, they abolished the Church's special courts and the onerous tithes, but since they had not the power Mexican Liberals and revolutionaries they were forced to provide the Church an income from state treasury subsidies.

In 1860, the Conservatives were back in power and promulgated their own Constitution. This very proclerical

document would last about sixty years. It retained the Constitution's statements about religion, including the prohibition on any public celebration of a nonCatholic religion. However, these provisions were not strictly enforced and Protestants were allowed to maintain churches. In fact, a momentous court case was adjudicated in 1890 in which the clergy hoped to enforce the laws against an Evangelical missionary of the American Bible Society. The Catholic Church lost in the Supreme Court, and the case set the precedent for increased Protestant activity. Ultimately, an outraged Congress acted to strike the prohibition on other religions altogether when in 1915 a mob attacked a Protestant mission. The passage of the law did not come easily since the Congress faced pressure from the Church and even the President. But the Congress held its ground and passed what came to be known as the Toleration Act of 1915. It was retained in the 1933 Constitution which has lasted to modern times (Mecham, 166-170).

Title XIV of the Constitution of 1933--the statement on Church-state relations--reads as follows: "Respecting the sentiments of the national majority, the State protects the Roman Catholic Apostolic religion. All other religions enjoy freedom in the exercise of their respective beliefs."[10] In addition, Article 59 guarantees freedom of conscience and

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[10]See Constitution of the Republic of Peru, 1933 (Washington, D.C.: General Secretariat, Organization of the American States, 1962).

belief. Moreover, no religious tests may be required for the holding of public office. Thus, the Church had lost few privileges; it simply was unable to prevent other religious groups from practicing. Ironically, this defeat spurred greater Catholic evangelism (Mecham, 174).

Peru became unique among many Latin American states in that clerics were given the right to vote and hold any public office except those of senator, deputy, president and vice president. Also, the Catholic Church is the only legally recognized religious body with juridical personality; therefore, constitutional statements and definitions refer to it. The Church did not lose all of its property as did the Mexican Church, nor did it lose the right to be involved in education: the law mandated Catholic instruction in public schools and allowed for private Catholic schools. Most significantly, the Church's historical role as political adviser to the masses was left undisturbed: in Peru there is a "strong tradition of clerical interference in political matters." The clergy does not hesitate to tell supplicants how to vote or to attempt to influence legislative debate and government officials at many levels. Says Mecham:

> The Church in Peru, therefore, is still accustomed to make use of its organizations and discipline to apply pressure when and where it chooses. A well-organized and disciplined institution, the Church has been

> recognized as necessary to stable government. (Mecham, 175)

Not the least of its resources is the Church's powerful tool of education. Children are raised to be respectful of the Catholic Church's teachings and of the institution in general, so that when they are adults many are likely to follow the direction of the clergy in clerical matters. Peru's leaders did not break the Church's power in the specific area of education and so did not break the Church's power generally in society.

The contrast with Mexico is striking. The Mexican state sought to prevent just such societal influence on the part of the Church, while in Peru, the Constitution itself establishes the Church's role in politics. One can argue that this freedom encouraged the present-day Evangelicals who are involved in Peruvian politics, both as federal legislators and in the post of Second Vice President.

The states of Bolivia and Paraguay have had Church-state relations similar to those of Peru: the Church has a rather privileged position and the clergy have some influence on politics. Significant differences are in the area of education policies. The Bolivian and Paraguayan Churches have not had the freedom of the Peruvian and Colombian Churches; although the former may still offer education, it is simply that--an offer and not mandated (Mecham, 185,190; also Lewis, 1982, on Paraguay).

The Chilean Catholic Church, having a history similar to others mentioned here, has expressed its political views rather often. Most interesting is its activity in the last 25 years. In particular, during the 1970s and 1980s, it was critical of the Pinochet dictatorship. Garreton notes that the advent of authoritarian government resulted in the Church's emergence as a "political-social space" [for debate] and as an "actor of primary importance." And to some degree, it has been an "alternative for the political system."[11] Garreton continues: "[The] Church emerged as the only organization with enough legitimacy to address the military establishment in the name of the general good" (180). Fortunately for the Church, it enjoyed some immunity from the dictator's retribution because many of the leaders of the regime were Catholics and defenders of the faith. Their desire to protect the social order from such "evils" as Marxism and other anti-Church teachings had been implanted in them as they grew up under clerical influence. As long as its criticism was not too severe, the Church was able to benefit from a regime populated with "good" Catholics. Nevertheless, there have been conflicts as when the Church harshly criticized the regime for its human rights abuses and became an intermediary between the state and those repressed or neglected by the regime.

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[11]Garreton, 179; See also Ben G. Burnett's Political Groups in. Chile

For the most part the Church has remained ideologically identified with the Christian Democrats, a party that not only has been legal for years, but one that also has held power. The clergy have been quite active, especially in the 1970s and 1980s with social welfare concerns (Garreton, 175-181). In sum, the Church in Chile has a long history of being an active political player: "The Church has played an important role in denouncing the dictatorship's violation of human rights, defending and protecting victims, and creating a free space for recognizing collective action and social actors" (Garreton, 193).

The Church's experience in Central America varies from state to state. In some there has been considerable freedom and a preservation of its pre-Independence privileges; in others, there have been great anticlericalism and persecution resulting in a weak Church with little influence over politics. In most states, particularly Central American states, there was great conflict over the Church-state question as extremists engaged in violence to settle the question in their favor. This study is enriched by a look at three states in particular: Costa Rica, Guatemala and Nicaragua.

In Costa Rica the Church was spared much of the violence and conflict that it endured in other countries. For most of the 19th century relations were peaceful; legislation and

governments, whether Liberal or Conservative, were favorable to the Church and it retained most of its privileges. During most of the 20th century, the Church generally has remained withdrawn from politics; however, when its interests have been threatened it has spoken out. For example, in 1949 a new Constitution was written. Some of the constituents sought to bar the clergy from holding public office and to declare education to be a prerogative of the state. The hierarchy successfully prevailed upon the delegates not to support the proposals.

The new Constitution, which opens with an invocation of the name of God, reaffirmed the existence of an official Church. Article 76 states:

> The Apostolic Roman Catholic Religion is that of the State, which contributes to its maintenance, without impeding the free exercise in the Republic of other worship that is not opposed to universal morality or good customs. (Mecham, 334; Jimenez, 1973).

Interestingly, Article 27 attempts to satisfy the demands of those who fear an established religion, apparently by forbidding political action on the part of the clergy: "no political propaganda may be carried on in any way by clericals or secular persons invoking religious motives or making use of religious beliefs." It should be noted, however, that the Church has from time-to-time expressed its views on political matters in this century, on labor matters and other social

concerns. The Costa Rican Church has had a prominent voice in the politics and social life of the nation despite the constitutional constraints upon it (Mecham, 331-336).

In Guatemala, the Church arguably fared worst of all of the Central American Churches since it was at the center of great political violence and turmoil after Independence. Initially, two Conservative presidents protected the Church and increased its privileges, even to the point of giving it representation in the Congress. But the Conservatives fell from power and were replaced by the Liberals in 1872 who implemented harsh anticlerical reforms. First, the government expelled the Jesuits, and eventually all male orders. Second, the government expropriated Church property, abolished the ecclesiastical courts and declared religious freedom. The Concordat with the Vatican was effectively abandoned with these actions. The new government asserted that it was not trying to destroy religion or offend the religious sensibilities of the nation. It found it necessary, however, "to cut loose of the ecclesiastical incubus, and to establish the supremacy of the civil authority in the State on a strong basis." The reforms were needed because of "the priests who would not rest contented with the loss of their former high standing" (Mecham, 318). Successive Liberal dictatorships pressed the anticlerical reforms further, destroying the nunneries and other such religious communities. Church buildings were confiscated for educational purposes, most

familial ceremonies were made secular, and pastoral frocks and vestments were barred from public view. The Constitutions subsequently adopted, and which governed Guatemala until 1945, codified these anticlerical reforms. These included more setbacks for the Church: they denied juridical personality; prohibited property acquisition and ownership, even of the very sanctuaries themselves; the clergy was prohibited from engaging in political discourse; education was secularized; and Church and state were separated. The Church's power in Guatemala had been destroyed, in much the same fashion and to the degree as it had been in Mexico. An 1884 Concordat restored relations to a small degree but the Church by no means regained any societal power.

The overthrow of the dictatorship of Jorge Ubico in 1945 brought another constitution; although it stressed socioeconomic concerns, the anticlerical legislation was retained. Not even with intense lobbying was the Church able to get the provisions removed. Religious freedom was ensured for all cults, but only within the confines of the temples. Further, the Constitution stated that "Religious societies and groups or their members as such, and ministers of cults, may not intervene in politics or in questions related to the organization or labor." The existence of monastic and other types of orders remained illegal, but the Catholic Church could at least under this latest legislation hold public processions and demonstrations of a religious nature. Only

ten years later another constitution was promulgated. The pro-Communist government of Jacobo Arbenz had been overthrown after harsh criticism by a very anti-Communist Archbishop. Clearly the clergy had not been obeying the law and had spoken out on political matters, but since their pronouncements favored the rebels, it was overlooked. The Constituent Assembly which met in 1955 was "composed largely of conservative Catholics." Hopeful, the Church argued for vast changes in the anticlerical laws but was able to obtain only a few changes. Juridical personality was established, and the Church was allowed to acquire property for religious, charitable, and educational purposes. Past expropriations, however, were not rescinded. The ban on clerical political activity was retained, but the clergy was to be allowed to engage in matters regarding labor. Another victory was in the realm of education, although it was a partial one: "The law will regulate the teaching of religion in public schools. The state will not give this education and it will be optional." The Church could now provide optional instruction in the government-run schools.

Thus the law has kept the Guatemalan Church from having significant influence on society and politics. In addition, there are other constraints upon the Church: a shortage of priests is one. This situation has greatly reduced its influence in society. Also a problem is syncretism which dilutes the small influence that the Church has.

Consequently, these problems have increased the strength of Protestantism in Guatemala, a situation unique among Latin American states. At times the Protestant clergy have outnumbered the Catholic clergy. The former, made up of several denominations, have been especially adept at social work in health and education (Mecham, 316-323). More recently, the Pentecostal and other Evangelical denominations have greatly increased their numbers.[12] The Guatemalan Church's response to the influx of Evangelicals has been sharply critical because they feel that Protestantism--and the state's response to it--has decreased the societal influence of Catholicism; in fact, some of the Catholic Church see Protestantism as the greatest threat (Crahan, 170). The Church also believes the state added insult to injury regarding enforcement of the anticlerical laws:

> The priests have charged, with considerable truth, that the anticlerical laws were more rigidly enforced against Catholics than against Protestants. On the

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[12]See especially Sheldon Annis's God and Production in a Guatemalan Town noted in the bibliography. Also, the Journal of Church and State reports that Protestant leaders believe that part of the reason for their great success has been that many Guatemalans who are baptized into the Catholic Church do not practice their faith, and in searching for spiritual fulfillment they have been open to the Protestant message. Modern Evangelicals of the last thirty years have been particularly adept at capitalizing on these circumstances. In addition, Protestantism's fortunes were augmented by "a series of national presidents [seeking] to weaken the power of the Roman Catholic clergy. In 1871, one of those leaders invited Presbyterian missionaries from the United States into the country" (Vol. 34, #2, Spring 1992, pp. 417-418).

> other hand the missionaries are often unsparing in their denunciation of priests for neglecting to improve the moral and physical well-being of their parishioners. (Mecham, 322).

The Church's position improved slightly with the advent of the present Constitution of 1965, a slightly more liberal document regarding religion.[13] Of note are a few provisions. It opens with an invocation of the name of God. Article 66 states that "The profession of any religion is guaranteed. Every person has the right to practice his religion or belief in public or in private, through instruction, worship, and observance, limited only by peace, good morals, public order and the respect due to the country's symbols. Religious associations and groups are prohibited from participating in partisan politics and ministers of faiths from campaigning." Article 67 addresses other issues:

> The Catholic Church and all other faiths are recognized as juridical persons and they may acquire, possess, and dispose of property, provided such property is intended for religious purposes, social welfare or education. Such property is entitled to exemption from taxes, assessments and excises.

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[13]See Constitution of the Republic of Guatemala, 1965 (Washington, D.C.: General Secretariat, Organization of American States, 1966). For more historical commentary, see also Mary Patricia Holleran's Church and State in Guatemala (New York: Octagon Books, 1974).

> The state shall issue to the Catholic Church deeds of ownership in real property which it now peacefully possess for its own purposes.

Article 93 addresses religious education, allowing for clerics to teach those who wish to receive such instruction. Further, "Civic, moral, and religious education is declared to be of the national interest. The state may contribute to the support of the latter without discrimination of any kind."

The Guatemalan case is interesting because it reveals marked similarities yet profound differences with the Mexican case. They are alike in that the various governments of each state treated the Church harshly, taking away privileges and in great measure destroyed the societal influence of the Church. When the reformers were through codifying their anticlerical sentiments, the clergy were restricted almost entirely to private exercises of religion; they had a severely diminished public role, having lost the right to control education, make political pronouncements, and even to wear their garb in public. Catholicism may not have been destroyed, but the agents of Catholicism--the clergy--have lost their former influence. The two countries are dissimilar, however, in the way in which the state has historically treated Protestants in general and, currently, some very vocal Evangelical groups in particular. The Guatemalan state has certainly not decreed Protestantism as the state religion, but neither has it made it difficult for

Evangelicals to participate significantly in politics and education by enforcing restrictive laws against them. On the contrary, some analysts argue that the right-wing governments of late have favored and aided Evangelical groups (Crahan, 171). As examples, an Evangelicals served as head of a governing military junta in the mid-1980s, and in recent times Evangelicals have capitalized on their liberties and numbers to make great political gains, as the current Presidency of the Evangelical Jorge Serrano attests. He benefitted considerably from a national coalition of groups working to get Evangelicals involved in politics. In contrast, in Mexico, nonCatholics have been treated as harshly by the state as have Catholics. 'The Mexican state has not favored any religious group [notwithstanding the Reform period and the inclusion of a limited number of Protestants in the Revolutionary armies and in a few post- Revolution cabinets of some generals], on the contrary, its goal has been until recently to thoroughly secularize society, to wipe out any vestige of religion in politics and many other areas of societal life. Evangelicals have had no better a time than Catholics.

Finally, Nicaragua offers another interesting comparison. During most of the 19th and 20th centuries, the Church in Nicaragua did not suffer the persecutions--official and unofficial--that other Latin American Churches have. It enjoyed a relatively favored legal status and reaped the

benefits of an 1862 Concordat. The tithes were abolished by this agreement but the state consented to support the Church. Most disputes were settled relatively amicably. While anticlerical persecutions were taking place in much of the rest of the region during the 19th century, the proclerical Nicaraguan government gave shelter to expelled orders such as the Jesuits. And although the political interference of the latter resulted in their expulsion from Nicaragua, this move was not aimed at the Church in general.

In 1894, however, Liberals attained power and enacted some anticlerical legislation overturning the Concordat. There was no widespread persecution or reduction in the Church's freedom to operate in society, but the union of Church and state was abolished. Later, the Constitution of 1950 invoked the name of God, but it did not go so far as to recognize an official religion. It decreed religious freedom and forbad the passage of any legislation which had as its goal the promotion or restriction of any faith. It recognized the juridical personality of all denominations and religious associations, thereby giving them the ability to acquire property. Public education was secularized although parents could opt for religious instruction, monastic orders were allowed, and interestingly, the document did not prohibit the clergy from speaking out on political matters. This last point is significant when we consider the political activism of religious persons and groups--both Protestant and

Catholic--in the last twenty years of Nicaraguan history. Although not officially the state religion, the Roman Catholic Church in the past has received special government recognition and privileges. Clerical attendance at political and diplomatic events is one example of the "special relationship." Such has been the case for much of this century. Protestants have been quite active in some sections of the country for several years (Mecham, 329-331).

Perhaps one of the reasons the Evangelical community has been so active in recent years--opposing the dictator Somoza in the 70's, and both supporting and opposing the Sandinista's Marxist regime--is that they have been allowed, as has the Catholic Church, to be active in politics (Crahan, 173-74). Again, the contrast with Mexico is a sharp one. [14]

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[14]Note the work of Bastian, discussed earlier in this work, for more information on the political activity of Evangelicals in Central America, Guatemala and Nicaragua in particular. Note also the following works: Crahan; Dennis Gilbert's Sandinistas: The Party and the Revolution (New York: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1988); Roger N. Lancaster's Thanks to God and the Revolution: Popular Religion and Class Consciousness in the New Nicaragua (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Manzar Foroohar's The Catholic Church and Social Change in Nicaragua (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989); and Phillip Berryman's The Religious Roots of Rebellion: Christians in Central American Revolutions (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984). Although differing in ideological perspective, these works provide valuable information regarding the role of religious forces in the region's revolutionary struggles, especially in Nicaragua.

Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with the legal constraints on the political activity of religious groups in Mexico. It discusses the Catholic Church in particular because its role in history has had the most significant effect on modern Church-state relations. The argument here is that whatever restrictions the Church has labored under, other religious groups have usually labored under them as well; moreover, whatever type of Church-state regime has obtained in Mexico due to the struggles between the clergy and the state, other religious groups have had to deal with this regime as well. In this chapter I have attempted to describe the relationship between religion and politics and the laws governing that relationship and how they came about.

Various legal constraints were imposed on the Catholic Church when liberalism swept Mexico in the 19th century. Liberals sought to rid Mexican politics and society of the control which the Church exercised through its wealth and privileged position. In their effort to build a modern nation-state, they were especially determined to deprive conservative reactionaries of their valuable alliance with the clergy. With the Reform period of the 1850s and the Revolution of 1910, the Liberals succeeded. The Church was finally reduced to a dependent and subservient role. Not only would it no longer be able to engage in political activity, it had also lost its control over education and the right to have

a prominent place in society. As a result, for most of this century the Church in Mexico has been a very restricted though popular institution. Yet another more profound result has been a general reduction in the political activity of all religious groups. Thus, nonCatholic groups such as modern day Evangelicals also have had no role in Mexican politics. Unlike the United States, Europe, and certain Latin American states, religious groups and persons whose politics are informed by their faith do not engage in political debate in Mexico. They do not organize around their religious faith for political action because the law doesn't allow it and history and tradition have taught them that the penalties for doing so are too high. In sum, religious groups in Mexico have capitulated to the state's requirement that they restrict their activities to the spiritual sphere almost exclusively.

Other former Spanish colonies have similar histories and have been through similar political struggles as Mexico, yet there are some profound differences regarding the mix of religion and politics. In many states, such as Colombia, Peru, and Nicaragua, the Catholic Church has retained most of its pre-Independence privileges and thereby continued to influence society in general and politics in particular. (For a summary, see the Table at the end of this chapter.)

The next chapter will deal with another constraint on religious group political activity in Mexico, that of doctrinal and theological views. The previous chapters dealt

with constraints on Evangelicals that are primarily externally generated; however, the doctrinal constraint originates within the religious group itself. Often pastors and other Evangelical leaders have counseled congregants against being involved in "worldly" matters such as politics. Indeed, given Mexican history as discussed in this chapter, it is not surprising that pastors would counsel their flocks against an activity that might not only jeopardize their spiritual standing before God, but their civil and legal standings as well.

Table: Church-state Relations

In order to clarify matters a bit, I have provided the following table to show the status of church-state relations in several Latin American countries; that is, the status that has obtained for most of the 20th century, based upon the constitutions as they existed through 1991. This time period is important because it is the period during which modern Evangelicals formed their opinions of the political realities regarding religion-based societal and political action. In other words, if the Catholic Church has been allowed a prominent role in society, then it can be argued that Evangelicals would be more likely nowadays to engage in social and political activities because the arena of politics is not necessarily closed to religious associations. (One might argue, that in the case of Colombia, for example, the status of church-state relations might denote a favored position for the Church and therefore the Evangelicals are at a disadvantage; this, however, is not the case in any of the Latin American states as far as this author was able to determine.)

The following column titles represent different aspects of church-state relations. Certainly others were considered, such as the presence of anticlerical laws, foreign priest expulsions, outlawed status, etc; but these categories refer mainly to historic events, not to constitutional decisions taken in this century, which is the focus of the table.

Country	Juridical Personality	Official Status	*Recognized/Protected	**Subsidized/Education
Mexico	No	No	No	No
Guatemala	No	No	Yes	Yes
El Salvador	No	No	Yes	Yes
Nicaragua	No	No	Yes	No
Venezuela	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Colombia	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Peru	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chile	No	No	Yes	Yes

*Recognized/Protected status refers to a Catholic Church that has enjoyed state recognition as the majority and traditional religion of the people. It is a "step" lower than official state-Church status.
**Subsidized/Education refers to several things: a Catholic Church that either receives state funds, is allowed to engage in education, or allowed to engage in charitable activities. If one or more of these has been present in the country, I have determined that the state approves of and encourages Church social action.

CHAPTER FIVE

Holy Wars and Conspiracy Theories: The Societal Constraints of the Catholic Church and the Media

The previous chapters dealt with the constraints on Evangelical political participation which are produced by government actions and historical events. There is yet another constraint of an external nature, that of societal institutions and other societal actors which militate against a prominent Evangelical presence in politics.[1] In recent

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[1]While there have been antiEvangelical persecutions in other Latin American countries, they have not been accompanied by the other constraints on Evangelical political activity described in the previous chapters of this work. That is, Evangelicals in many other countries of the region may have had to fear persecution from localized radicals and sporadic persecution from the government, but they did not have also to fear sustained persecution from governmental authorities, onerous laws, and a closed political system which all have served to keep Evangelicals' general presence in society muted. In fact, in some instances governments have stepped in to protect Evangelicals from attacks (note the Guatemalan case below). Therefore, in the interest of a comparative study, I have included in this chapter's notes the few citations of antiEvangelical violence outside Mexico that I have found.

For example, the Journal of Church and State reports that a Guatemalan Evangelical was attacked in August of 1991 and almost kidnapped by suspected right-wing militants. The Evangelical had raised the ire of rightists by calling for talks between the government and the leftist rebels. It is not known if the Evangelical was leftist or not, but usually such attacks are carried out by rightists against mainline Protestants and Catholics who tend to be more moderate or leftist; that is, not supportive of the government's approach to settling the leftist insurgency problem. The Journal also reports that tensions between charismatic and traditional Catholics have risen in a remote mountain village. [Charismatic Catholics maintain a Catholic form of worship and deference to Catholic hierarchy and episcopal structure, yet

years, individuals in the Catholic Church have openly and repeatedly criticized Evangelicals as the latter's numbers have increased.[2] So, too, have certain members of the Mexican news media. Unfortunately, some critics have done more than launch verbal assaults; incidents of violence have been

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they are rather "Protestant" in some of their beliefs and worship practices such as tongues speaking, belief in healing, etc..] In one incident in this same village, some of the leadership of the traditional Catholics locked the charismatics and their priest out of a church; a brawl ensued and police responded by closing the church indefinitely (Vol. 34, #1, Winter 1992, p. 178).

The Journal reports a clash in the very Catholic Dominican Republic between a "flamboyant" Evangelical radio preacher, and a Catholic cardinal. The radio preacher consistenly used the airwaves to criticize the Church, and some allege that the prelate had him removed from the airwaves. The Dominican Republic has a de facto established Catholic Church by virtue of a concordant with the Vatican; the Church-state relations are similar to those in Peru and others discussed in Chapter Four of this study. One reason for the prelate's action may be the growing numbers and societal influence of the Evangelicals in the country (Vol. 34, #2, Spring 1992, p. 412).

Other antiEvangelical incidents include: the Peruvian Catholic Church's stance against then candidate and now President Alberto Fujimori, who was supported publicly by Evangelicals; he later named an Evangelical to his cabinet; the Guatemalan Church's revival of its charges that the "sects" are part of "sinister U.S. strategy; the Bolivian Church's angry reaction to the Bolivian president's "acknowledgement of the evangelical influence" in society (Latin American Weekly Report, 7 June 1990). See also News Network International 9-8-89 for a report on the unresolved bombing of a Guatemala City Evangelical church.

[2]The Catholic Church has also criticized Evangelicals in the past, especially during the Revolution. Many Catholic militants blamed the Revolution on Protestants in Mexico acting as agents of the United States. For an interesting commentary, see Dennis R. Palmer's dissertation "The American Protestant Conspiracy Theory of Mexican History: A Case Study in the Literature of Mexican Militant Catholicism" (University of California Berkeley).

reported, at times as outrageous as the Cuban and Salvadoran persecutions of religious groups. In short, modern day Mexican Evangelicals believe they have many reasons not to be vocal or try to manifest themselves to any great degree in society as their counterparts do in other Latin American states, or for that matter in the United States. To do so, in some places simply to worship, risks harsh reaction from local governmental militants, certain Catholic authorities, and a hostile press. In addition, for Evangelicals to mobilize politically, to challenge the political order and the political elites--especially in rural areas where the Catholic Church is strong--could bring the most severe reaction. A few Evangelical leaders readily attest to their fears of becoming more visible in society.[3] For many, the risk has been and

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[3]The information in this chapter was obtained through research of various missionary news organization publications and the author's interviews conducted on several research trips to Mexico. The author admits that these news organizations are subject to the suspicion of bias due to the fact that they are staffed by Evangelicals and exist to report on the activities of Evangelicals. Unfortunately, other than the reports in established professional journals and newspapers, I have encountered few sources which purport to reveal antiEvangelical violence and societal bias; therefore, I have had to rely on the Evangelical news organizations for much of the information in this chapter. [Perhaps there is an opportunity for further research by Latin American social scientists.] If these Evangelical reports are unconvincing as to the actual facts, we can at least accept them as evidence of Evangelicals' perceptions of their plight in society. Certainly some of these events have indeed occurred even if we doubt the details and the interpretations supplied by Evangelicals. We should note also that Scott, Martin and Stoll have also discussed similar events.

As to my interviews of Evangelicals (Mexico City 1986, 1990, and Tepic, Nayarit, 1990), several of them expressed the sentiment that "too public" a presence in any fashion can

continues to be assault, loss of property, or even death. This is not to say that such incidents are always reported accurately (bias may occur due to partisan information sources), nor is the point being made that the abuses and criticisms are widespread, permeating all of the country and at every level of the Church and the media--in fact, they appear to be localized and emanating from specific individuals. Nevertheless, the argument here is that the Evangelicals point to the reported incidents as evidence that their participation in society is not welcomed by certain groups and individuals. This chapter--which argues that societal constraints militate against a public Evangelical presence--will discuss some of these incidents and the reactions of Evangelicals.

The Catholic Church as a Societal Constraint

Earlier chapters dealt with the relationship between the Catholic Church and Mexican Evangelicals, showing how they have been at odds, especially when the government favored the latter, as in the Reform period and during the Revolution. For most of this century--after the Revolution--the relationship was relatively peaceful since Evangelicals remained few in number and, because of the law, generally out

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result in a devastating reaction. For example, one of the interviewees, Jonas Flores, is a government official, a lifelong PRI member and former federal legislator; he has been the subject of antiEvangelical attacks in rural areas while on evangelism tours.

of public view. However, in the last 25 years, Evangelical churches have been growing, and in some rural areas, where there are few priests, or where Pentecostal, Mormon, and Jehovah's Witness missionaries have made significant inroads, and in municipal regions where local leadership is more powerful than the national government, the strife between Catholics and nonCatholics has increased dramatically. These circumstances not only are due to the national hierarchy's criticisms, but also are due to the fact that most of the power over the lives of citizens is often in the hands of local leaders. Moreover, where the local community is made up traditionally of highly committed Catholics--whether it is a rural community of Indians or an urban one of socially alienated individuals--the local political authorities who represent themselves as defenders of the Catholic faith can wield an incredible amount of power.

Annis (1987), Clawson (1976, 1984), and McGavran (1963), in addition to several others, provide informative descriptions of rural Indian life in the southern and southeastern regions of Mexico and Guatemala which are historically Indian and maintain that ethnic makeup to a great degree. Since the geographic region studied in most of these works is heavily populated by persons of Mayan descent, many of whom are full-blooded Indians and most of whom are engaged in farming and small scale industry, the descriptions can be applied generally to both Mexico and Guatemala. Many of these

studies use an anthropological approach, concentrating on culture and folkways and how local indigenous leadership exercises authority over the population. These populations are the least assimilated into national life, so local leaders exert considerable control. A prominent characteristic in the rural areas is the dominance of Catholicism, but it is a syncretic form of Catholicism--certainly a North American Catholic would not readily recognize his religion as practiced by a Mayan Catholic. In worship practices there is great holdover from Mayan worship practices in that Indians venerate many of the saints almost as though the latter were deities themselves. Moreover, local Indian leaders are often designated by the PRI as the official municipal authorities. These leaders are by and large Catholics and usually administer their communities in such a way that the municipalities are officially and solely "Catholic" dominions. Those who refuse to participate in festivals and worship services, as Evangelicals refuse to do, face great social pressure to comply.

This discussion of Catholicism as a constraint can be more easily grasped if it is divided into two sections. First is a look at the actions of the Catholic Church in general--a review of a set of instances wherein leading members of the hierarchy have criticized the presence and activity of Evangelicals in Mexico. The second section focuses on more specific instances of the activities of local Catholics, where

they have used their political and societal positions in certain local areas to persecute Evangelicals violently and expel them from communities.

The Catholic response in general

Certain news organizations have reported instances where Catholic authorities have criticized the Evangelical presence in society. A typical example appeared in an article in the Open Doors News Service (ODNS). ODNS is a news organization concerned with missionary activities (Stoll, p. 135). In a 1987 article entitled "Mexican Press Claims 'Holy War' Against Religious Sects Has Begun," ODNS correspondent Elizabeth Isais (wife of Mexican Evangelist Juan Isais) reported on a story featured in two prominent Mexican newspapers, the Mexico City daily Ovaciones (August 5, 1987) and Impacto, [the latter's article was entitled "The Sects Invade."] The story stated that a "holy war" had been declared by Catholics against the infiltration of Protestant "sects," as the Mexican Church refers to them. Those targeted in the "holy war" were "not only the Mormons, Spiritists, Jehovah's Witnesses and Rosacrucians, but also the Salvation Army, the Mexican Bible Society, Methodists, Lutherans, Evangelicals, Pentecostals, Presbyterians and Anglicans." Further, her story discussed the Church's opposition to "the growing presence of Evangelical/Protestant groups making headway in the predominately Catholic country."

The Ovaciones article detailed what it called the Church's strategy, the centerpiece of which was said to be instructing Catholics to use a house-to-house approach to evangelization in order to win back converts. Participants learned that they were "obligated to reconquer a minimum of ten ex-Catholics who have been converted to Protestantism by the sects. As a second step, the article said participants in the campaign would teach courses designed to convince each of their reconverted believers to win ten others, thus multiplying the effect of the campaign." The campaign was quite novel; the Church in Mexico never before had engaged in such an activity. The Church's efforts at evangelization are similar to those of Evangelicals, since both groups desire to win converts to their respective faiths. However, what Evangelicals object to is the strident "antiEvangelical" nature of the Church's campaign. They argued that it smacked of a national effort to rid the country of their influence. Moreover, they objected to the labeling of Protestant groups as "sects" because many of these groups are well-respected and have been operative in Mexico for more than 125 years (ODNS, 9-10-87). As was noted earlier, many members of these church groups were supported in the past by Liberal Mexican governments and also held positions in post-Revolution administrations.

Such criticism has come also from the highest levels of the Church. In September of 1987 the hierarchy in Mexico City

released a study it had conducted which excoriated the Mormons, the Baptist Church, the Anglican Church, the Salvation Army, the Hari Krishnas and several other "sects" for being "pseudo religions" (The Christian Century, 1-17-90, 41-42; Scott, 3). The report contained factual errors, such as the statement that Mormons teach polygamy which the church in fact banned in 1890. The report labeled the Jehovah's Witnesses as a nonChristian religion, and criticized Baptists for encouraging its members to accept the Bible on faith without official interpretation. John M. McClintock of The Baltimore Sun, who as reported on these issues, notes that, according to some "sect" leaders, the real reason for Catholic opposition and reaction may be concern over how successful the offending denominations have been in evangelization. The Mormons have grown in Mexico from 250 chapters to 500 in the past five years. Other denominations have had similar success. Some Pentecostal and Independent Evangelical leaders in Mexico City have told this author that the hierarchy usually does not object to the presence of the mainline denominations because they are not very active--as are Evangelical groups--in evangelizing Indians, rural people, and those who have abandoned the Catholic Church.

Success in proselytizing for both the Catholic Church and nonCatholic faiths does not come easily since the people of Oaxaca are extremely traditional, with loyalty and self worth tied to the community and the tribal concept of property

ownership, notes McClintock (Sun, 9-21-87). The Catholic Church worked to adapt Catholicism to these folkways, but found their work to have been in vain in many areas when Evangelicals and others entered the picture. The latter evangelized the Indians and called into question traditional and Catholic beliefs about communal based salvation and a hierarchical Church. They taught that a hierarchical Church was not what God intended, and that salvation comes to individuals through faith, not by communal tradition, rituals and beliefs. Evangelical missionaries normally do not attack the Church outright, but by implication, says the Sun's McClintock. The Rev. Abelardo Lopez of the Independent Christian Church points out that he and other Evangelicals believe that the Church's work with the Indians has put the Indians into a "form of slavery." [Communal Catholicism forces supplicants to spend small fortunes on drinking alcohol and syncretic religious festivals of the saints.][4] Lopez further claims that the Indians generally have been receptive to his church's work. His church is purely Mexican, and he himself is an Indian. Another "sect" leader, a Mormon bishop, insists that his church has been successful because of its emphasis on the family and opposition to a materialistic way of life. Talking to the Sun's McClintock, he adds: "You must realize that the Catholic Church was imposed on us and that it

[4]See Annis 1987; Clawson 1976 and 1984; and McGavran 1963 for more information on this subject.

is essentially foreign....Religious freedom is guaranteed by the Mexican Constitution. We no longer have the official church. We are as Mexican as anybody else" (Sun, 9-21-87). This last comment is presumably a reaction to the charge that Evangelicals and other nonCatholic groups are representatives of a foreign culture, the U.S. culture, in particular. Nevertheless, some members of the Oaxaca state government do not agree with the Mormon bishop. According to the state attorney general:

> These ideas [of the nonCatholic groups] are foreign and have nothing to do with our traditions and ways of thinking. The people here are Catholic, and they are content. Our beliefs have evolved over the centuries. They are deserving of respect and should not be torn down. (Sun, 9-21-87)

The attorney general's statement and the incidents of violence perpetrated by Indians against Evangelicals reveal that not all Indians are receptive to the Evangelical presence. In fact, the Evangelicals are clearly a minority even though they have managed to convert some of the Indian community.

An example of Catholic hierarchy opposition which fortunately did not include violence involves the mass distribution of an Evangelical book. In November 1990, Catholic Bishop Javier Lozano Barragan of Zacatecas state, then president of the Mexican Bishops' Commission for the Doctrine of the Faith, warned Catholics that U.S. Evangelicals

planned to distribute two million copies of a Spanish translation of Strength To Live. The book is an evangelization tool which contains Christian testimonies of famous persons. The bishop claimed that the book "attacks Mexican culture and the Catholic faith," and the doctrinal commission issued a report stating that the book is "not acceptable for a Catholic because it adulterates the message of Christ as it has always been read by the Catholic Church." The bishop also objected to the book's style, which he said "is written from the point of view of 'Yankee culture' and therefore clashes with traditional Mexican cultural values." Beginning in October of 1990, the U.S.-based Arthur S. De Moss Foundation[5] waged a massive advertising campaign for the book using radio, television, newspapers and billboards. Prominent Mexicans have been featured in the campaign, including a former Miss Mexico (The Christian Century, Jan. 1990).

In a related incident in 1990, Mexican bishops reacted harshly to reports that there has been a 400% increase in conversions to Protestantism since 1968 in Mexico. The bishops used the report to criticize the growing activity of Evangelicals. According to the report, the hierarchy believes that as much as ten percent of Mexico's population may be Protestant after so many years of proselytizing by the country's nearly 300 Evangelical church groups. It is

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[5]The Arthur S. De Moss Foundation is a U.S.-based Christian organization that supports societal causes in the United States and abroad.

especially critical of those churches with ties to U.S. groups, and one bishop did not hesitate to attempt to tie some of the Evangelical activity to U.S. government imperialism. Although he admitted that he had no evidence that the U.S. government was directly supporting Evangelical activity, one cleric noted that "it is well-known that the North American government sees the Catholic Church as a threat to its policies in Latin America." He claimed also that the American Evangelical churches "play an important role in a general campaign 'to divide the Catholic people' and thus weaken the Church."

A Mexican nun, a superior general, agreed with this criticism, stating that "the sects take advantage of the economic situation of poor people, offering them money if they will abandon their [Catholic] faith." She also laid some of the blame on her Church, allowing that many conversions to Protestantism are the result of a "lack of an adequate, systematic and progressive education in the faith, so that people do not give up their spiritual values for material ones." Another Bishop lashed out at the Mexican government "for placing more restrictions on Roman Catholic evangelization than on that done by the evangelical groups." He maintained that the government charged the Church with violating legislation banning religious groups from using the mass media and so stopped a weekly Catholic radio broadcast. However, it took no similar action against two Evangelical

groups proselytizing over the radio.[6] He argued further that such governmental policy reveals how the Mexican state does not properly protect Mexican culture and national sovereignty: "It is the government's responsibility to watch out for the social tranquility, the sovereignty and peace of the nation, and it should be taking care that no group attacks our cultural values and idiosyncrasies, as is happening [with the sects]." Another bishop echoed these sentiments: "[Although the Mexican Catholic Church] is not against religious freedom for anyone...the sects are attacking our cultural values, and the government should take notice and put a brake on this threat to our national sovereignty" (The Christian Century, Jan. 1990; see also NNI, 2-15-90).[7]

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[6]See The Christian Century, January 17, 1990, p. 41. Whether or not the bishop's account is true, it should be noted that such use of the airwaves by any religious group has been banned by law. The executive decrees came down during the presidency of Jose Lopez Portillo. He charged Evangelicals with selling their air time to secular advertisers for a profit, thus violating the restrictions governing their use of radio. Since his decree, all religious groups are barred from any proselytizing. The author first heard of this incident on a trip to Mexico, when Jonas Flores confirmed that some Evangelicals had abused their privileges and so incurred the wrath of the state.

[7]In 1992, Cardinal Ernesto Corripio Ahumade of Mexico City stated that the growth of Protestantism is causing a "crisis of faith." Another prelate, Archbishop Adlolfo Suarez Rivera, charged that "Protestant groups are plotting to take advantage of the pending Mexico Free Trade Agreement to 'besiege' the Catholic Church." In other reports of violence, in July a Baptists minister and three laymen were arrested in Oaxaca for refusing to contribute money for a festival being given in honor of the local patron saint; and in September, a Protestant convert died from wounds suffered during an attack by a militant Catholic group known as "Apostles of the Word" (Journal of Church and State, Vol. 34, #1, Winter 1992, p.

The Catholic response in certain local areas

Certain Catholics have gone a step beyond criticizing Evangelicals to the point of abusing their political powers over a local community. Their goal appears to have been to "defend" traditional Catholicism by expelling Evangelicals from the communities or silencing them with force.

News of the Church's national campaign which was discussed above showed up in the U.S. press. A few days after the ODNS report, a Mexico City-based reporter for the Baltimore Sun wrote an article entitled "Evangelicals face hostility in Mexico" (9-21-87, p. 4). He said the "sects" were accused of undermining order in the country. The focus of the story is a violent incident that occurred in the southern state of Oaxaca, a very rural and poor state populated mostly by Indians who speak many languages but little Spanish. According to the report, on an April night in 1987, three Mexican evangelists and their families were kidnaped from their home by a mob of villagers. They had been harassed similarly several times before in the previous month. The evangelists, their families and about 40 followers were put into the one-room jail of Santiago Atitlan, a village located several hours into the Sierra Madre mountains. They were charged with the crime of "stirring up trouble" in the

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Catholic community of Mixes Indians. Most offensive was their preaching of "individual liberty, salvation and the imminent coming of Christ." Such teachings were regarded by the local authorities as a "threat to the established order." After three days in jail, the Evangelicals expected to be released as they had been on previous occasions. Instead, some of the villagers came to the jail, bound the three evangelists, took them to a clearing and shot them. The rest of the detainees were forced at gunpoint to leave the town and told never to come back. At the time of the writing of the Sun article--five months after the incident--no one had been charged with the killings. Witnesses reported that some of the town's auxiliary police force and the town council were involved in the incident, including the killings. A spokesman for the church to which the evangelists belonged, the Independent Christian Church, stated that the blame lay with "Catholic fanatics" who probably did not act with the hierarchy's authority. Whether or not this spokesman's account is accurate, the point can be made that these Evangelicals saw the town's indigenous leaders as their real opponents.

Certain Catholic officials spoke to a Mexican newspaper, Uno mas Uno, after the incident, noting that he "did not want to give details about the possibility that the expelled group may have been from some religious sect" but he added that the matter was "in the hand of the sub-delegate of the zone."

Sub-delegate Guillermo Gutierrez holds this political post, having been appointed by the PRI, and he, too, made a statement to Uno mas Uno. He said that in Magdalena "we are all Catholics and we do not accept the imposition of suggesting that we adopt a new religion, which is why this group of some 150 people was expelled." He added that the community is very jealous of its religious traditions, and that "in the case someone who lives there might decide to change religion, the person could be expelled and would have to sell his possessions" (NNI, 2-15-90).

The incident was not the first for Oaxaca: in 1985, several missionaries were killed in an atmosphere of denunciations by Catholic authorities. The state's archbishop has declared "Protestant sects" and drug dealers as being among the leading problems of Oaxaca, and the hierarchy has repeatedly denounced "the insurgencies" of Evangelical groups. Usually, however, the Church is referring to the non-mainline denominations, and Church authorities have protested the violence, arguing that they have good relations with established denominations such as the Presbyterians and Methodists. Said the Rev. Danial Quiroga Dorantes, spokesman for the archdiocese, "What we object to is these sects who attack the Catholic Church, prey on the ignorance of the people and take advantage of the misery of the Indians" (The Baltimore Sun, 9-21-87, p. 4).

Another incident in 1987 reveals how dangerous it has been for Evangelicals in rural areas to worship freely among Catholics. In the state of Chiapas, a rural southern state of Mexico populated mostly by Indians of Mayan descent, many of whom are Catholics, there is a Tzotzil Indian village called San Miguel Mitontic. According to sources in the village, the town president, Juan Lopez Vasquez, decreed that Catholic villagers could with impunity "kill anyone that is found singing or studying the Bible at home" (ODNS, 6-11-87; 8-10-87). To carry out the decree, the town president led a mob of about 300 pistol and stick wielding villagers and arrested all of the 232 Evangelicals who lived in the community, including women and children. The group was held for three days in a jail and a warehouse without food or water.

Attorney Pablo Salazar Mediguchia, a former state district attorney, defended the Evangelicals by taking the case to the Chiapas state Congress, asking them to issue arrest warrants for the town officials and bring them to trial for overstepping their authority (such officials have no legal powers of arrest) and for violating the Evangelicals constitutional rights. In response to his plea--offered while the Evangelicals remained in captivity-- the state government called an emergency meeting of congressional, judicial, and executive personnel, Salazar and family members of the detainees, as well as town government officials, to discuss a

solution to the case. In blatant disregard of the law, the town president refused to abandon his position and free the detainees. His refusal demonstrates how much power local authorities in Mexico can have regarding social issues. He argued that he would keep them in jail for "violating religious traditions." In the end, the state government was unable to persuade the town president and the Congress did not bring charges. [Governor Absalon Castellano Dominguez did eventually meet with Evangelicals leaders, but he waited two years to do so. He has since tried to defuse tensions in the area.]

Returning to the town after the Evangelicals had been held for three days, Salazar was able to secure their release only after signing a statement that required the detainees to "cooperate" with the "religious traditions" of the town, abandon their Evangelical faith, and promise to participate in the town's religious festivals of drinking and veneration of the saints. A spokesman for the group, Miguel Ortiz, stated: "They want us to glorify the saints. We are prepared to do whatever the president [of the town] says except take orders to pay for or participate in religious festivals." Initially, the detainees said they would rather die than agree to the statement, but Salazar convinced them to agree since the document had no legal force. At the time, he feared for their lives. When Salazar signed and the detainees were released, Ortiz says the town president warned them: "Either forget your

faith or get out [of town]. If you sing hymns, we'll kill you. We will destroy your temple." One week later, the indigenous Christians left the town and joined a community in another village that had faced similar persecution earlier (ODNS, 6-11-87; 8-10-87).

According to News Network International [NNI is another news organization which reports on missionary activities], one year later, some of these Evangelicals came back to their town of San Miguel Mitontic, but the local governmental officials and the town's Indian leaders responded again with expulsions, beatings and arrests. Some were jailed and fined a sum equivalent to several month's wages to pay "the costs for the previous year's expulsion." The Evangelicals appealed for help to the new governor, Patricio Gonzalez Garrido, a notorious opponent of the radical leftist Catholic archbishop of Chiapas. These events were reported by an Evangelical, Emilio Perez, who was the subject of a death threat issued by the mayor; as it happens, the men are cousins (NNI, 9-8-89). In July of 1987, Governor Gonzalez allegedly told NNI that he intended to implement legislation to secure the rights of Evangelicals, the centerpiece of which would be a law to deny immunity from prosecution for those elected officials accused of not securing freedom of conscience and those accused of promoting violence against Evangelicals. Gonzalez reportedly made this statement during his gubernatorial campaign, but upon becoming governor he did not introduce the legislation

and denied he had made such a statement, allowing only that the expulsion problem in Mitontic had been resolved (NNI, 2-15-90).

Such incidents have occurred for approximately the last 25 years against Protestants of many denominations, according to attorney Salazar, and numerous complaints have been lodged but to no avail. According to an NNI report, to date, over 7000 persons have been expelled from their communities in Chiapas. Referring to the Chiapas Governor's refusal to act, Salazar stated: "[U]nless the case is resolved through the legal process, officials responsible for ordering the exile of believers will have no motivation to discontinue the practice in the future when it is deemed that there are 'too many evangelicals' among them" (NNI, 9-8-89; 2-15-90). Ortiz, the expelled group's spokesman, comments on the situation: "The government of Chiapas will not pursue the case because according to them, the municipal president is in charge and he represents the majority." It may be that religious freedom is a secondary issue for some of the persecutors. Some Evangelicals have speculated that the local authorities persecute them for financial reasons. Since Evangelical beliefs began to spread through the region about 25 years ago, local distillers have suffered great financial losses due to declining demand for alcoholic beverages. Over the years the local "caciques," or landowning bosses, have waged the expulsion campaign to get rid of the disincentive to drink.

They have tried to legitimize their actions by turning a dispute over economics and political control into a dispute over religion and culture (NNI, 9-8-89).

Other incidents reported by NNI have been particularly outrageous. In 1989 in the town of San Miguel Aloapan, Oaxaca, a ten-year-old boy was killed while defending his father from a violent attack by villagers. The child and his family belonged to a Methodist congregation which local Zapotec Indians had been trying to expel from the community. In addition, a pregnant woman who also belonged to the congregation was beaten, causing her to miscarry. Five other women were reportedly raped when they tried to secure the release of their husbands who had been detained. Clemente Cruz, a spokesman for the Methodists, claims that the attacks by the local authorities are in part a response to Evangelicals' criticism of the municipal president's handling of communal property. At a meeting of the Fellowship of Mexican Evangelicals in Cuernavaca, Cruz told his colleagues that the local administration may have been embezzling from the community-owned lumber business while at the same time denying Evangelicals access to markets (NNI, 10-12-89).

About 20 families abandoned San Miguel Aloapan and sought refuge in the capital of Oaxaca. Some of those who remained filed charges against the local authorities which resulted in the arrest of two tribal leaders. However, those Evangelicals who brought the charges have had to mortgage their homes to

pay legal fees charged by local attorneys handling their cases. Methodist officials in the state capital planned at the time of this report to seek a meeting with the President of the Republic, Carlos Salinas (NNI, 10-12-89).

Later that year, also in Oaxaca state, a Church of the Nazarene congregation reported that it was not allowed by Catholic zealots of the town of Yolotepec to give a Christian burial to one of their congregants. Cemetery officials told church members that they would not be allowed to bury the woman in the city cemetery because "her beliefs were 'different' than theirs [the Catholics]" since they were stewards in the local Catholic Church. However, the events that followed make this incident a bit different from the ones related in the foregoing.

Certain city authorities ordered the cemetery workers to bury the body, but the workers refused and one was jailed. The following day, the woman's relatives decided to bury her anyway, but on the way to the gravesite they were attacked by a mob of about 60 villagers who shouted threats and threw stones at the casket. During this attack, the local Catholic priest was reported to have declared over a bullhorn that "everyone in Yolotepec must accept the Catholic religion." The Pastor of the Nazarene Church reportedly told the crowd that they were violating Mexican laws regarding religious freedom. Some in the crowd responded with "Here the law does not apply."

This NNI article goes on to report that 1989 was one of the most violent years for Evangelicals. Several persons were killed and churches destroyed, along with numerous injuries and expulsions. At least thirty Pentecostal churches have been closed in the state of Hidalgo alone because parishioners fear violence. (NNI, 12-13-89).

Until 1990, most of the violence reported by Evangelicals and secular press organizations was allegedly perpetrated in rural areas by local Indian authorities ostensibly defending their Catholic folkways and communal traditions. In 1990, reports of violent incidents continued to reach the press, but now there were at least two incidents reported to have occurred close to the national capital. The people involved were not rural folk, but the characteristic of strong local leadership committed to preserving Catholicism still applies.

NNI reports that in a community near Mexico City on January 15, 1990, two members of an Independent Pentecostal Church were beaten and four others were arrested and held for three days by a mob of angry villagers. The villagers accused them of stealing images of the saints from a local Catholic Church. Local municipal officials reportedly refused to intervene in the case even though the mob's actions clearly were illegal. However, the authorities in the neighboring town where the Pentecostal church is located succeeded in gaining the release of the prisoners. A Presbyterian pastor from this town reported that the Evangelicals were told that

from now on they were obligated to participate in the town's Catholic festivals. (NNI, 2-15-90). With this incident, it appears that the "rural" variable is not the necessary ingredient for violence, but rather the presence of municipal leaders who seek to keep nonCatholics from practicing nonCatholic religion.

Perhaps the most serious attack to date is one reported by NNI that occurred in greater Mexico City and involved a well- known Mexican evangelist based in the capital (NNI, 2-15-90). In February of 1990 about 160 Evangelicals met for an interdenominational prayer meeting in a small village within the bounds of the capital. At midnight a huge mob wielding machetes and sticks and throwing stones broke up the meeting. The mob, made up of local Catholics, had been gathered at about 10:00 PM by the ringing of Catholic church bells signaling an emergency. Loud- speakers warned the villagers that squatters were coming to steal their land and that they should be driven out immediately. Evangelicals not attending the prayer meeting report that they promptly told Catholic officials that their fellow congregants were simply worshiping and would leave in the morning. A few of those Catholics gathered by the bell ringing went home peacefully, but others told the Evangelicals that they could not stay any longer. These Catholics joined with others from the nearby staunchly Catholic town of Magdalena where a religious

festival had just been concluded. These celebrants were eager to join in driving out the "invaders."

The Evangelicals were in the midst of singing a hymn when the leader of the mob ordered them to leave. Juan Isais, then vice president of CONAMEX [an association of Mexican Evangelicals], was leading the meeting and reports that he was told by the mob leader: "We are believers in Jesus Christ, we belong to the Virgin of Guadalupe, and we do not want you here. Get out before we kill you; we are the authority here." The Evangelicals began to flee down a hillside under a "hail of stones" as a crowd they estimated to be about 10,000 pursued them shouting "Kill them!" and "This is a Catholic town."

One Evangelical doctor reported that she was chased by a group of men riding in a truck. One of them struck her with a machete before she was able to seek refuge in a house. Eventually, police were able to rescue her. Juan Isais said he was beaten and struck by a stone, but was finally rescued by police. Many others suffered injuries.

The Evangelicals gave credit to the Mexican police for saving them from death. They note that ten squad cars arrived on the scene quickly, followed by seven ambulances. The police were clearly outnumbered and had risked their own lives. Because of the size and agitated state of the mob, the police were left with no option but to drive alongside the fleeing Evangelicals in an attempt to shield them from their

pursuers, stopping only to pick up the more seriously wounded. NNI cited a press report in a Mexico City daily which stated that the group was chased over a distance of three miles as the police urged them on with "Keep running, keep running for your lives!" [According to NNI, an indication of some of the press bias with which Evangelicals have had to contend is the fact that some of the other Mexico City dailies reported several versions of the story: that the Evangelicals were drug trafficking Satanists; that they had attacked the Catholics first; and that they had interrupted a Catholic procession. Other reports were more accurate, according to NNI, and one radio commentator expressed regret that such a "barbaric act" had taken place within the capital city's limits.] Some Evangelical observers have commented that expectations regarding the Pope's upcoming visit in May of 1990 had stirred up many Catholics, especially priests and local Catholic festival officials, against the Protestant denominations and may be responsible in part for the Mexico City attack.[8]

There is yet one other more recent incident of violence--reported by an Evangelical press--which may represent an omen for the future, a future of escalating violence as the attacked become the attackers. In the summer of 1992 about 46

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[8]A June 7, 1990 issue of the Latin American Weekly Report reports that during his 1990 visit to Mexico, Pope John Paul II "warned the faithful against the appeal of the 'sects'--a Roman Catholic catchword often applied so ambiguously as to embrace mainstream Protestant churches as well as the smaller and newer [Evangelical] groups, and even at times to include such organizations as the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses."

Evangelical Indians refused to take part in local tribal festivals in their Chiapas village. They were arrested by the municipal authorities. The following day, a group of Evangelicals, apparently not directed by their leaders, kidnaped three tribal leaders in response to the arrests. As the violence spiraled out of control, tribal forces attacked the Evangelical community and about 100 of the Evangelicals were injured (Moody Monthly, June 1992, p. 62).[9]

Other instances of violence in Mexico City worth noting are the several bombings of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. This organization is a part of Wycliffe Bible Translators which has ties to Mexico as far back as the 1930s when President Lazaro Cardenas favored some of its activities among Mexican indigenous communities. It is not known who was responsible, but the message was clear to Evangelicals that their presence was considered unwelcome by some bold elements of Mexican society.[10]

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[9]The Journal of Church and State (Vol. 33, #4, Autumn 1991, p. 838) also reports incidents worth noting: in Puebla in April and May of 1991 several Evangelicals were imprisoned illegally; violence also occurred against Evangelicals in Mexico state, Tamaulipas, and Oaxaca; in one such incident the local authorities threatened to close down an "unregistered" Pentecostal church in response to the violence.

[10]This information comes from a paper presented by William D. Taylor to the World Evangelism Fellowship's "Latin America Today" seminar held May 9-11, 1988 in Wheaton, Illinois (p. 13). The Summer Institute has long been accused of using its educational and linguistic work as a front for anticommunist efforts; it has also been accused of being an arm of the C.I.A.. However, its founder in Mexico enjoyed the friendship and support of the revolutionary and leftist President Lazaro Cardenas (father of Cuauhtemoc Cardenas) because of the

Whether these incidents occurred exactly as reported is a matter for debate since most of the information sources arguably are suspect as to bias. [At the very least we can draw a definite conclusion that the Church has been critical and that some amount of violence has occurred based upon the more objective reports of secular press organizations.] But we should be able to conclude from the discussion above that leading Evangelicals believe that the incidence of violence is on the increase; more fundamentally, they believe that because of their religion they are being persecuted with harsh public criticism and violent physical attacks on the part of the Church and local officials, respectively. Consequently, it is perhaps easy to understand why Mexican Evangelicals--in the author's interviews--have supported this chapter's thesis by expressing to this author their fears of manifesting "too public" a presence in Mexican society. They have affirmed that circumstances are such that to do so sometimes provokes a societal reaction which is simply too high a price to pay.

Mexican News Media Bias as a Societal Constraint

The criticism made by the Church and the physical persecution perpetrated by local governmental authorities--whatever the exact level--attest to the difficult societal circumstances under which Mexican Evangelicals have to operate or believe

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Institute's literacy work. (For more information on their relationship and the Institute, see Scott 1991).

they have to operate. But societal constraints on Evangelicals involve not only the Church and militant local governments; certain members of the Mexican press [which generally tends to be liberal] have also lashed out at what they perceive to be a "U.S. foreign plot" at work in Mexican Evangelicalism. At times, they sound a bit like the Catholic critics of Evangelicalism. [One example was given above regarding the various reports on the attack on Rev. Isais in Mexico City.] Although this discussion of media bias is not supported by a great number of reports, it is nevertheless a significant topic because Evangelical leaders perceive this bias to be detrimental to their cause.

One noteworthy incident involves the use of radio for religious purposes. ODNS reports that in April of 1987 a Mexican newspaper reporter severely criticized "Mexico City's sole Christian radio program," a weekly broadcast called "Prisma." The program is sponsored by a consortium of evangelical denominations who have apparently obeyed the above-described legislation very carefully because the authorities have not taken them off the air. Nevertheless, Jaime Manzano, a reporter for Punto, while admitting that the program did not openly proselytize, complained that it was "a mouthpiece for promoting information about 'indoctrination campaigns' and news about meetings with public officials." Apparently he was referring to and an Evangelical celebration of the Mexican Bible Society's anniversary; this celebration

included a parade that began at the Benito Juarez monument. [Juarez is regarded by Evangelicals as a hero because of his authorship of Mexico's religious liberty laws and his friendliness toward them during the Reform period.] The reporter objected to Evangelicals linking their activities to the "national heroes and symbols." He stated further: "Through this [activity] we may find out the ramifications of these churches, their penetration on the international level and the strategies they use to influence people." We might speculate that he was alluding to an alleged connection between Mexican Evangelicals and U.S. cultural imperialism (ODNS, 11 June 1987, pp. 9-10).

NNI reports another incident of press bias which occurred one year after the Punto incident. The leading Mexico City newspaper, Excelsior, published a May 25 editorial titled "Religious Sects Gaining Ground" which claimed that the "sects" use "economic power" to gain followers from among the poor who would normally be Catholic were it not for a shortage of priests. The editorial claimed: "The Protestant sects, [generally] coming from the country to the north of us, take strength from their economic power to conquer an ever greater number of followers....In places where there are still great sectors of indigenous people, such as [the states of] Chiapas, Guerrero, [and] Oaxaca, [their] goals are to break down, erase, the national identity." The newspaper did ask Evangelical churches for a response, and NNI reports that some

Evangelical leaders countered the reporter's charges by arguing that their growth is not at all due to U.S. contributions of any kind since, they argued, such gifts are almost non- existent. They added that one of their goals is teaching literacy whereby they are making better citizens of all Mexicans, presumably a universally esteemed goal (NNI, 7-14-88, p. 4).[11]

These examples of press bias, despite the fact that some of them are reported by the Evangelical press, combine with the Church's criticism and the violence of local militants to act as disincentives to Evangelical involvement in society. Natives of Mexico City are particularly avid readers of newspapers--there are scores of dailies and weeklies published in the capital. One might argue that it is natural for Evangelicals to adopt a "siege" mentality and withdraw a bit

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[11]A similar story appeared in the May 13, 1985, edition of Excelsior which was reported from the state of Chihuahua. In this news article, entitled "Protestants de EU Penetran Culturas Indigenas" ("U.S. Protestants Infiltrate the Indigenous Cultures"), the writer reported that the local Catholic diocese was denouncing Protestants and their U.S. supporters for manipulating the Indians living in the mountains of Chihuahua. A local priest charged that U.S. "hegemony" was evident in the workings of the Institute on Religion and Democracy (I.R.D.), an "ultra conservative and ultra rightist" group whose philosophy is in line with Ronald Reagan. [The author would point out here that the U.S.-based I.R.D. is made up mostly of theological and political conservatives, many of whom are Presbyterians and other mainline denominations. It is inaccurate to characterize it as an arm of the U.S. policy, thought it did support much of President Reagan's Latin American policy; nor is it accurate to characterize it as "ultra conservative" and "ultra rightist" since these terms--especially the latter--invoke notions of fascism.]

from public scrutiny when the very popular secular press criticizes them and accuses them of being the agents of a foreign plot. Again, Mexican Evangelicals have expressed to this author their dismay at these circumstances.

Conclusion

Because of the limited availability and possible inherent bias of the information available on this subject, it is difficult to determine if violence is escalating or simply remaining steady since modern Evangelicalism was introduced into Mexico in the 1960s. Clearly the Evangelical press reporters and commentators believe it is escalating, as they assert in several of the articles cited above. The secular press, both in Mexico and the United States, has covered some of these incidents, with at least one report in The Baltimore Sun noting several incidents and speculating about an increase in violence due to Evangelical successes in converting many in the Indian communities. It should be noted, also, that at least one observer in academia, David Stoll, has discussed some of these incidents of persecution in his work Is Latin America Turning Protestant? (1990). Whether or not the violent incidents--and for that matter the alleged biased reporting of the Mexican press--are actually increasing in number, we can attempt to explain the reasons for the violence and criticisms.

First, the local authorities, most often Indian leaders, appear to be persecuting nonCatholic individuals because the former fear a reduction in community cohesiveness due to a breakdown in adherence to traditional moorings. As anthropological studies of indigenous communities the world over have shown, folkways and religious customs are generally regarded as the glue that keeps these communities together; those who express dissidence often come under severe social pressure to conform, with the ultimate solution sometimes including violence and expulsion from the community.

The second possible reason for the violence and harsh criticism is the opposition to Evangelicalism on the part of certain members of the Catholic Church hierarchy. These officials have taken their stand with the local community leaders against nonCatholic religious activity. Members of the hierarchy have publicly criticized Evangelicals and their efforts at proselytizing which have been more successful in the last several years; and according to Evangelical press reports, priests have encouraged mob activity against the offenders. The Church, while itself restricted from much societal involvement by the Constitution and historical anticlericalism, nevertheless in some locations has been able to make life very difficult for these modern day Mexican "dissenters." Perhaps the amount of violence and criticism have increased and will continue to increase as the government continues to allow more religious freedom and the competing

religious groups vie for converts. [The latter section of this study will deal with the most recent evidence of the struggle among religious groups for converts, social position and political recognition.] In any event, the incidents may be relatively few and localized--occurring mostly in a few southern rural states and the national capital--but the potential for escalation and expansion exists as the relationship between religion and the state is transformed.

Perhaps one can speculate as to a third reason the violence and criticism have gone largely unchecked and may be increasing: the refusal of state and federal authorities to enforce the federal Constitution and check the power of municipal officials and the Catholic Church where the latter holds considerable sway over a population. I will discuss later in this study the thoughts and activities of some Mexican Evangelicals regarding the solution to these problems.

CHAPTER SIX

"Come out from among them, and be ye separate," or How not to love the world: Doctrine and Theology as Constraints

The previous chapters discussed various constraints on Evangelical political activity in Mexico that are external in origin and nature; that is, Evangelicals have been constrained from political participation in part by forces other than those within their own community. Evangelicals' own experiences with the government, the history of (Catholic) Church-state relations, and the societal pressures militating against Evangelical involvement have all served to create an atmosphere that does not invite the political participation of religion-based activist groups. While it was demonstrated that most Latin American states share similar histories with Mexico, it also was shown that many states stand in marked contrast to Mexico where Evangelical political activity is concerned; in some of these states both the Catholic Church and Protestants assume prominent roles in politics and society. This chapter will be a discussion of yet another constraint, but this is an internal one: the theological and doctrinal beliefs of Evangelical leaders and groups which discourage political activism. In particular, it will be shown that--on the whole--modern Evangelicals in Mexico (at least until the late 1980s) not only have been discouraged

from activism by their social environment, but they also have been discouraged by their personal beliefs and the teachings of their leaders.

To be specific, the Evangelical doctrinal views discussed in this chapter, as they relate to political and social involvement, are those which are articulated by church leaders and which are based upon scriptural teachings. In this matter, as with any aspect of theological debate, there are differing opinions and points of view since individuals differ in their interpretations of scripture. The doctrinal views that result from such theological differences often contrast markedly, and these differences are present in the United States and elsewhere, including Latin America. When individuals, especially church leaders, interpret scripture as advocating social and political involvement, one may expect Evangelicals to be more active in politics; when such interpretations are not present or not dominant among church groups, one may expect Evangelicals to remain withdrawn from society and politics. In Latin America, we find leaders articulating one or the other of the doctrinal positions, and so we find some Evangelicals participating in politics while others are withdrawn.

To begin, I will examine the various doctrinal positions in Latin America generally. Next, a focus on Mexico is in order to show that several doctrinal positions have been and are presently articulated; in fact, a discussion of several

significant events in Mexican history reveal the working out of various doctrinal positions. Finally, I will contrast Mexico with Guatemala to show what views have tended to dominate among specific groups, and which of these views dominate currently. Throughout this discussion, my focus is on the Evangelical leadership because they articulate the doctrinal views to church members. Leadership preferences and views appear to be the key factor in determining the likelihood of Evangelical political involvement.

The data for this chapter include not only the analyses of other scholars, and various interviews, conducted by the author with Mexican Evangelical leaders who are politically active and striving to get their fellow believers involved in the politics of their nations. They report that their task is not easy given the history of "apolitical" doctrinal views in Mexico.

Various Doctrinal Positions in Latin America

It is important to note at the outset, as do Scott and other researchers of this subject, that the political apathy to be found among Mexican Evangelicals has its roots in the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the early 20th century. Many of Mexico's pastors were trained in the fundamentalist seminaries of the United States, and many Mexican citizens were converted to Protestantism over the years by U.S.-based fundamentalist missionaries. The theology

and politics of these seminaries and missionaries tended to be conservative; i.e., politics was not the proper sphere for Christians, the authorities were not to be challenged, and only the spiritual realm and the spread of the Gospel were to concern the Christian. Notes Scott: "Whereas evangelicals in the United States have recently entered the political arena with vigor (e.g. abortion, presidential elections, etc.), Mexican Protestants generally do not wield much political clout nor have demonstrated much interest in political affairs." (Scott, 65, footnote 79).

David Stoll, who undertook a comprehensive study of the region's Evangelicals in Is Latin American Turning Protestant?, agrees with Scott that to understand Latin American Evangelical politics, one must understand the debate over conservative and liberal theology (and how the conservative view dominates.) Although theological debate was rather muted for much of this century, it became heated in the late 1960s. The various groups eventually became polarized around their doctrinal positions. Those who advocate what Stoll calls the "status quo" believe they should turn their backs on the world; in reality they are supporting the status quo of the existing political and social situations. The "liberal" group, mostly "bourgeois reformers," seek change without violence or undue antagonism of the government. Their positions and actions are reminiscent of those Evangelicals who--mostly in spirit--supported the Mexican Revolution of

1910, the Cuban Revolution against Spain, and the Guatamalan political turmoil of 1954. The last category, the "revolutionary" group, are the active supporters of leftist revolutionaries battling the region's dictatorships. Stoll and David Martin have noted several instances of Latin American Evangelical activism-- including Mexicans--on behalf of leftist causes: e.g., striking against landowners (Martin, 104), and supporting Socialist and other leftist political parties (for example, see Martin, 96-97, 260-261; Scott, 52, 301). Over the last twenty years the confrontation has been mostly between the "small progressive and radical camp" of both reformers and revolutionaries, and the "reactionary or conformist" group.

A significant flashpoint came when the conservatives reacted against the introduction into Latin America of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and its regional affiliate, Church and Society in Latin America (ISAL) in the 1960s. The theologians of this group seek social revolution to change the miserable living conditions, believing that nothing else can ameliorate these terrible conditions of the region's poor. Stoll says that these Protestants are effectively the "first liberation theologians in Latin America." As might be expected, conservatives reacted against the revolutionary goals and rhetoric of ISAL: they objected also to the support given to leftist revolutionaries. Conservatives considered the theology and actions of the WCC and ISAL to be a

perversion of Christianity, one that makes the faith into a political instrument. Conservatives responded by creating associations of their own and sponsoring the First Conference on Evangelism in Latin America (CLADE I) in conjunction with the Rev. Billy Graham and the U.S.-based National Association of Evangelicals. At this meeting, "soul-winning" was emphasized, not social action. Ironically, several Latin American ministers--not leftists by any means--pushed for a recognition of the appropriateness of social action, apparently in response to the "paternalism" of the U.S. Evangelicals. The Latin Americans wanted their meeting to be "distinctively Latin American" and "distinctively evangelical."

Those who advocate this "middle way" with equal emphasis on social action formed the Latin American Theological Fraternity to "pursue social issues without abandoning evangelism, deal with oppressive structures without endorsing violence, and bring left- and right-wing Protestants back together again" (Stoll, 131). It is important to lay out the Fraternity's positions in some detail, and compare them with the views of the conservatives, for Stoll argues that it is this disagreement that for many has led to an Evangelical withdrawal from politics over the last thirty years. It is rather obvious why conservatives would oppose the goals of revolutionaries who advocate violence, but the conservatives

appear to stand in opposition to the Fraternity's goals and views almost as strongly as they do the revolutionaries.

Some of the Fraternity's views are as follows:

**they are in agreement with liberation theology at least in the belief that sin exists in political and social structures as well as in individuals;

**there is no scriptural dichotomy between evangelism and social work;

**one's reading of the Bible is shaped by history and culture;

**a Christian cannot be "above politics" because biblical values are meant to be implemented by the Christian currently in all of life;

**the "otherworldly position" of North American fundamentalists is to be rejected;

**finally, the "liberation" paradigm of liberation theology, which subordinates the gospel to Marxist theory is to be rejected and replaced with the concept of "contextualization" (reading the Bible in light of ones's own culture).

This third way found favor among some Evangelicals in Latin America, even among some in the United States, but not among the conservative Latin American leaders. This conservative reaction was underscored in 1978 when the ecumenical Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI, a WCC affiliate) was formed to support views similar to those of the Fraternity.

However, conservatives responded by forming the Latin American Evangelical Confederation (CONELA), believing that the CLAI, while purporting to emphasize evangelism, would be too leftist, too political, and simply a front for the WCC and its ecumenical and leftist views (Stoll, 131-133). A review of CONELA's views is in order since this association is fairly representative of conservative Evangelical views, and a conservative view has been the Evangelical majority view. [1]

CONELA's views generally are that politics is to be avoided because the "kingdom of God"--which Christians are to seek according to Jesus' command--is not "food and drink." That is, concern over earthly matters wrongly takes one's focus off the things of God and the daily practice of Christian life. CONELA was designed to combat the "leftist ideologies...penetrating the church." It proclaimed that the churches should not "become involved in struggles for political power, and that Christians should render unto Caesar what is Caesar's." Stoll says that CONELA claims some twenty million members, but he contends that although the group is quite large, this number is probably exaggerated, if for no other reason than the fact that Evangelical churches are

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[1]A reading of Martin, Stoll, and Scott tends to encourage the understanding that political and theological conservatives are in the majority in most of Latin America, whether urban or rural; it is when more liberal leaders and groups began to assert "liberationist" and social responsibility views that the conservative majority began to react. They denounced such doctrinal positions and formally articulated their own; CONELA is an appropriate representative of this view.

notoriously fractious and "non-joiners." His assessment of the organization is that it is "conformist toward political authority" thereby making it a de facto supporter of the status quo (Stoll, 133-34).[2]

In his analysis of Evangelical politics, David Martin states that most of the current discussion on the matter is made by academics and theologians who criticize conservative believers for taking an apolitical stance, for not being concerned about "liberation" and "cultural colonialism." The critics charge the Evangelicals with not addressing "their real problems or help[ing] to create the solidarities" necessary for solving political problems (233).

What Stoll and Scott have found regarding Evangelicals in general, Martin has found regarding Pentecostals in particular: for most of them, their doctrinal views cause them to withdraw from society. Martin concentrates mostly on this denomination since they are the largest and fastest growing of the Protestants, due to their message, their indigenous character, and their emphasis on the supernatural.[3] Pentecostalism divides the church from the "world," and "fosters a contempt for the world that includes the political

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[2].In support of this conclusion about CONELA and conservative Evangelicals in general, Stoll discusses their ties to the Religious Right in Latin America and U.S. government and private support. See Scott, Chapter Six.

[3]He does point out that Pentecostals have been involved in some political action, and sometimes on the left: the group's doctrine does not necessarily dictate apoliticism, although for most it seems to (235-236).

struggle in which the world is so constantly engaged." This is a "principled" and carefully decided choice, and it is "based on transcendental foundations" (234).

Martin reveals the perils the liberal minority church groups are enduring: as the mainline and radical leftist denominations become more modern, interact more with the world, and blur the line between church and state, they have also lost their effectiveness with the poor. In contrast, the conservative Pentecostals--who in the liberal's mind are unsophisticated and unaware of the "social structural problems" and causes of poverty--have been hugely successful in converting the poor and meeting many of their basic needs.

He states that in general, the Pentecostals are apolitical, suspicious of the world of politics and especially its corrupt processes. However, "[o]n occasion the Pentecostal churches offer some legitimacy to the national security state in return for recognition, and the temptation to do this is specially strong in the pastorate." [In particular, we should note that Mexican Evangelicals have acted no differently on the whole.] Pentecostals exhibit a strong respect for authorities, even in Nicaragua and Cuba where leftists have been in power. As noted, some Pentecostals have taken a political stand, usually on a local level in direct response to an attack on their interests. For the most part, these actions of the minority were liberal in nature, based simply upon anti-Catholic sentiments--rejecting

the "Catholic" and "communitarian" culture (1850-1950); thereafter, they were mostly conservative actions in support of national security regimes.

Doctrinal Views Among Mexican Evangelicals

Some of the most recent scholarship on Mexican Evangelicals and their societal and political involvement is Luis Scott's Salt of the Earth: A Socio-Political History of Mexico City Evangelical Protestants (1964-1991).[4] Scott, originally from the United States, is a seminary professor in Mexico City and has lived there for several years. He belongs to the Latin American Theological Fraternity, an association that resides on the ideological and theological spectrums somewhere between "fundamentalist" and "conservative" on the one hand, and "liberal" on the other. Although his theology is rather conservative (in terms of the Divine inspiration of the Bible and the redemption of man solely through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection), he can be described as an ecumenicist regarding matters of social concern. His research--based upon a review of the literature on the subject and over 100 interviews--provides a valuable analysis for students of Mexican religion and politics and is the first in

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[4]Scott was a great help to me in the preparation of this dissertation. He is extremely well-connected with all sectors of Mexico's Evangelical community. Salt of the Earth was originally his Ph.D. dissertation at Northwest University; subsequently, it was published by the Mexican Evangelical publishing house, CUPSA, in 1991.

depth look at the social and political thought and action of contemporary Mexican Evangelicals; moreover and most importantly, he provides a survey of the voting behavior of Mexico City Evangelicals in 1988. I will use his research to build the case that the predominate doctrinal view in Mexico is and has been one that discourages political involvement. In particular, he addresses premillenial dispensationalism, a theological and doctrinal position that often is combined with more theologically fundamentalist and politically conservative views.

In the introduction to his book, Scott expresses his belief that as the PRI became more conservative over the period from 1929 to the present, so did Protestants as reflected in their voting habits and the statements of their leaders. He confirms much of the argument in the previous chapters of my study, for instance that external forces such as the anticlerical legislation and government takeover of education constrained Evangelical political activity by sending them (and the Catholic Church) a message to remain on the fringes of society. In sum, Scott asks and answers an important question: Does Evangelicals' traditionally conservative theology (fundamentalist) produce an "apolitical" or "conservative political posture," and cause them to be

defenders of the political status quo? He responds in the affirmative.[5]

Having established the general theological and doctrinal debate over the Evangelical role in politics we turn now to a detailed discussion of the three Mexican denominations treated in Scott's study. Scott's research examines three of the largest denominations in Mexico and their action or inaction regarding three crucial socio-political events. The denominations are the National Baptist Convention, the National Presbyterian Church, and the Church of God in the Mexican Republic. These churches are comparable in size, have many churches in Mexico City and throughout the nation, and have been around for many years; the first two are considered more mainline, while the latter is a Pentecostal church. The events under scrutiny are the 1968 student movement which resulted in the "Tlatelolco Massacre" where the government cracked down on several thousand student and leftist demonstrators, killing hundreds; the 1985 earthquakes in Mexico City; and the 1988 national elections. The research reveals that with regard to these events, although a minority of liberal Evangelicals did become politically or socially involved--that is, they stepped outside of the spiritual realm and acted in the political and social spheres on important issues--most Evangelicals did not, maintaining a reclusive and

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[5]Socio-economic factors may also be present, but they are not under scrutiny here; see Scott, Stoll, and Martin for more information on this subject.

apolitical posture (11-13).[6] Most members of these denominations not only desire to be kept from the "evil one," but also they have sought to remain out of the world. Below, I will use Scott's study to show how these churches and their leaders have articulated a conservative doctrinal position, demonstrated by their reactions to important events.

The National Presbyterian Church

This denomination is one of the oldest in Mexico, tracing its roots to before the 1910 Revolution. Many of its pastors and members supported the struggle against the Dictator Diaz vocally and militarily. But the church suffered a heavy blow with the 1917 Constitution that forced it to close its schools, and the internal struggle between fundamentalists and modernists also took its toll. The church did manage to salvage some political favor by strongly supporting the Calles regime in the 1920s and its anticlerical war against militant Catholics, the Cristero Rebellion. The church also enjoyed a good relationship with and favors from leftist and nationalist President Lazaro Cardenas. His concern for the rural poor fit well with the concerns of the many rural Presbyterian congregations. Some Presbyterian leaders saw him as "a tool in God's hands." Another president, Adolfo Lopez Mateos, was

[6]An apolitical posture is defined by Scott to be in reality a political one since it tends to be supportive of the status quo, a contention I do not necessarily share.

married to a Presbyterian, further boosting the church's image in the eyes of the government (53-58).

In the 1960s, some Presbyterians were rather heavily involved in social ministry, moreso than any other Protestant denomination. One church leader, Jose Hernandez J., wrote in an Evangelical magazine:

> ...the Christian believer...cannot isolate himself from civic life, neither do his convictions permit him to be indifferent to the struggles for social and political progress in his country.... [W]e are not commenting about a sympathetic sentiment of the Christian toward the social struggles for freedom of people, but rather we are speaking about the participation of the believer in those struggles.

However, one should not get the impression that Hernandez called for any political action that would upset the status quo; he went on to say that "Evangelical institutions are patriotic and give their support to progressive governments. ...a good evangelical Christian is always a good citizen. To Caesar, that which belongs to Caesar."[7] In fact, the church offered rather uncritical praise for the state; Presbyterian participation in social and political life was never present when the PRI disapproved of such or when the PRI was the "oppressor" in the "struggle" (58, footnote 47). The rewards

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[7]Scott gives the reference for this quotation in footnote 45: "La Vida Civica del Creyente," El Faro, (September 1964), p. 4).

were freedom to be involved in education to a limited degree, the constitutional prohibition on such activity notwithstanding.

When the student movement swept Mexico in 1968, most Presbyterian leaders sided with the state, accepting its explanation that the students were not engaging in self-initiated protest against the authoritarianism of the Mexican system, but were instead pawns in the hands of outside communist and leftist agitators. The church officially refrained from criticizing the government's violent crackdown, counseled its youth not to be involved in social and political protest, and kept its eyes on the prize of the upcoming Olympic Games in the capital: the church, like other Protestant groups, hoped to engage in a massive evangelization campaign at the Games--with government permission--and so feared any social disturbance or reprisal for supporting the demonstrations (Scott, 74). One church did shelter some of the students who were fleeing the tanks and soldiers, but this was not official policy. Scott interviewed two former Presbyterian students who were active in the protests. They say they had been told by church leaders not to participate because "evangelicals do not participate in politics." These two, now as church youth leaders, continue to be active in Protestant ministries on campuses and to counsel political awareness (60-62).

This continued political awareness among some former students who are also church members is one result of the student movement, according to Scott. The movement itself was "a widespread political awakening among Mexican youth in general." It "shook up" the Protestant campus associations and ministries that had traditionally been theologically and politically conservative. By 1970, there was strong evidence that the student-church member leaders were continuing to act upon their newly found convictions, although not without controversy. In that year, the Department of Christian Education of the National Presbyterian Church convened a student congress in San Luis Potosi state. The constituents discussed economic, social and political problems facing Mexico, in addition to religious matters. They expressed shame for "indifference to all positive, revolutionary ferment." It was decided that they would from that day forward question church dogma and hierarchical structures to make them "more responsive to the needs of society." The political apathy of Mexican Evangelicals was to be reformed by permeation of society with "Christian principles of freedom, justice, mercy, and love." The students wanted the church leadership to help them to integrate their faith with the demands of university life, and this included a Christian response to socio-political issues: the church was called upon to provide relevant ministries for dealing with these needs. Interestingly, a more "Mexican style of Christianity" was

called for, rather than a continued reliance on a "U.S. style" [emphasis mine].

As might have been expected, the conclusions of this convention produced a strong and critical response from the hierarchy of the church. The national education director was fired for allowing the conference to sanction such debate, and church leaders criticized the young congregants' "involvement in political affairs" and reiterated their stance that student involvement in the events of 1968 was the result of a "confused and disoriented" minority who were "used by others." The rift this event caused increased the polarization between the conservative wing of the church and the reformers, and it reveals what Scott refers to as evidence that the official doctrinal position of church leaders was a doctrine of "compartmentalization": that is, religious life is separate from social or political matters. This approach allowed church leaders to justify their own lack of involvement, Scott believes. Other evidence of the strength of this doctrinal approach is the escalating rift throughout the 1970s between Mexican Presbyterian officials and those in the United States (and their counterparts in Mexico, most of whom were seminary professors) who were seen as too liberal and ecumenical. These liberal Presbyterians' support for armed revolution, liberation theology, and other liberal causes and positions made anxious the traditionally conservative Mexican church members. As the rifts widened, each sector continued to

defend its position, although one can see evidence of a slight shift to a less conservative stance on the part of some: some pastors did take courses in the social sciences to understand better societal problems, and the education authorities--later into the 1970s--did provide teaching materials that encouraged church members to use the Gospel to promote material as well as spiritual well-being and social harmony (63-68).[8]

The amount of data regarding the Presbyterian Church's response to the 1985 earthquakes in Mexico City is not great, but it is important to note that during this event Presbyterians of all stripes provided relief for the disaster-stricken. The event, according to Scott, boosted the social consciousness of church members generally and fostered more social work (69-71).

Perhaps the most significant event by which we can judge the political attitudes of modern Presbyterians is the 1988 elections. These elections were highly contested and considered fraudulent by many. The PRI's presidential candidate barely won a majority, as did its legislative slate, even according to the official PRI-controlled results. In short, these elections were a good example of what Evangelicals had always referred to as the "dirty business" of

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[8]While I would agree that some leaders may have used this doctrinal approach to justify apathy, we should caution against the appearance of cynicism by noting that many leaders probably truly believed that they were fulfilling their calling in remaining separate from social and political matters.

politics. Scott states that his interviews with over 70 Presbyterian pastors and laymen "reveal that the basic message (if any) proclaimed from the Presbyterian pulpits was that voting was a Christian duty." Apparently no Presbyterian pastor provided guidelines for voting behavior or political activity in general. A few of Scott's interviewees allowed that they believed pastors should have done so, but most of the people he talked with said that a church "should not attempt to shape its members' voting habits" because of doctrinal and legal restrictions. The interviews further revealed that most "agreed that social and economic factors were far more influential than evangelical beliefs in helping Presbyterians decide for whom to cast their ballots" (71-72).[9]

In addition to the legal and systemic constraints on political activity that Presbyterians have faced for several decades, Scott states that one must understand how important doctrinal views are: "Mexican Presbyterians have tended to see their relation to the government as being one of strict obedience." Romans 13:1-7 is understood by most of the

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[9]It is interesting to note that the historical affinity between the PRI and Presbyterians alluded to early in this discussion was strained mightily but not broken. The 1988 elections were held during an extremely trying economic conditions, so those at the lower end of the scale, even if they were Presbyterians, voted in large numbers for the leftist candidates. In footnote 112 on page 72, Scott cites the election analysis of Martin de la Rosa and Charles A. Reilly which reveals that Presbyterians split their votes among Cardenas (35.5%), Salinas of the PRI (33.3%) and abstention (25.4%). Nationally, only about five percent voted for the PAN which is an unacceptable party for most because of its ties to the Catholic Church.

leadership and many of the laity to require total obedience. One conservative pastor commented in 1990:

> According to the Bible, we see that the Lord Jesus Christ made a separation between the Church and the State. He said, 'my kingdom is not of this world,' and he did not dedicate his time to solving social or political problems. The Church has the task of multiplying in numbers and growing in the knowledge of the Lord, and that task is so large that the church does not have time to attend to political problems. (Scott, 75, footnote 118)[10]

Scott's interpretation of this comment and the doctrine that supports it is that the view is based on "a conservative dispensationalism" which teaches that the church--believers in general--should withdraw from political involvement and other worldly entanglements so as not to corrupt themselves. Evangelization is the only calling to be pursued while awaiting the return of the Lord. Attempts to reform the world are considered a waste of time and resources. Moreover, social work can be seen as an attempt to obtain "salvation by works" rather than solely by faith in Jesus Christ, as most Presbyterians interpret Scripture. A contrasting doctrinal view would be that of Reformed Theology (a la Niebuhr's Christ and Culture, 1951), which teaches that the lordship of Christ

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[10]This comment was made in a denominational journal, Gracia (May 1990, in an article entitled "What do the Evangelical Leaders Say?"[my translation].

extends to all areas of life, so believers should be active in all areas of society. Scott maintains that if Mexican Presbyterians held this view, they would be more socially responsible as they were prior to 1917 (74-76).

The National Baptist Convention of Mexico

The history of this denomination is similar to the Presbyterians in that Baptist pioneers, missionaries from the United States, had some valuable political connections during the late 19th century which allowed them to carry forward evangelization in a Catholic country ruled by a dictator. A government official even sat on the board of one denominational association. Although the Revolution of 1910 strained ties between the government and the church, a relationship remained between them whereby the church's hierarchy did not effectively challenge the state. The Baptists also suffered the strains of the split caused by theological liberalism, but by the time the split was healed, the majority of the convention had moved to a solid theologically conservative position augmented generally by a politically and socially conservative stance. Most Baptists were committed, like the Presbyterians, to conservative dispensationalism and the attendant teaching of noninvolvement "in the social and political activities of this world." Missionaries coming to Mexico (as "tent-makers") in the mid-20th century "were urged to abstain totally from

involvement in Mexican politics. Mexican pastors generally adopted the same position." One Baptist missionary wrote in a denominational publication that the gospel message "must be free from politics." In the piece he also defended the anticlerical laws of Mexico (Scott, 77-89).

The split between liberals and conservative erupted again, although with fewer numbers on the liberal side, in response to the 1968 student movement. Moreover, the student issue coincided with tensions between Mexicans affiliated with the more liberal American Baptist convention and those retaining ties to more conservative U.S. Baptist organizations. Most Mexican leaders and pastors discouraged their students from taking part (liberal pastors and seminary professors being in the minority), echoing the views of the Presbyterians as discussed above. A small number of Baptist students participated. The issue was not discussed from Baptist pulpits, most pastors taking their lead from the large and influential First Baptist Church in Mexico City.[11] The words of one pastor in 1968 sum up the view of the church's leadership: Alejandro Zamora "cautioned [his] students to be careful and wary of outside infiltrators who would use the student movement for their own purposes. There was concern

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[11]The author finds it interesting and ironic that this same church hosted a meeting of the newly-created political action group, the Foro, in May of 1992. The author attended this meeting. Such changes in what doctrine allows Baptists to do in Mexican society will be discussed in more detail in the second section of the dissertation.

that the students were being used as 'cannon fodder' by communist infiltrators" (Scott, 90-94). The student movement also caused division among those attending Baptist leadership conferences, as it did for Presbyterians. In 1969 a national congress of Baptist students met in the state of Puebla, wherein the organizers called for the denomination to emphasize "Christian approaches" to social problems. Again, reminiscent of the Presbyterian Church, the church leadership and most laity criticized this action; only a few participants continued their call for Baptist-based social ministry.[12] The letter of one Baptist pastor to a socially-concerned student in Mexico City, which appeared in the denominational magazine La Luz Bautista (January 1969) is indicative of the leadership's conservative position:

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[12]One of the liberal pastors who supported the Baptists students involved in the 1968 demonstrations, Rolando Gutierrez of Horeb Baptist Church, has somehow overcome suspicion since in 1990 he was overwhelmingly elected denominational president. Based upon this fact, Scott notes that it is interesting to ask whether he moderated his views to the center or whether the denomination is more open to a "socially-conscious" stance. Gutierrez has also, like some Presbyterians, encouraged pastors to take social science courses and establish ties with secular academia (96-98). Scott notes that the 1970s was a decade of increasing social and political awareness for the National Baptist Convention. This reflected the mood of the country--the youth especially who raised more questions about how they could integrate their faith with their responses to social problems. Both the state and the church found themselves the target of criticism (97-98). However, the dominant attitude was that of the conservatives, since most leaders and laity held to their traditional positions regarding the doctrine-based attitudes and activities.

> Mario, millions of youth have failed simply because when they could have used their complete intellectual resources, they used them in secondary issues or in things that they could have achieved later....Don't you think that they [the students] are fighting a battle that is not their own? The youths' battle should be in front of their open books. (Scott, 95-96)

Again like the Presbyterians, the Baptists were very much involved in providing relief services for earthquake victims in 1985. From these activities resulted some permanent social ministries and aid programs, many of which involved the active participation of the laity.

Concerning the 1988 elections, Baptists voted in large numbers--about 86% cast ballots--but not very enthusiastically. The vast majority of pastors gave no counsel from the pulpit. Says Scott:

> [Pastors] gave no orientation regarding the civic responsibilities of Christians. The idea of providing parishioners with criteria by which they could evaluate parties or candidates was totally alien to Mexican Baptist thought." (100-101)

Again, the dominant doctrinal stance was that Christians should "render to Caesar what is Caesar's" and not intertwine the ecclesiastical and politico-social spheres. Scott reports that he found only one pastor among the scores of Baptist leaders with whom he talked who had actually discussed the

elections with his parishioners. Most pastors told him that they believed the majority of Baptists voted for Carlos Salinas of the PRI because of "the traditional alliance between the PRI and the Evangelicals." Several pastors said they would rather go with a "known evil" than with an "unknown good." The PAN was clearly not an option because of its perceived ties to clerical influence, and some pastors agreed that Cardenas and the left were rejected because of ties to communism and the atheistic left. However, some pastors allowed that perhaps as many as one half of Baptists voted for Cardenas because of their position at the lower end of the socio-economic ladder.

The opinions of the leadership aside, Scott's survey of Mexico City Baptists found that only about 41.1% of them voted for the PRI. The considerable vote for Cardenas of lower class Baptists and members of the more liberal Baptist churches tended to drive the PRI's share downward. Interestingly, about 25% of upper class Baptists voted for PAN. (Only about 14% of upper class Presbyterians voted for PAN.) (Scott, 100-101).

Scott attempts to explain the reasons for the Baptist voting results. He notes that Baptists have been traditionally out of the mainstream, neither influencing culture nor being influenced by it. But an aberration occurred with the reactions to the student movement; it caused greater social awareness, as did a general anti-PRI sentiment

among Mexicans due to the strains of a bad economy during the 1980s. "Social, economic, and gender factors were very influential [in the 1988 election]. Precisely because most Baptist pastors tried to be apolitical, religious factors did not play a significant role." While socio-economic pressures played a key role in influencing voting behavior, doctrinal views created a vacuum for this influence because they diminished the influence that church leaders might have had; church leaders' silence left church members with no other source of counsel on social matters except the broader culture around them, and most of it was anti-PRI because of the economy. Other factors explaining how socio-economic pressures could be the dominant influence on Baptist voting behavior are: one, the traditional Baptist "congregationalism," which leaves pastors standing alone and somewhat timid about taking stands that might not be supported by their fellow pastors; and two, the influence of U.S.-based Southern Baptist missionaries who tend to be conservative and influence pastors to be apolitical or conservative in their approach to church-state issues (Scott, 101-104).[13]

The Church of God in the Mexican Republic

This Pentecostal denomination is one of the largest and most conservative in Mexico, and it represents Pentecostalism

[13] The more liberal American Baptist Convention left Mexico in 1971, so its influence is greatly diminished.

in general because of that strain's common roots. Like in other Latin American nations, Pentecostal denominations are the fastest growing, partly because of their indigenous nature--much of the movement was founded and spread by Latin Americans rather than foreign missionaries. Pentecostals generally tend to be the most separatist and withdrawn from society, and the most quiescent in the face of state power and authority. Additionally, the denomination is rather nationalist and authoritarian, being dominated by appointed bishops; Baptists are congregational and Presbyterians elect their elders (Scott, 105-108). Not only did the church's leaders see the 1968 student movement as influenced by outside agitators, and as something with which their youth should not be involved, they went further to say that it and the increasing societal turmoil of the 1960s were signs that Jesus Christ would soon return to earth. Therefore, human efforts to solve social problems would be an exercise in futility. In an article entitled "Youth: Christ Asks for Your Cooperation" (my translation) in the denominational magazine (El Camino a la Vida, Sept.-Oct. 1964), Amos Bustos T. said: "Neither of the two great, dominant ideologies, that is, neither Democracy nor Socialism have been able to solve the profound moral and spiritual problems that snare the youth of your days." This article was the closest the leadership came to discussing the issue officially: based upon his interviews, Scott says that most leaders ignored the student movement and did not provide

counsel for church members. While a few Church of God students did participate in demonstrations--some in leadership roles--most refrained. Former students who are also members of the denomination told Scott that many of the students' sympathies were with the demonstrators; they believed the protestors were justified in criticizing a corrupt and abusive government. Some have continued to be opponents of the PRI.

Without much encouragement from church leaders, many Church of God students engaged in massive evangelism campaigns in response to the turmoil their fellow students were undergoing. Older church members report that others of their youth--quite a number--became aloof from the church and ashamed of it for its apolitical and uninvolved social stance. These patriarchs blame the radicalism of the universities for spawning this sentiment. As in the case of other denominations, those outspoken students who joined the protests left the Church of God and began their own social ministries. Those current mid-level church leaders who gained a social consciousness during the movement but remained with the church take care not to offend the older, more powerful, and conservative bishops of the denomination (Scott, 108-11).

Again, like the other denominations, many in the Church of God--especially the youth--responded to the 1985 earthquakes with a massive relief effort. In addition, a pastoral alliance was formed to bring aid to the victims in the hardest-hit neighborhoods (Scott, 111-112).

Church of God pastors were no different from their counterparts at the Baptist and Presbyterian Churches when it came to offering counsel from the pulpit on how a Christian might determine his political views. They offered little comment on how or even whether to vote, instead maintaining their traditional apolitical stance. Church members interviewed after the election gave widely conflicting accounts of how they thought their fellow church members voted--overwhelmingly for the PRI and overwhelmingly for Cardenas. Scott notes an article in El Camino a la Vida (Oct.-Dec., 1988, p. 2), wherein Scott says that Pastor Jose Luis Monticellos "gave legitimacy to the PRI [on its official victory]." The pastor encouraged the faithful to pray for the PRI victor, Salinas, as it was their duty. He commented further on the PRI:

> In the case of the PRI we know that their ideology is good, because it is based primarily upon the Mexican Political Constitution, which was founded upon the Reform of Benito Juarez. And thanks to that Reform we have freedom of religion. The Catholic hierarchy, which has always coveted more power, has been restrained by this ideology. And we should pray that this ideology continue....As we already said, the PRI is a party with a correct ideology. (Scott, 113, footnote 39)

The apparent interpretation of this statement is that the PRI is the appropriate ticket for the denomination because it

has helped Protestantism by restraining the Catholic Church. [Significantly, this commentary was given after the election and hardly represents political activism, but rather acquiescence to an authoritarian state.] In fact, according to Scott's survey it appears that most Church of God members did vote for the PRI--64.3%--with about 28.6% voting for Cardenas (Scott, 112-115).

Scott provides an explanation for the church's lack of political activism and conservative posture. He notes that its organizational structure is very rigid, with each church being administered according to the "cacique" model, especially the rural ones where the authoritarian model originated. The "oligarchical" hierarchy is made up of a "strong episcopal chain of command, with several older men [now in their 60s and 70s] who make most major decisions." These appoint superintendents for each district, and these in turn appoint pastors which must be accepted by district congregations. These pastors hold great sway over their congregations. There is no democratic tradition as in some other Protestant denominations. Even such simple matters as food and what is considered appropriate dress are subject to pastoral decree: severe discipline results for violations. Strict uniformity is demanded of all denominational churches; hymnals, versions of the Bible, and Sunday School materials must all conform to the national leadership's directions.

Frequent denominational conferences and ministerial meetings help to enure the uniformity.

Because the denomination is so uniform and strictly controlled, the leadership's conservative dispensationalist doctrine dominates the thought of Church of God members. [This, even though most dispensationalists, especially in the United States, are critical of many Pentecostal practices and beliefs.] The eschatalogical beliefs are premillenial, and not surprisingly these encourage a withdrawal from the world: believers are simply to hold to their faith and wait to be raptured from the ever more sinful world. Any contact with the world is simply to "rescue" lost souls by sharing the gospel, not to reform society. Pentecostals consider scriptures referring to social action on the part of Christians to be references to the future, when Christ actually rules during the millenium. In sum, the Bible and its injunctions regarding society at large are not interpreted to require any other stance than an apolitical one; so then, participation in politics is not only a waste of time but a contradiction of a particular interpretation of scripture.[14]

Church of God members are also discouraged from political activism and social awareness because of their reliance on "prayer and patience" to resolve problems, and because of the interlocking doctrines of "separation from the world" and

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[14]Scott says that this interpretation of Church of God doctrine is based upon his interviews and analysis of several articles in El Camino a la Vida. See footnotes 54-58, p. 117.

absolute obedience to "Caesar" which translates into the political sphere as "separation of church and state"--strictly defined and adhered to. Scott believes this is so, not so much because the church is putting forth a doctrine determined by religion, but one based upon historical circumstances. The Catholic Church, having persecuted the Pentecostals in the rural areas so often, is the great enemy. Since the post-Revolution political system protects freedom of conscience and curbs Catholic Church power, it is appreciated by church members. If it is also authoritarian, the Christian has no choice but to obey it. Church doctrine demands strict obedience. Romans 13 is understood as follows: "...because the civil government is an institution of God, every Christian should conscientiously and in good faith respect it and obey it in every one of its laws." Even when the church disagrees with certain laws or officials, "it is the divine will that we submit ourselves to them without murmmurings" (Scott, 115-118).[15] Clearly, among the denominations Church of God members are the most deferent to the authorities; they take most seriously the doctrinal view of remaining separate.

Scott concludes Salt and Light by answering some of the questions he asked at the beginning. One question, aimed at

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[15]In footnotes 64 and 65 on page 118, Scott quotes this information from an article in El Camino a la Vida, August-September, 1980, pp. 13, 16. He also notes that one of the most damning criticisms the church has of social and political involvement could be that it is generated by the "modernistic social gospel."

Evangelicals generally, paraphrased, is this: Is there a relationship between theology and socio-political action? Scott says yes, that conservative theology has perhaps produced an apolitical stance that is in effect a defense of the status quo in Mexican politics, even though a minority has engaged in political activism and criticism of the authorities. Scott draws a comparison between Mexican and U.S. Evangelicals. The latter are involved in political activism over such issues as abortion, pornography, pollution, etc., while the vast majority of Mexicans are not. The Mexicans' reading of the Bible tends not to influence their view of social and political views. Leaders, pastors, teachers and denominational publications devote little time to these issues. Scott speculates that the Constitution of 1917 and the state's treatment of religious organizations "apparently have influenced Protestants' reading of the Bible and consequently, their understanding of the church's mission, essentially eliminating a prophetic voice in the public arenas."

Scott states that his interviewees, especially the clergy, repeatedly responded to his questions about noninvolvement by saying that the Constitution prohibited them from being involved in politics and that they must obey the government. He believes that although their theology and doctrine is an important constraint, it is not so much the causal factor as are the political and legal constraints: this

theology and doctrine are in fact shaped by the political realities of Mexico. He illustrates his contention with a comparison of Mexican Evangelicals with those in Peru and Colombia: the latter have essentially the same conservative theology as those in Mexico (premillenial despensationalism), but the Peruvians and Colombians have more political and legal freedom to participate in politics and so they do. There is one difference to the theology: for example in Peru, Evangelicals are more united around a middle-of-the-road doctrinal view (neither leftist nor rightist) which has counseled social responsibility for many years; moreover, leaders have traditionally supported and encouraged such a view.[16]

In sum, theology and doctrine in Mexico is not so much discounted as a constraint against political activism as it is put into perspective: Evangelicals across Latin America share similar theology, but because of differing political circumstances and the absence or presence of leaders who counsel activism, various Evangelical groups have adapted their interpretation of Christian teachings.

I would agree to an extent with Scott: Mexican Evangelicals--as shown in other chapters of this study--have several pressures working against their political involvement, and importantly, they wish to avoid antagonizing the state so that they may remain free to evangelize. All of these

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[16]Interview with Luis Scott, Mexico City, 5-31-92.

pressures combine to strongly suppress political involvement. However, we should not underemphasize what is happening here when we bring in other countries for comparison. That is, theology and doctrine really are important, and Mexican Evangelical leaders do not counsel noninvolvement for their congregations simply as a way to justify their own lack of involvement as leaders: I believe that may be a partial explanation for some pastors, but many at least appear to sincerely believe that they are obeying scripture. Certainly there is precedent for such an approach to societal problems when we consider the views of U.S. Evangelicals prior to about 1976. They have only recently begun to be "salt and light" in the social arena as they have been in times past. I do not disagree with Scott so much as I want to point out that doctrinal views run deep, and although they may be influenced by the environment, they are not wholly subject to it. Such a view would require a cynicism that I cannot support given my dealings with several Mexican and Latin American Evangelicals over the years.

There is great value to what Scott has contended, however. He puts the focus on another aspect of Mexican Evangelicals' views of social and political action: that is the fact (at least it appears to me to be a fact) that the leaderships' pronouncements are extremely important in determining how church members will interact with their country's political system. It is therefore worthwhile to

compare Mexico with other Latin American countries, as Scott has done, to show how particular Evangelical leaders have spoken out on the issue of Evangelical political activism, especially since the late 1980s. We can also get a sense of how Mexican Evangelicals stack up against their counterparts in the rest of the region given the information provided in the foregoing. In recent years, theologically and politically conservative Evangelicals have led the way for their followers by championing an Evangelical voice in politics. They have run for office, encouraged others to do so, and have become effective lobbies in behalf of Evangelical concerns in their respective countries. There are several revealing examples that illustrate my point. Rios Montt and Jorge Serrano of Guatemala, Evangelical leaders in Mexico, and Carlos Garcia Garcia in Peru are relevant cases, to name a few. These will be discussed in the latter section of this dissertation that on the whole deals with the recent changes in attitudes and doctrinal interpretations--and for Mexico, constitutional changes--which have combined to produce what may be termed an Evangelical "political awakening," a new force in Latin American politics.

I will conclude this section on Mexico with the views on doctrine and theology of several Evangelical leaders in Mexico. Pablo Monzalvo--a member of the PRI, an advisor to the mayor of Mexico City, a university instructor, and pastor

of an independent charismatic church he founded with his wife--believes that in addition to being constrained by doctrinal views that discourage interaction with society, Evangelicals lack a "political culture."[17] In his circle, mostly the independent charismatic churches, the pastors discourage political involvement; they don't have a "vision" for politics. Monzalvo adds that he is glad of this since they "don't know how" to be involved in politics and would only cause problems for themselves if they did. He believes this situation obtains because most of these pastors are drawn from the lower class--the blue collar professions. Many are not even literate, and this is the case over most of Mexico. Interestingly, he appears to dispute other claims that Evangelicals simply believe that politics is "dirty;" rather, they are simply "uncultured politically." Monzalvo avers that this is the case for the other Pentecostal denominations as well, the Assemblies of God and the Church of God.

Luis Scott, whose published work I have used in this chapter, discussed this issue with me in Mexico City.[18] He confirmed what he has written, and added that the isolationism of Mexican Evangelicals should not be taken as indicative of conservative or fundamentalist Protestantism in general. Guatemala and other countries provide evidence that these

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[17]Interview with Pablo Monzalvo in Mexico City, Mexico, June 1, 1992.

[18]Interviews with Luis Scott in Mexico City, Mexico, May 28, 1992, and May 31, 1992.

religious groups can be quite involved in politics: the leadership tends to be the key influence over church members.

Jonas Flores is a member of the PRI who has worked as an elected and appointed civil servant in Mexico for over thirty years.[19] As an Evangelical, he was one of the first to encourage political participation on the part of his fellow believers. After largely unsuccessful efforts on his part (he did manage to get a few involved in campaigns for the PRI and to annually celebrate Benito Juarez Day), he states very frankly that most Evangelicals are ignorant of politics, having decided that it is "worldly" and to be avoided. Moreover, the heads of the various denominations have been too afraid to get involved, fearing that they would lose the few privileges they have to evangelize and operate their churches. (These thoughts appear to confirm the analysis in the foregoing chapters. In addition to the anticlerical laws discussed above, Flores notes the chilling effect of the Interior Ministry's order [1980] that prohibited almost all Evangelical use of the airwaves for evangelization.) Flores adds that Evangelicals are a very heterogenous lot: for example, they are divided by social and economic class, and by political ideology. To coax them into working together for political purposes has not been easy, at least in Flores's experience. In fact, Flores speculated in 1990 that perhaps

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[19]Interview with Jonas Flores Carillo in Tepic Nayarit, December 18, 1990.

the only way Evangelicals would turn to political activism is if the Catholic Church or the government were to engage in harsh persecution against them. To hope that the PRI will look upon them as a potentially valuable constituency, and therefore interest them in politics, is ill-advised. Says Flores: Evangelical numbers are not great enough and so the authorities are uninterested in coopting them. If the party ever reaches out to them, it will be because it needs them to add to its legitimacy.

One other of my interviewees, Jose Gonzalez (a native of Uruguay) concurs in much of the analysis in this study, agreeing that Evangelicals have generally been withdrawn from politics in most of Latin America.[20] But he points out that Guatemalan Evangelicals used to think as Mexican Evangelicals do, refusing to get involved in the "sinful" world of politics. But the work of Iglesia Verbo broke ground,

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[20]Jose Gonzalez is the director of a Virginia-based ministry to Latin America called Semilla (Seed). I have spoken with him on several occasions about this study; in particular, our discussion of January 28, 1991 by telephone was very helpful in my collection of information. As a student in Uruguay, he was a Marxist protestor against the government. He was converted to Protestant Christianity several years ago and came to the United States. His outreach is to teach biblical principles of government to Latin American Evangelicals, with a particular ministry to politicians. He has spent most of 1991 and 1992 travelling throughout the region, speaking to Evangelical politicians about religion and politics, encouraging them to let their faith inform their public service. I would note that Gonzalez, Flores, and others I have interviewed were of much help in the initial work on this study, in formulating questions and organizing the themes of the research.

propagating a pro-involvement doctrine that spread to most of the Guatemalan Evangelical community.

Mexico and Guatemala Compared

Marco Tulio Cajas's work allows us to add a comparative perspective to the discussion. In his description of the history of Guatamalan Evangelical politics, he provides insight into some of their doctrinal views. He asserts that, unlike Mexican Evangelicals, the Guatemalans have often been involved in politics, at times for liberal causes, such as the agrarian reform of the 1950s when Evangelicals oversaw local efforts of the reform; however, they are in general conservative as to politics (exceptions noted, 279). In the late 1950s and the early 1960s, Evangelicals strongly asserted their presence in society with marches and evangelism campaigns. This activity "attracted the attention of the political leaders" primarily because of the Evangelicals' well-known anti-communism and support for stable government. Soon, they were participating in political campaigns, taking sides on issues and candidates. The Guatemalan earthquake of 1976 gave them another opportunity to manifest their presence by giving aid to the disaster victims and the poor in general.

Tulio Cajas notes that one church in particular, Iglesia Verbo--to which Rios Montt belonged--was a forerunner of Evangelical social involvement. By 1983, Evangelicals had set

up the Commission for Social Responsibility to coordinate relief efforts and ministries to the poor. Tulio Cajas maintains that this social work was an outgrowth of the increasing political responsibility that Evangelicals were undertaking in Guatemala. Interestingly, and in contrast to Tulio Cajas, Stoll notes in his discussion of Guatemala's experience with the Evangelical military junta leader (1982-1983), Rios Montt, that most Evangelical leaders were not very supportive of Rios Montt's role in the coup and the ensuing administration. Although some took on advisory positions with the government and saw some positive things happen--official corruption was curtailed and the violence against the insurgents was less random[21]--some leaders continued to believe that Christians should stay out of politics and that the state's bully pulpit was no place for evangelism. Rios Montt's subsequent fall from power at the hands of the military that installed him, due mostly to his fight against corruption (Martin, 255), embarrassed Evangelical leaders and deepened the feelings of the minority that political activism was an inappropriate role for the faithful (Martin, 92).

Tulio Cajas' analysis of Guatemala's experience with Rios Montt differs; he believes that Evangelicals were mobilized and ready to take a strong political stand when the military

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[21]See Stoll, Chapter Six; Martin tells a similar story, 92, 252-255.

took over the government in 1982 by coup d'etat. The junta put General Rios Montt in charge, whereupon he regularly and boldly proclaimed his faith. Only a minority of Evangelicals objected to his moralizing and mixing of religion and politics. The majority of Evangelicals, and many business and military leaders strongly supported him as a personally honest "law and order" man. Tulio Cajas emphasizes Evangelicals' appreciation of the general, and they credit him with a moral renovation of the country (276-278). Following his ouster, Catholics were emboldened to vie for power with Evangelicals who continued to be politically active. The Evangelicals managed to win 12 seats in the 1983 Constituent Assembly. In 1984, Evangelical leader and businessman Jorge Serrano Elias began running for the presidential elections of 1985; he had been a top aide to Rios Montt. Of course, most Catholics supported Christian Democrat Vinicio Cerezo. The campaign was emotional and hotly contested because of the religious ramifications: Serrano was accused of trying to provoke a religious war. Tulio Cajas reports that this turmoil appears to have drawn enough Evangelical votes away from Serrano to cost him the election; he ended up in third place. Interestingly, one U.S. study of Evangelical electoral preferences found that they generally matched those of the general public; therefore, it is difficult to argue that a religious war had been taking place. The upward mobility that often characterizes Evangelicals had increased their political

awareness and involvement, in Guatemala as well as in other Latin American states; it seems this factor influenced their voting more than simply religious affinity.

Tulio Cajas addresses specifically the involvement of some Evangelical leaders in the 1985 elections, noting the "disastrous" consequences suffered by these more vocal Evangelicals who did engage in politics in behalf of Serrano. Some made "prophecies" and had "visions" about Serrano's 1985 candidacy. Having learned their lesson, in 1990 they remained on the sidelines, not giving visible support to any faction or candidate. Tulio Cajas says that many leaders of several denominations apparently gave a more ecumenical and cautious support to candidates, mostly to Serrano and Christian Democrat candidates. In fact, Evangelicals were supportive of campaigns all across the political spectrum, some even running themselves: they revealed themselves as being fully integrated into the multiparty process. Perhaps their loyalties were destined to be split: Serrano and Rios Montt ran separate campaigns for the presidency.[22] During the campaign, neither Rios Montt nor Serrano appealed directly nor exclusively to Evangelicals: such appeals were left to an extremely fundamentalist minority of Evangelicals committed to civil

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[22]Even though he led in many opinion polls, Rios Montt was attacked by many on the left and in the center for running at all since in doing so he was violating the constitutional mandate which denies former coup leaders the privilege of running for office. In the end, he could not overcome the many forces arrayed against him and his support was not enough to win.

government based upon the "theory of 'the government of God'": they supported Rios Montt, among others. Serrano's only obvious Evangelical affiliation was with the broad-based coalition he lead, the Movimiento de Accion Solidaria (Serrano, 41). Exit polls showed that religion was an irrelevant factor, so again a religious war did not occur (Tulio Cajas, 279-281).

What did happen is that Serrano won the presidency (after a run-off against another non-Evangelical conservative businessman) due to a conjunction of political forces coalescing in his behalf. These circumstances were historic--never before had there been such building of coalitions and making of political pacts among groups in Guatemala. Moreover, Serrano, even though he was known to be an Evangelical a former member of the Rios Montt administration, was able to capture much of the centrist vote (Tulio Cajas, 282).

Tulio Cajas concludes his article by discussing the future of Guatemalan Evangelical politics. He maintains that the question is not whether to participate in politics--that question is settled in the affirmative. The question is simply which party, group, ideology or candidate they will support, and what coalitions they will join or build themselves. Their faith and doctrine are central to these tasks, as are their perceptions of which candidate or group

best represents their interests. In sum, they appear to be in for the long haul (283).

The foregoing contains a discussion of Jorge Serrano, recounting his activities as an Evangelical politician. Clearly, as a prominent Evangelical leader, he believes that Christians should be involved in politics; his own involvement reflects his belief. Serrano has written a book about his doctrinal and theological views as they pertain to Evangelical involvement in politics. La participacion del cristiano en la vida publica (The Participation of the Christian in Public Life) was written and published in Miami and distributed in Guatemala before the election of 1990: like many politicians vying for votes, Serrano used his book to help him disseminate his message to the voters. A glance at the table of contents reveals that the work was designed to provide a Guatemalan Evangelical's view of why Christians should be involved in politics, what their role is and how their faith can inform their involvement. Throughout the book, Serrano conveys his personal testimony. Chapter titles include: "Reflections on a theology of participation;" "The Lord works and has worked within the lives of persons and nations;" and "Politics is dirty--we'll clean it up."

Serrano opens by admitting that what he is endeavoring to do is controversial: he knows that there are some who do not believe Christians should be active in political affairs. But

he maintains that his position is biblically based and nondenominational, and he draws an analogy to Gamaliel in the book of Acts (a Jewish leader who counseled patience to his colleagues before they attempted to destroy Christianity) to say that if Evangelical politics is of God it will prevail, and if it is only the designs of men, it will pass away as a futile and vain endeavor (11). He maintains that he and other Evangelicals are not called to serve only in the church and not outside it. He believes he is called of God to be a Christian politician, just as many are called to be ministers, teachers, and missionaries. In sum, there is not necessarily a conflict between Chirstianity and civic involvement. One can be called to both and fulfill the call honorably, provided one is politically active with an "ethic" and "vision" based upon "God's principles for the development of the nations and the world" (12). Because he believes he is called, and because the world of politics needs a Christian voice, it is imperative that Christians be involved

The detractors have been many, he notes, whether from the Catholic Church or from his own group, the Evangelicals. Through it all, he intends to remain uncompromised in living according to God's word as he works in politics, supporting justice and the dignity of man and being supported by the prayers of his fellow believers (14-16).

In the chapter entitled "Reflections on a theology of participation," he outlines two approaches Evangelicals often

have used to justify action or inaction. The first is liberation theology, which appropriately encourages activism but wrongly justifies it for the purpose of socialism and revolutionary struggle; the second is the very conservative approach--historically deterministic--which teaches believers to refrain from trying to change the material world and only to wait for Jesus Christ's second coming. These two positions have confused Christians, says Serrano, keeping them from faithfully executing Jesus' instruction in Matthew 22:21: rendering to Caesar what is his, and to God what is God's. What is needed is a middle approach which draws from both views: political activism but according to biblical principles for biblical purposes. This approach will produce the proper "theology of participation" (17-20).

Serrano asks and answers two questions: what should motivate a politically active Christian, and how ought the believer conduct himself in politics? First, he should be seeking the common good entailed in democracy and a more just society. Since man is created in God's image (Genesis 1:27) he is free and has dignity and rights; moreover, the society he builds and the government he installs should be based upon the permission of the governed, and it should respect these truths. No government has the right to allow any one class to enslave people; further, the family is the primary unit and should be supported by government--not attacked or burdened unduly. Romans 13, which commands respect for authorities,

should be read in light of Acts 5:29, which calls upon Christians to obey God rather than men when the commands of the two are in conflict. The laws of Guatemala should protect citizens' rights and should be strongly supported by believers. When corruption and abuses are occurring, Christians should strive to see that such activity is terminated; moreover, and importantly, Christians should not seek to be a part of such abuses--their goal should be honest and responsive government according to law and human rights. Interestingly, Serrano emphasizes that concern for the poor is vital as a matter of religion and civic responsibility; Evangelicals involved in politics cannot act as the former right-wing oligarchs have, in that the latter either ignored or abused the poor. Finally, Christians must seek to rid the political arena of the "two faces of the law:" one for the common man and one for the elite. This is an unjust system and violates God's notion of justice found in Proverbs 21:3. Christians should seek justice and equality before the law for all citizens (24-27).

As to the second question, "How ought Evangelicals conduct themselves in politics?" Serrano answers first in the negative--they should not conduct themselves as the "regular" politician. He uses an example found in Matthew 20, wherein the mother of the disciples James and John, the "Sons of Thunder," asked Jesus for power and privilege for her sons when they joined Christ in heaven. Jesus rebuked her for her

selfish and carnal request, a request that ignored the fact that only those who were willing to sacrifice and put others' needs first deserved to have authority vested in them. Serrano maintains that her attitude is that of the typical politician who desires power and prestige with which to rule over men. The Evangelical ought not to share her attitude; he should seek to serve others in love and compassion for the sake of their needs, working for equality and justice and not simply climbing the social ladder and serving himself. Christian principles should be the guide, not opportunism. His example continues in Matthew 20:25-28 with the comparison between what Jesus called the Gentile rulers who lord it over their charges, and the Christian who leads in love and compassion by serving. Serrano takes this as a call for the Christian civil servant to be a good "employee" of the people (28-29).

In other portions of Serrano's book, we find him discussing theology more exclusively, detailing how God is at work in the affairs of men, how scripture provides the way to salvation from sin and corruption, and how the church, as it propagates the gospel, has the answers for the turmoil of the material world. All of these factors are further encouragements, indeed mandates, for the Christian to be involved in political affairs.

In another chapter, the Guatemalan president discusses in particular the "Great Lie" that Christians should not

interfere in politics. This "lie" is built upon several theses: 1) the function of a Christian is simply to win souls through spreading the gospel; 2) politics and religion must be kept completely separate; and 3) Christians are to be concerned only with: the future as opposed to the present, the spirit and soul as opposed to the mind and body, private morals as opposed to public laws, theology as opposed to philosophy, science and business, the individual as opposed to society, and the family and the church as opposed to the civil government. This set of beliefs, in essence, severs the ties between the private and the public spheres; it prevents the private life from informing the public life. Serrano maintains that such a state of affairs is contrary to the mandate given believers in Genesis 1:28 to subdue the earth according to God's will. He refutes the notion that to join the two spheres, to allow one's private beliefs to inform one's public practice is evidence of "worldliness" or "living in the flesh." In fact, the church and the state do influence one another whether we like it or not. And since a church-controlled state and a state-controlled church are equally unacceptable to Serrano, he insists that the individual Christian allow his faith to inform his actions and thereby influence government for the better. As individuals, as Christian civil servants, Evangelicals should inform government with the biblical principles which work and "prosper" peoples. He warns Christians not to deprive

government of the moral and ethical principles that bring justice and development (59-63).

Serrano gives further justification for his own political life by referring to the examples of Daniel and Joseph of the Old Testament: both were governors who ruled according to God's principles. There is no lack of bad examples either: Saul and Ahab were commissioned to rule according to God's will, but neither lived up to their calling (65-67).

Finally, Serrano concludes his book with the chapter "Politics is dirty--we will clean it up." He admits that, indeed, politics-- especially as practiced in Guatemala--is a dirty business. However, as a democracy, Guatemala's laws obligate all citizens to participate: "We have the responsibilty as Christians to participate actively so that the world is made to fit the model of the Bible [regarding] love and justice." He notes Proverbs 29:2, which states "When the just rule, the people are happy; but when a wicked man rules, the people groan." This, says Serrano, confirms the call to political participation, and he asks rhetorically, why should Christians sit back and allow a political situation to obtain wherein the unjust rule? Further, politics is not "dirty" by nature, but is so because wicked people participate in it for corrupt and selfish purposes. Christians can and should participate in it differently. Spiritual responsibilities "go hand-in-hand" with secular responsibilities. He concludes with these words of Jesus as

recorded in John 17:15: "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one." (69-72).

Conclusion

This chapter has revealed how the doctrinal and theological views of Evangelicals, especially as they are articulated by the leadership, can act as constraints against Evangelical political involvement or as stimuli to such activity. Since in Mexico a conservative view of the Evangelical role in society has predominated, therefore Evangelicals have not been involved in society in general and in politics in particular to any significant degree for most of this century. But in other Latin American states, particularly Guatemala, doctrinal and theological views have acted as stimuli to political activity, as the political career of Jorge Serrano attests.

The latter section of this study will reveal how these doctrinal and theological views are changing in Mexico, and when combined with a change in the legal standing of religion in Mexico, they are sparking what appears to be a nascent Evangelical awakening.

II.

Recent Changes in the Legal Status, Attitudes, and Behaviors of Mexican Evangelicals: Serpent-Doves and Sons of Thunder

The previous chapters of this study discussed a number of reasons why Mexican Evangelicals have remained uninvolved in the social life of their nation, particularly the political life of Mexico. They have been constrained from action--generally kept on the fringes of society--because of external and internal factors. As to the former, they have faced historical, systemic, legal, and societal obstacles; and as to the latter, they have been discouraged from action by their own doctrinal beliefs as articulated by their leadership.

However, some significant changes are afoot in Mexico regarding the role that religion plays in societal life; changes have also occurred in the way Evangelicals are thinking about their particular role in society, and especially their role in politics. In sum, laws have been changed and doctrinal views of some Evangelicals--though not all--have been adjusted so that both laws and attitudes in Mexico are now more similar to the laws and Evangelical attitudes in other Latin American states. (Interestingly, a comparison can also be made between modern-day Mexico and the

United States, whose laws allow politically-conscious Evangelicals to be active in politics.)

The next chapter will consist of a discussion of these changes. The first part of the chapter will focus on legal changes which have altered the status of religious persons in the country; that is, I will discuss recent debate over constitutional reform and the amendments to the Constitution which ultimately were made and implemented in 1992. These allowed more freedom for religious persons to be active in politics and society generally. Indeed, much has changed since the ratification of the 1917 Constitution, and these changes did not come about easily nor without rather intense public debate. So then, included in this section will be a review of the last few years during which the Catholic Church and Evangelicals debated the need for changes. This debate caused tensions between and among several groups, revealing the legacy of the societal and doctrinal constraints discussed above. My sources will be a few published documents--including the actual constitutional changes--and the interviews I have conducted with participants. There will be few comparisons made in this chapter because the focus is on Mexico and recent trends there.

The latter part of the chapter will include a discussion of the profound changes that have occurred in the way many Mexican Evangelicals think about politics and in the way they are actually behaving. I will discuss the nature of these

changes and which Evangelicals are experiencing them. Some Evangelicals, especially certain leaders, are encouraging their followers to become active, and they are backing up their newly-found "Jorge Serrano-type" doctrinal attitudes with rather aggressive action. Some played significant roles in the debate over constitutional reform, and indeed much of this activity began only recently, in part because of the reforms. Certain Evangelicals are forming interest and action groups, petitioning the government, and in general becoming politically active. The prospects for this recent political involvement will be more fully discussed in the concluding chapter. My sources for this section are, again, interviews with Evangelical leaders and some published documentation.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Changes in Legal Status

Mexico, although a semi-democratic state, has had some of the harshest laws restricting the practice of religion; moreover, these laws went beyond simply regulating the practice of religion to the point of pushing religion to the fringes of society, or at least forcing it "underground" in the view of some religious persons. As was noted in Chapter 4, the several anticlerical provisions in the Constitution were particularly onerous to religious persons: they barred clergymen from voting, joining political movements, and supporting or becoming candidates for office; the laws also prevented them from inheriting property, and from bringing any issue before the courts; they barred from public display religious activities and clerics from wearing religious garb; and finally, the laws took away from religious associations the privilege of educating the youth. Although the enforcement of some of the laws has been relaxed since the 1940s, the chilling effect has been much the same: until 1992 they were on the books and could be enforced, as they have been in the past, and moreover, religious persons, both Catholic and Protestant, found them offensive and anachronistic. In sum, the laws effectively sought to prevent religion and religious persons from informing or influencing the societal views and politics of Mexico. Making changes in these laws certainly would not come easily.

Mexican diplomat Leonardo Ffrench[1] told me in 1990 that he expected that these laws would be changed under the administration of Carlos Salinas who had been elected in 1988. As a reformer facing a divided ruling party and an economic crisis, and as a partisan seeking more legitimacy for the PRI, Salinas would logically consider this option.[2] Ffrench predicted that at least Article 130 would be changed so that the state could, among other things, formally recognize the Vatican and the Church in Mexico. He also noted that neither the Catholic Church nor the Evangelicals would want the other to gain any power in society, the implication being that such changes were sure to produce strong debate on both sides.[3]

Other Mexicans have made similar comments. Jonas Flores, a former PRI senator and currently an advisor to the PRI governor of his home state of Nayarit, told me in 1990 that as the PRI looks for legitimacy, it may attempt to redeem itself

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[1]One of my original contacts in Mexico was Leonardo Ffrench, a Mexican diplomat I met in Washington, D.C., in 1988. He was then director of the press office for the Mexican embassy and is currently director of the foreign press office for President Salinas. In Mexico in 1990, I had an opportunity to interview him about the then current status of church-state relations.

[2]The Washington, D.C.-based Heritage Foundation speculates that part of Salinas's motivation was the fact that the North American Free Trade Agreement might be more easily approved by the U.S. Congress if such restrictions on religion were removed ("Mexico Watch," Sept. 1992).

[3]For more information on this and the following discussion, please see a review of debate over the proposed changes and the 1990 papal visit written by Gregg Jones for the National Catholic Register, September 10. 1989, pp. 1 and 8.

with the Catholic Church by extending diplomatic recognition to the Vatican; such an act could win it wide and deep support among the nation's many Catholics. Flores said that if this were to happen, Evangelicals as a voting block could be seen as irrelevant to the PRI, therefore relegating them to the political sidelines indefinitely. He agreed with those who predicted strife among religious groups if constitutional reforms were to become a reality.

Along these same lines, Luis Scott[4] speculates that the changes eventually were made in large part because President Salinas wanted to enhance the legitimacy of his government and the PRI. However, Scott's view is more complex than others in that he suggests that Salinas was after more than simply enhancing legitimacy as a matter of wise political maneuvering; in reality he was rather desperate because he had actually lost the election of 1988, says Scott. An opening to the Church was a way to obtain support for the official election results from an influential sector of society. Moreover, Evangelicals played a part in this scenario because the President sought to include them in the discussions.

Scott maintains that the President, having lost the election, negotiated with the Catholic hierarchy, either directly or indirectly, in order to quell any protest they might offer to the official results giving him the presidency.

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[4]This information was gathered during my first interview with Luis Scott in Mexico City on May 28, 1992.

The Church had sent him a respectful letter in 1988 asking him to make the policy and legal changes. Scott notes that what they asked for and what happened subsequently were almost identical. In the end, the Church did not protest the electoral outcome and the Pope gave his blessing to Salinas.[5] However, the president still had a debt to pay, and according to Scott's estimation, that debt was recognition of the Church and diplomatic relations with the Vatican, as well as changes to the Constitution. It appears those debts were paid.[6]

Interestingly, press reports that covered the debate over a period of about two years do not refer often to Protestant views; these will be discussed later as I relate what Evangeliclas have told me.

As early as July 1989, Mexico City newspapers were reporting on the national debate over constitutional reform. Not only were clergymen discussing the issue, but the country's legal experts were as well. The Mexico City English-language daily, The News (July 24, 1989), reported on an unprecedented meeting to be held at the National

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[5]For students of Mexican history, it is interesting to note that this scenario, if indeed it is accurate, hearkens back to the 19th century when the Pope gave his blessing to oligarchical rule in Mexico, whether of foreign powers or dictators. The Revolution of 1910--which produced the most famous and celebrated of Mexican heroes, some of whom later gave birth to the PRI--was fought in part to terminate once and for all such Church influence in Mexican politics.

[6]These views of Scott were made known not only to me in the interview, but also to were made public in an interview he gave to the English-language Mexico City daily, The News, in May of 1992.

University; the topic would be political rights for the clergy. Discussants at the conference entitled "Political Participation of the Church in Mexico" were to hear from members of the Catholic hierarchy as well legal scholars as the two groups discussed "the controversial subject of church participation in Mexican political life." Noting that the Church had always participated in politics at the local level [in violation of the law], one professor said that it was time the issue was discussed frankly and openly. He added that any changes should allow the Church to participate as a "wholly independent institution with no interference from the government or vice versa."

Reporting in the aftermath of the week-long conference, The News (July 31, 1989, p. 2,4) said that "Revolutionary diehards" were determined not to see the changes made, while many less traditional politicians and legal scholars were just as determined to promote change. Particularly salient issues were whether priests would be allowed to vote, own property, and criticize the state. Reporter Gregg Jones of the National Catholic Register (September 10, 1989) reveals that in an interview with Mexican political commentator Jorge Castaneda, the latter explained that it is the traditional stalwarts of the PRI--the "dinosaurs" who hold firmly to the Revolutionary dogma--that most strongly oppose changes; they fear the challenge that priests, working through the Church and the PAN, might offer to the party's hegemony.

Some in the Church fanned the flames: the Bishop of Cuernavaca, Luis Reynoso Cervantes, is an outspoken proponent of the changes. He admitted that the debate was irrelevant to him because he already had been voting whenever he pleased. Moreover, the government, he claimed, had already reached a decision favoring the Church on the matter after the government received suggestions from the hierarchy.

Revealing of Protestant-Catholic tensions, another Bishop, Arturo Lona Reyes of Tehuantepec, called Article 130 "anachronistic and humiliating. It keeps us in ignominy while the protestant sects engage openly in politics." Other members of the Church's hierarchy, however, disagreed with Reynoso's bold statements: said the Vatican's Delegate Girolamo Prigione who was "annoyed at Reynoso's speech, "He is very talkative...He is a lawyer, you know." Prigione--who as the Vatican's representative traditionally had no formal relations with the government until Salinas allowed such in 1991--maintains that the government (and the PRI) have nothing to fear because the Church is not interested in playing partisan politics, but seeks only to encourage citizens to fulfill their civic duty to vote (Jones, 8).

Other legal scholars who addressed the conference, such as Professor Emeritus at the National Law School Jorge Barrera Graf, said that the Article should be changed "because some of its clauses are in violation of the [United Nations'] Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man." One professor,

Ignacio Burgoa, has charged that Article 130 is not even enforceable and has never been because it was not properly ratified during the convention of 1917 (Ferrrari, 71). Even the much celebrated left-wing presidential candidate of 1988, Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, in contrast with most leftists, called for "legal and explicit" recognition of the Church. But other legal scholars disagreed vehemently with proponents of change, as did some politicians, such as leftist Senator Saul Gonzalez Herrera and congressmen Francisco Ortiz and Jaime Enriquez; these officials said that any changes would be "a historical error."

In an apparent answer to the conference, Interior Secretary (Secretaria de Gobernacion) Fernando Gutierrez Barrios announced in early August 1989 that the government had no plans to change Article 130 (The News, August 4, 1989, p. 5). He would repeat this position often over the next two years. Asked about the upcoming papal visit in 1990 that encouraged proponents of change, Gutierrez Barrios replied that it was a "pastoral" one only, not official, and bore no relation to any debate about the unofficially proposed changes.[7]

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[7]A related matter reveals how heated had become the debate over religious political participation. Hector Delgado, an official with Cardenas's political party, the Party of the Democratic Revolution, or the PRD, appeared to express sharp disagreement with his superior's views on the Catholic Church as he defended Marxist-Leninist views. He lashed out at the Church, claiming that it was largely responsible for much of the illiteracy in Mexico, and that through its control of many private schools it was violating

The end of 1989 witnessed rising expectations among the proponents of change, the government's attempts to quell optimism notwithstanding. Bruno Ferrrari reports that Vatican Delegate Prigione, in particular, held out hope for change, perhaps as soon as the summer 1990 papal visit: "There is reason to hope that for this occasion (the papal visit) the long-awaited legalization of the Catholic Church in this country will be granted" (30Days, December 1989, pp. 69-71). Ferrrari attempts to explain the government's possible motivation if it were to respond to Church demands. He notes that during the late 1980s "economic, social, and political factors have led the government to consider changing its policy toward the Church." One of those social factors was the reality of the incredible Evangelical growth which was causing concern among Catholics. This concern may have motivated Catholics to become more vocal of late: in the

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the laws, charging "enormous sums of money" to practice the Liturgy on school property. Specifically criticizing the clergy, Delgado charged that "the mundane interests of the political clergy have always been allied with the bourgeois and imperialists' interests." Their political activity [apparently a reference to current activities and the proposed changes] "...is an attack against the people. Since 1810, 1857, 1862, and 1929-1940, the Constitution called for the absolute separation of church and state." Further, the Catholic Church, he said, has been pressuring the government subtly to "reinstate relations between the Vatican and the Mexican government." One of the Church's tactics is to obtain reform of Article 130 so that the clergy would have political rights. Said Delgado, "For many years, the clergy has violated the Mexican Constitution. It has fostered anti-communist propaganda and has indicated that being a Christian is incompatible with voting for Marxist-Leninist parties. (The News, August 4, 1989.)

mid-1980s a massive demonstration of 300,000 Catholics took place in front of the National Cathedral, which happens to be located on the same square as the National Palace where the executive's offices are located. Their unprecedented action was in protest of a publicly-sponsored art exhibit which featured a work portraying the Virgin of Guadalupe with the face of Marilyn Monroe; another defamed Jesus Christ in their opinion. Significantly, and revealing of the boldness of these Catholics, the demonstrators chanted the words used in the 1920s by condemned Catholic rebels--the Cristeros--awaiting the firing squad: "Patria y Religion" and "Viva Cristo Rey" ("Fatherland and Religion," "Long Live Christ the King") (30Days, December 1989, pp. 69-71). The government abruptly ended the art exhibition. Political leaders began to look seriously upon this new Catholic activism since the demonstration hearkened back to Mexico's troubled past; more importantly, it revealed the ability of religion to successfully challenge the government in modern Mexico.

Ferrrari reports further that because the Church began to show such latent power over society and because Salinas's party was so divided and lacking in influence, the President asked the hierarchy to consult with him over the grave economic problems with which his administration was faced at its outset (70-71; see also The Economist, April 28, 1990, p. 46).

By the early part of 1990, the U.S. press had picked up the story. Larry Rohter of the New York Times (February 15, 1990, p. A16) reports that Interior Secretary Gutierrez Barrios, the same official who a few months earlier had said no changes in church-state relations would be made, announced in February that the President would appoint a "personal representative" to the Vatican, and that it was time to "facilitate a fruitful dialogue" with the Vatican "as modern democratic life requires." Such actions are in line with the President's pre-1988 outreach to the Church, such as when he met with Mexican bishops during his campaign and allowed his father-in-law to attend a Vatican reception. Rohter reported also that the Pope was widely expected to meet with the President when he came to visit in May, but that even though the bishops wanted the Constitution amended, the Interior Secretary continued to stress that no changes were planned. Rohter also reiterated the charges of the left that any changes were unconstitutional and dangerous to social peace.

In any event, the Pope did visit and was officially welcomed by the government. In the aftermath, the Church was bolstered in its call for constitutional reform.

Edward Cody of the Washington Post (July 10, 1991, p. A14) reported one year later that the President was still moving towards reform, and now he was publicly hinting at such; his veiled implications were emphasized by several events and diplomacy changes, such as his July 1991 visit to

Rome to return the Pope's visit, the regular and public meetings between the President with Church officials, and the government's granting of diplomatic license plates to the Vatican's representative. However, again, the Interior Secretary continued to state officially that the government had no plans to make changes, and "Revolutionary diehard" lawmakers continued to lash out at proponents of change and clerics in particular.

Finally, on September 21, 1992, President Salinas established diplomatic relations with the Vatican. The move came approximately three years after the debate began in earnest.

Several observers have discussed the Evangelical role in the government's opening to the Catholic Church and the debate over constitutional reform. In particular, Scott, Monzalvo, Flores, and Gonzalez believe that Protestant-Catholic tensions have increased over the issue, in part because Evangelicals felt that they had been ignored to a degree and in part because they felt threatened by a Catholic Church moving closer to the government via official recognition. Says Scott about the persecutions (discussed in Chapter 5 above) and the recognition of the Vatican: "[M]any Protestant leaders link these two events" (Scott 122). Evangelicals believe that Catholics have been emboldened by the growing state-Church rapport, and that mobs have therefore been stirred up by

priests; moreover, mob organizers continue to feel at liberty to provoke civil rights violations.[8]

Some Mexican Evangelical leaders, such as Pablo Monzalvo, stress that the cause for much of the strife is the phenomenal growth of Pentecostalism: this growth worries Catholics more than any other denominational growth. Monzalvo, a PRI advisor to the mayor of Mexico City, is both a politician and a pastor of an independent charismatic church he founded.[9] He says that the Catholic Church is "worried" about the spread of Evangelicalism and it seeks to "thwart this growth." Monzalvo warns Evangelicals not to "rock the boat" and unnecessarily antagonize the Church or the state by becoming too vocal as Evangelical political activists attempting to obtain political power. He warns further that although in the past the PRI appreciated the balance that Evangelicals offered against the hegemony of the Church over societal religious views, the moment Evangelicals become too numerous or too vocal in the government's eyes the state will "clamp down" on them. Therefore, constitutional reforms are not necessarily a

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[8]In a related event, Scott told me in our May 31, 1992 Mexico City interview that there has been in existence for some time a Christian Democratic Party--clearly a violation of the law before the changes--under whose banner a niece of a presidential envoy ran as a candidate. Evangelicals cannot feel comfortable with such circumstances since they appear to reveal increasing Catholic power.

[9]Interview with Pablo Monzalvo, Mexico City, June 1, 1992. He was most helpful in sharing his views, and particularly in providing me with a copy of the new regulations implementing the constitutional changes of 1992 as soon as they were available.

guarantee of greater Evangelical freedoms in the political arena. He sees the reform as simply a wise political maneuver on the part of Salinas. The President "is no fool," he says, and with good political strategy he effectively "used the Pope," showing "himself to be clever, more than the Pope even because Carlos Salinas has helped himself in this." No matter what the changes turn out to be, the President will not "give the Pope power" over society. The changes, moreover, will not be to the disadvantage of the Evangelicals and to the sole benefit of the Catholic Church, as the latter desires. Monzalvo says this is so because the Church is "still alarmed" at Evangelical gains and this alarm is intensifying. The Church has been agitating throughout the debate to see to it that the Evangelicals do not get the upper hand. He points to a "hot spot" in the state of Chiapas (discussed in Chapter 5 above) to demonstrate how great the tensions are: the Governor has come to rely on Evangelical votes and their good citizenship qualities, so he favors them over Catholics. The Church has responded, says Monzalvo, by going "to war with him." Nevertheless, the constitutional reform could only exacerbate the problem as the two religious groups confront one another with the politicians caught in the middle.

In November of 1991, the President finally brought the debate to an end, since in the Mexican system what he commands is done: he announced that his administration planned to make specific changes in the Constitution in order to promote a

"new juridical situation for the churches [grant them juridical personality] and to look for greater agreement between how the people of Mexico actually engage in religious practices and what the law says they can do" (PRI, 2). In December of 1991, his party, the PRI, presented its views on these proposed changes.[10] Although a full discussion of the party's findings and proposals is unwarranted here since the final changes were implemented in July 1992 and will be discussed below, it is worthwhile to present the PRI's theoretical justification and political concerns regarding any changes.

The party asserts that because Mexico is a modernizing nation, its Constitution must conform to modernity: new laws and new government- private sector relationships must be developed to meet the demands of a changed world. These private sector entities include the various political parties,

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[10]This discussion refers to a congressional document of the PRI entitled "Decreto Que Reforma Diversas Dispocisiones De La Consitucion Politica De La Estados Unidos Mexicanos" ("Decree To Reform Diverse Dispositions of the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States.") It is a lengthy document which contains a detailed discussion of the changes supported by the ruling party, with justification for each. Quotations are drawn from my translation of the document. I have not quoted from other documents which were produced after the president's November 1991 announcement, such as the Secretary of the Interior's January 28, 1992 document outlining the changes according to his office's analysis and proposals, and the official statements of the Congress (the Camara De Diputados) in January 1992. I have chosen not to review them in detail since the PRI controls both the executive and the legislative branches of government in Mexico, and so the PRI's views are the views of the president and will become law after the Congress officially approves his wishes. Page numbers refer to this PRI document.

unions, as well as the churches. It is interesting to note that the president and the PRI refer to "churches" and not simply the "Church" thereby making it clear that the new laws will apply to and take into consideration all religious groups (1). Further, the party acknowledged that such action--which requires much caution and serious attention given the historical circumstances (reviewed in the document), and current presence of opposition--indeed was warranted in order to comply with a "popular mandate" that the PRI perceives. The party admits, frankly, that the restrictions on religious persons' activities were warranted at the time of their implementation due to undue Church control over society, but now some of the restrictions "have lost their justification and are no longer fully congruent with the aspirations of the people." Moreover, the United Nations pronouncements on this matter must be appreciated by Mexico even if there was some justifiable disagreement in the past (3-7; 14).

The basic principle guiding the congress should be "to preserve and endorse strict respect for the liberty of conscience, state sovereignty, and the need for clear demarcation between civil and ecclesiastical matters and the juridical equality of all religious associations" (3). Further, "the state should not be given power to intervene in church matters and the churches should not be given power to intervene in government affairs" (8). The goal is to

modernize, so it is incumbent upon the state to "harmonize all social actors, including the churches" (8).

As to the specific guidelines for making the changes, several areas are discussed. Every Mexican has the right to voluntarily engage in worship activities in their places of worship according to the dictates of conscience and the denominational guidelines; however, for the sake of social peace and fairness, worship outside these places "should not be offensive to others, nor affect the public order." Liberty to profess beliefs outside the home ends where liberty of others of differing faiths or no faith begins. The state will guarantee all faiths the same liberty without showing preference to any. Government regulations that continue after the changes should be based on liberty and order, and be clear to all concerned; and finally, new laws should not produce a situation where a "hypocritical" liberty obtains allowing the state to say freedom of conscience exists but restrictions produce a different reality (9-10; 20-21). Given the heated debate over reform, one can see readily the PRI's concern that the changes not be a cause of civic unrest.

On July 15, 1992, the official changes were handed down from the Congress and the president in the "Diario Oficial de la Federacion," the Secretary of the Interior having published this document as "Law of Religious Associations and Public Worship; it is also referred to as the "Ley Reglamentaria." The legislation went into effect July 16, 1992.

The laws will replace the previous legal regime regarding religion and public life. They begin by stating that no one can use them to avoid obeying other civil laws: freedom of conscience and worship are not licenses for civil disobedience. Article 2 states what rights are guaranteed: freedom of conscience, worship, and protection from being forced to proclaim allegiance to any religion for any reason, such as to obtain work; freedom from compulsion to participate or pay for religious festivals; freedom from being made to answer to any inquisition regarding one's religious beliefs.

Article 3 states that the Mexican state is separate from religion and the church, that it exercises its authority over all religious manifestations as far as the laws require for the sake of public order and morals. It will not favor any religion or express prejudice against any. Further, official identification of citizens will not refer to religion. Article 5 forbids any local government entity from enacting laws which contradict these articles.

Article 6 provides juridical personality for churches and religious associations who register with the Secretary of the Interior, as well as the right to organize themselves according to their own rules and administrative regimes. Article 7 sets out the qualifications and procedures for qualifying as a governmentally recognized church or religious association; among these, churches are required to have existed in Mexico for at least five years and have the

necessary support to exist as a church. Article 8 forbids churches to engage in profit-seeking schemes. Article 9 provides more guidelines for organization, as well as liberties which are rather generous compared to those which churches could claim before the changes. They can participate in more charitable enterprises, such as hospitals, and they can use public facilities for religious activities within the bounds of the law.

Article 11 outlines qualifications for ministers and other representatives of religious associations: among other things, they must be at least 21 of age and Mexican by birth (there are a few exceptions for foreigners), and of good character. Their obligations and rights, according to Articles 12, 13, and 14, are as follows: they must register with the Ministry of the Interior; as citizens they can vote, but cannot hold office, or hold appointed positions, unless they have severed all ties to ministerial positions; finally, as ministers, they may not engage in partisan political activity, neither supporting or opposing candidates or parties. Still unclear, and important for determining how much Evangelical political activism may result from the changes, is whether ministers and religious leaders may even discuss politics at all--whether from the pulpit or not--and whether they may encourage voting and involvement in a nonpartisan manner.

Article 16 forbids religious associations or their ministers from owning or administering any means of mass communication; they may, however, own and operate press operations solely dedicated to disseminating their religious information, and special permission may be obtained in extraordinary circumstances for religious associations to use the means of mass communication. Violations will result in state expropriation of the properties involved in the violation. Article 17 governs the ownership and administration of buildings and equipment which can be owned by the religious associations; several regulations are set down for the registration of these properties.

Articles 21 and 22 allow freedom of worship in church properties and allows for public worship when official permission is granted; but by no means may religious associations hold political meetings in churches.

Articles 25 through 28 mandate that the Interior Ministry is responsible for the enforcement of these regulations, and it will mediate disputes between religious associations. Articles 29 through 36 discuss in more detail what actions constitute infractions, what the sanctions will be (including revocation of registration and closing of churches) and what procedures will be followed by which officials. Noteworthy are: the prohibition on moral or physical pressure to change an individual's religious views or affirmations; converting a religious meeting into a political one; publicly opposing the

laws or the institutions of the country; and defaming the national symbols. (This last one causes problems for the Jehovah's Witnesses who believe it a sin to honor or express allegiance to any person or entity but God.)

The Ley Reglamentaria concludes by recounting what articles of the Constitution of 1917 have been amended or rescinded by this legislation; they are many, since the changes provide for new liberties and rights that have not existed in Mexico for almost eighty years.

These legal changes reveal two things: one, religious groups have held opinions on constitutional matters but because of the laws themselves they have withheld these opinions, and when given an opportunity they readily spoke out; two, the constitutional reform ignited activity among many religious groups. This chapter turns now to a discussion of how these Mexican participated in the reform.

One might assume that most Evangelicals would have been quite pleased with the constitutional reform, since the laws allow Mexico's Church-state relations to be more similar to those of many other Latin American states, and less so, to those of the United States. Nevertheless, the changes produced tensions between Catholics and Protestants as has been noted, but also among Protestants themselves. Some Evangelicals objected to the changes for fear of losing the few rights they already had and worried that the Catholic

Church might be able to use the changes to its advantage at the expense of Evangelicals. In fact, when the changes were proposed and when the President invited some denominational representatives, but not all of them, to inform them of his plans, those not invited were angry and a quarrel broke out among the denominations. These circumstances reveal some of the division among Evangelicals which may portend problems in the future for united Evangelical political action. Moreover, Evangelical attitudes toward constitutional changes reflect the doctrinal views as discussed in Chapter 6 and the fear of other societal actors, such as the Catholic Church, as discussed in Chapter 5: according to information given by interviewees for this study, some Evangelicals were apprehensive about changes that might draw attention to them and involve them in societal conflict.

Scott's thesis focuses on the Evangelical role in the reform process. In September of 1991--well after the Church's letter of 1988 and apparently during the time the president was contemplating the changes--the president invited leaders from three denominations to his official residence and to his "Informe," or State of the Union Address. The purpose of the meeting was to allow him to get their views on the changes. But this event produced rancor among various denominations because the Pentecostals were not invited, only the historical denominations of Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian. Taking offense at not being consulted, Pentecostals (at the time, the

president of CONAMEX--the conservative Mexican Evangelical umbrella association affiliated with the World Evangelical Fellowship and CONELA--was a Pentecostal pastor) formed the Foro Nacional de Iglesias Cristianas Evangelicas (the National Forum of Evangelical Christian Churches: Foro) to represent their interests. (This organization will be discussed in more detail later, but its creation reveals the deep divisions that exist among the denominations and speaks to the difficulties Evangelicals may have in presenting a united front for political activity.)

Why were the Pentecostals not invited? Scott believes it is because Salinas knew that their presence would offend the Catholic Church whom he was courting at the time. The Church would be offended because the Pentecostal denominations are the fastest growing in the country, just as they are in most of Latin America; in contrast, the mainline denominations are not much of a threat to the Church since their growth is rather static. Therefore, Scott speculates that the Church may have put pressure on the president not to invite the Pentecostals or any denomination other than the mainline ones. These circumstances caused the denominations to quarrel over charges of accepting favoritism.

As to the Evangelical reaction to the changes, Scott states that before the Informe and the private meeting with the president, most Evangelicals, roughly 90%, had been opposed to the changes. In fact, they had been vocally

opposing changes in their denominational magazines prior to the election of 1988 and during much of the debate over the reforms. They were especially afraid of changes in the regulation of education and political activity of the clergy, fearing that the Catholic Church would take over in both areas if they were allowed any freedom. Evangelicals had been promised, says Scott, by a high government official that there would be no changes; and since the Interior Secretary continued to say so, they had reason to believe there would be no reforms. But only six days after their meeting with Salinas and the Informe, they came out in favor of constitutional reform, taking out a full page newspaper advertisement expressing full support for the president's proposed changes and thanking him for including them in the discussion. In fact, the National Baptist Convention, after the audience with the president, presented a document to the government outlining their views in considerable detail.[11]

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[11]The Baptist leadership cites each article to be reformed in turn and their views on the reform of each. Its wishes were in line with the president's proposals. What it did not ask for is telling. The Baptists did not ask that churches currently owned by the government (the prior legal situation) be given to the denominations, but that they remain the property of the nation. Moreover, ministers should have the right to vote, since they are Mexican citizens and by right ought to be included in the democratic process, but by no means should they be able to stand for election or be appointed to state offices, the rationale being that they, as ministers, cannot separate themselves from their religious work. The leadership's requests offered no opposition and in some aspects appear to be asking less than the president revealed in his plans. Additionally, the leadership repeatedly pledged itself to upholding order and preserving social peace; several times it alluded to the need for all to

Why did Evangelicals make such a complete turnabout? Did certain Evangelical leaders now have a "social conscience" and a desire to get involved in politics? No, says Scott, but rather they realized in their meeting with Salinas that he fully intended to make the changes and they wanted to "get on the bandwagon" so to speak. Scott also believes that Evangelicals wanted to gain the president's favor since they were suffering increased persecution at the hands of Catholic militants (as discussed in Chapter 5) whom they were openly opposing by at first declaring against reform.[12]

Nevertheless, some Evangelicals did desire more societal presence, both to proselytize and to encourage political activity. The Foro, formed in part in reaction to the slighting of Pentecostals regarding the presidential audience, ironically supported the president enthusiastically, notes Scott, with only a few Foro members expressing dissent. They held a press conference, and for the first time Evangelicals were seen on television and in the newspapers expressing their views on a matter of public policy. Scott speculates that they supported the changes in part because they hoped to obtain the president's approval for Evangelical use of the

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respect the principle of religious plurality and nondiscrimination. Not surprisingly, the admonition to "render to Caesar what is Caesar's" was cited.

[12]Scott asserts that most of the persecution is conducted by a small minority of priests not in Mexico City, who think that by being far from the capital they can get away with fomenting persecution of Evangelicals.

airwaves. Scott argues that Foro leaders have a "700 Club" mentality, a reference to Pat Robertson of the United States, a religious broadcaster who has campaigned for the presidency and is quite involved in American politics.

In sum, the changes were debated by the Church, the government, legal experts, and Evangelicals. In the end, as is usually the case in Mexican politics, the president's wishes prevailed and the reforms were carried out. The Catholic Church was pleased, and Evangelicals-- facing political reality--either nervously accepted the reforms out of political necessity (mainline denominations) or enthusiastically supported them with the goal of increasing their influence in society (Foro). If Scott's interpretation is correct, for some Evangelicals the doctrinal constraints to political activity maintained their strength even as the legal constraints began to fall away. For others, such as certain members of Foro and a few in the mainline denominations who welcomed the changes, a political awakening of sorts was underway: both legal and doctrinal constraints were weakened simultaneously and rather dramatically.

If some Evangelicals have indeed revealed changed attitudes toward political involvement, have become active and now encourage others to be active, who are they, what are they thinking, saying, and doing? Certain activist Evangelical leaders provide at least some answers for these questions.

Their activity over the last 10 to 15 years is worth examining. I would caution readers that the answers provided here are not conclusive, since I have been unable to talk to all leaders, nor is there much documentation of their views and activities since these changes have only recently occurred. My contacts are in Mexico City, the center of Evangelical activity and guidance--as much as it is followed in the rest of the nation. While some leaders continue to concentrate on evangelism, now at a greater pace, others are gathering Evangelicals together in seminars and providing them with printed information to teach them about political involvement and. Most of the leaders appear to have begun expressing new attitudes and engaging in political activity in response to the freedoms now allowed by the reforms. So then, this chapter contains information given by some of the most active and politically-minded Mexican Evangelicals that I have encountered, either in interviews or by researching documents they have provided.

Changes in Attitudes and Behavior

In various sections of this study I have referred to recent research on Evangelical growth and isolated incidents of political activity, particularly in the rural areas. For example, Clawson (1984), Higuera Bonfil (1986),[13] Rodolfo and

[13]Higuera Bonfil provides information regarding certain Evangelicals in the state of Quintana Roo, who have engage in political activity, perhaps at the urging and under the

Quiroz (1990), and Palacios (1987), provide interesting data about these issues. They discuss not only numerical growth and increased evangelism, but also politics and socio-economic issues such as increased entrepreneurialism among Evangelicals. It is not necessary to focus on this information here, but simply to note to it in support of the contention that the last 10 to 15 years in Mexico have witnessed an increasing social presence of Evangelicals in rural areas.

Mexico City has also been the site of increasing evangelistic activity over the same time period. It is important to note this activity because it reveals changes in the attitudes and behaviors of some Evangelicals--they are increasing their numbers in Mexico City, and in some respects are taking a more pubic position in society. Moreover, if there is increased Evangelical activity and presence in society, it may lead to more social awareness; that is, some Evangelicals may be reforming their doctrinal views to allow for more social activity, and there may be a political

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instruction of missionaries. These Evangelicals, according to personal testimonials, have used the press to express their views, as well as organized themselves along denominational lines. At times, they have ignored city officials' decrees due to denominational divisions; for example, some have refused to register their churches with the local representative of the Interior Secretary, as the pre-reform laws required. In general, it is certain Evangelical leaders who are the most active and vocal, not the rank-and-file church member. Higuera Bonfil, although noting the political activity is nascent, believes Evangelicals could form very active and powerful local political interest groups.

awakening at hand. We should caution against the notion that simply because a particular group grows numerically and begins to establish a more public presence, it does not necessarily follow that the group will become politically active. Nevertheless, we may speculate that the group can and perhaps will become more politically active if other circumstances obtain, such as if politically active leaders and societal and governmental acceptance of the group's activism are present. We saw that the events surrounding the constitutional reforms produced such awareness and involvement, spurred mostly by church leaders desiring to speak out on politics. The activities and attitudes of these leaders are discussed in this section, as well as their plans for the future.

Evangelical activity in the 1980s has produced a combined total of about 1800 churches and preaching points in Mexico City, as well as some specialized ministries to various sectors of society. Ministries include those directed at professionals and politicians, as well as the poor.[14] John Maust of the Latin American Mission reports estimates of the

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[14]This information is derived from a report of the Latin American Mission (Evangelical) written by John Maust and entitled
"Cities of Change: Urban Growth and God's People in Ten Latin American Cities" (Coral Gables, Florida: 1984). It is a report on the activities and growth of the region's Evangelicals. I have included it in this section because it provides information that is not attainable elsewhere, given that there is little scholarly work on the subject, especially on the subject of urban Evangelicals. This piece also contains information on one of my interviewees, politician and pastor Pablo Monzalvo, and his wife Judith who was also present during my interview of her husband.

number of Mexican Evangelical believers to range from 850,000 to one million, or about 6% of the population. Numerous evangelistic endeavors, many headed by lawyers, politicians, North American missionaries, as well as nationals, were founded in the decades of the 1970s and 1980s; for example: Evangelism-in-Depth led by Juan Isais; the Pentecostal Faith, Hope and Love Centers founded by U.S. missionary Dan Ost; the Christian Renewal Church founded by pastor-politician Pablo Monzalvo; and the numerous other outreaches led by several historic and more recently founded denominations. Even without access to radio and television, some churches reported phenomenal growth rates of 12% and greater. Christian bookstores abound, and the Billy Graham Association rents out an average of 30 to 40 films each month. Several Evangelical leaders credit the 1981 visit of Billy Graham to Mexico with sparking much of the activity. The evangelism tour was highly publicized, provided positive visibility, and the conduct of attendees and organizers was lauded by several politicians and government officials. Several churches and ministries were born of this event (Maust, 32, 129; Conard, 52-53).

But even with such growth and ministry foundings, observers and Evangelicals themselves report that "denominational barriers" continue to be obstacles to growth and to working together (Maust, 123-24). So much so that perhaps this divisiveness itself constrains Evangelical political activity, since Evangelicals cannot begin to work

for political goals if they are unable even to work for spiritual goals. (Prior to the Billy Graham crusades, the government witnessed such division and it almost cost Evangelicals permission to hold the Graham crusades.) If these attitudes can be changed, perhaps political activity will increase among church members. Noteworthy is the fact that many of the current Evangelical outreaches include some social ministry (Maust, 123). For example, Monzalvo is a successful politician, but he and his wife founded their church in a poor neighborhood and thereby are able to help their congregants obtain access to public programs that provide housing (Maust, 130). Another leader, a lawyer who has tried to tie the many efforts together, Rafael Ortiz, found that he could not get Evangelicals to "network" as he had hoped. Still, he carries on this activity on his own. During the mid-1980s he had about 30 politicians and professionals meeting together once a month to help one another "in their secular and spiritual ministries." It is this type of Evangelical leader, especially the pastor-politicians and the pastor-politicos, who are exhibiting these changed attitudes and behaviors, and they may be influencing others similarly.[15] Changed attitudes and

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[15]It should be noted that Jonas Flores, long-time PRI member and government official, stresses that one must look not to the national Evangelical leadership based in Mexico City to find the most effective church leaders encouraging political activism. Rather, one should look to the local pastors: they have the most power over their congregations, and when their doctrinal views change to allow activism, they

behaviors among Evangelicals in general may depend in large measure upon the success or failure of the leadership.

Monzalvo asserted that his fellow Evangelicals should be involved in politics; they should participate as voters and supporters of candidates and parties. However, they should not organize themselves as a political party or gather themselves around Evangelical leaders bent on becoming political leaders of Evangelicals, nor should they attempt to create a definitively Evangelical group within the PRI or any other party. To do so--as some whom he knows are doing--will invite certain failure since Evangelicals are a small minority, the established parties, especially the PRI, are too strong to allow such and simply will not allow it, and the anticlerical history of Mexico presents a foreboding obstacle; additionally, Mexican Evangelicals are often identified by critics with the United States, and a public presence would exacerbate this problem. If they were to form a party and a "religious war" were to erupt, the Evangelicals would lose badly; they would be an easy target of all the forces arrayed against them. Moreover, the "religious war" might not be restricted to simply Catholic-Protestant conflict, but intra-Protestant conflict may erupt as Evangelical leaders attempt to gain political followings. Referring to the "monolithic power structure of the PRI," he argues that many

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will pass these on to the congregations. Moreover, local pastors have the best chance to spark an Evangelical political awakening.

members of the PRI, in particular, would be quick to oppose such a move. There is only a handful of Evangelical PRI members powerful enough to come to their aid: a former cabinet official who is now a deputy in the lower house, and perhaps two or three others. These people, men and women, are in the PRI, the PAN, or in Cardenas's leftist group, but they are not well-enough ensconced in the upper echelons of the government or the "Revolutionary Family" to protect vocal Evangelical political activists. Relief in this area may come later, as members of the elite are proselytized, Monzalvo says, by himself and others. He believes God has made this his purpose since he has been able to stay in power (as an advisor to the capital's mayor) even though his faith is well-known. In sum, he sees more to be gained for Evangelicals if they will not create a separate party but work quietly within the established structures.

Monzalvo admits that his desire is to see Evangelicals support the PRI. In his opinion, it is a party God has allowed to remain in power and one that has allowed Evangelicals the freedom to join it. Moreover, the PRI opposes communism and the Catholic Church's hegemony, conducting itself as Evangelicals should want it to. It "behaves" as an Evangelical party in many respects. (He is particularly sensitive to the Catholic-Protestant issue because as a member of the fast growing Pentecostal/charismatic movement, he knows well the religious

tensions currently existing.) "But," he says, "in the moment that the Evangelical church becomes a danger--too large or too vocal--the government would clamp down. So then, it is more important not to rock the boat and cause trouble for the Evangelical church; such misguided activity could prevent the spread of the gospel."

Monzalvo hopes that the existing parties will look to Evangelicals for votes. Each election there are more Evangelicals in Mexico, and the parties, especially his party, the PRI, should be able to count on Evangelical votes. Such a situation can boost the PRI and give Evangelicals a voice. Further, he maintains that the best hope Evangelicals have is to be supporters of many candidates and parties, as well as be candidates of many parties so that their voices are heard and they have real representation across the spectrum. As a rapidly growing minority--perhaps as much as 10% to 15% of the nation--Evangelicals can be an attractive electoral group; but to be set off as a distinct party would be devastating.

Monzalvo hopes that Evangelicals will be able to use the opening of the constitutional reform to gain more political power and become more involved. As to radio, television, and publications, Monzalvo cautions Evangelicals to be patient and not to push because their use of these can produce a backlash. It would perhaps give them such a public presence that critics would attack. If they do use the means of mass communication, they should seek only to evangelize and inform about politics,

not feature candidates or Evangelical leaders seeking to expand their base of support. An ideal situation would be programming controlled by a leader who truly does not seek political power, but wants only to inform Evangelicals about politics. Monzalvo admits that, unfortunately, such a person does not exist yet; most appear to be seeking a base of support.

Accordingly, Monzalvo advises Evangelicals interested in their future political role to look for options other than simply to support the PRI. Although he is "a PRIista" to the end," and the party's leader, Salinas, is extremely popular for now, the future may be different. The PRI may not be able to maintain its hegemony--it may even have to put forth a non-PRI candidate for president in 1994; it is in some respects a dying party, "a losing group"; for any group to tie its fortunes to it would be a mistake. The youth especially should "branch out." Who might they look to? He states that the PAN is an alternative, noting that the municipal president of Mazatlan is an Evangelical PANista. Also, there is the PRD (of which Monzalvo is rather critical), whose coordinator in the federal Chamber of Deputies (the lower house) is an Evangelical woman. She was formerly a Cabinet minister for Salinas (see above), but Cardenas recruited her for a congressional race. She is on the left of the political spectrum, as is Cardenas, and together they represent an

opening on the left and even among Communists, for Evangelical political involvement.[16]

Monzalvo admits that most independent and charismatic leaders are now privately telling their people to vote for the PRI. But in general, he believes most Evangelicals support the party with whom their denominational leaders are affiliated. Their support has helped at least one Evangelical leader--a rather vocal proponent of Evangelical political involvement--who has run for office. Here, Monzalvo refers to the case of a newly-elected deputy from Monzalvo's home state of Oaxaca: the Evangelicals gave him the margin of victory against another PRI candidate in an internal run-off election.

Finally, Monzalvo addresses the persecutions Evangelicals are facing. He maintains that such actions are rooted in the cultural problem of "caciquismo," which is the absolute control exercised by local rural village leaders. Monzalvo's statements reiterate what was discussed in Chapter 5, that these local leaders are angry over the Evangelicals' teaching of temperance: when the gospel is spread, the cacique's profits from liquor sales decline. Therefore, the cacique

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[16]Luis Scott noted in my interviews with him in Mexico City that some on the Mexican political left are very open to Evangelical involvement. For example, in 1978, the Mexican Communist Party stated that not all religious persons should be seen as enemies of the poor, nor should they be excluded from the political process. In fact, the party called for its members to recruit religious persons, including pastors. During and after the 1988 elections, Cardenas himself advocated the same. These events make clear that members of the left were among the first to call for enfranchisement of the clergy.

allies himself with the priest to force the social and cultural compliance of all village residents with the folkways from which he profits: the drinking festivals. An economic conflict becomes a religious one. The state, although not itself persecuting Evangelicals, is unwilling to do anything about the situation. Although it has some responsibility in the matter, the federal government does not intervene because it does not see the issue as important enough to warrant concern. Monzalvo states that Evangelical numerical growth will allow them to put pressure on the authorities to obtain relief. But he cautions Evangelicals not to engage in or provoke a "holy war" with their persecutors because the former would lose.

Perhaps a "holy war" is not yet in the offing, but certainly the Catholic Church will not be able to take advantage of the constitutional reform alone. Along with independents Monzalvo and Flores, and certain others of the mainline denominations encouraging political activism among church members, there is the Foro. In the preceding pages this organization was introduced as party to the debate over the reform, and as an association dedicated to representing Evangelical interests in Mexican society. A closer look at the circumstances of its founding, it statement of beliefs, and its goals reveals a unique and unprecedented situation: a "Moral Majority" type organization now exists in Mexico.

Recall that the Foro was founded in 1991 after no Pentecostal leaders were invited to the presidential consultation. At its formation a press conference was arranged by the leadership, made up mostly of Pentecostals and especially members of the Church of God (based in Cleveland, Tennessee) in the Mexican Republic and the Assemblies of God.[17] For the first time Evangelicals "went public," expressing their views on television and in newspapers, and actually were being sought out by the normally ambivalent or hostile press who sought to obtain an Evangelical point of view on the changes. As was noted earlier, almost all members of the Foro completely and enthusiastically supported the president's initiatives.

Luis Scott reports that his advice was sought by the Foro leaders as they created their organization. They originally sought to form an organization solely for Pentecostals and Charismatics (sometimes referred to as neo-Pentecostals since they are the new wave of Pentecostalism, having branched off from the Assemblies of God and other older denominations.) Scott advised them to include all Evangelical Protestants so that the Foro could more realistically represent all groups. This advice was accepted, and so the Foro Nacional de las Iglesias Cristianas Evangelicas was created (the National Forum of the Christian Evangelical Churches). Initially,

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[17]This information was drawn from the May 28, 1992 Mexico City interview with Luis Scott.

there was little tension between the Foro and the other more established Evangelical associations such as CONAMEX; however, within a few months, CONAMEX publicly severed its ties with the Foro. Surprisingly, the reason for this according to Scott is not so much denominational differences--CONAMEX has been led by a Pentecostal president, and current president Juan Isais is a Presbyterian on good terms with Pentecostals--but rather it is jealousy over public attention. When Foro leader Alberto Montalvo, speaks, the press covers him readily as though he spoke for all Evangelicals in Mexico, almost as though he were the "Evangelical Pope," explains Scott. CONAMEX is perhaps jealous of this attention since it has been active in Mexico for more than 15 years and its work is being ignored while the Foro is a very new organization and gets all the press coverage. It cannot help much that Montalvo is a former highly placed director of CONAMEX.[18] At a 1992 Luis Palau evangelistic crusade, the evidence of the

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[18]Scott relates another similar instance of Evangelical disunity. CONAMEX also broke with the Comite Evangelico de Defensa (Evangelical Committee of Defense), an interdenominational watchdog group reporting on persecutions of church members. The reason for the break was that some Evangelical leaders had met with the Pope when he visited Mexico in 1990. The Committee accused the Methodists in particular of meeting with "the Beast." The Methodists denied meeting with the Pope, but said that they had the right to do so if they desired. CONAMEX defended the Methodists, who are members of CONAMEX, and so broke with the Committee over its criticism of the Methodists. This incident typifies the strained relations that often develop among the Evangelical groups, casting doubt on hopes that they can work together for political ends.

strains were public and very obvious. As yet, there has been no reconciliation.[19]

According to Foro publicity documents (see Foro in Bibliography), the organization's membership is open to all Evangelical denominations (not Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses), independent churches, local churches, Evangelical fraternal organizations and alliances who agree with the principles, political activities, and political values of the Foro. These documents state that Foro members have joined together "at the historical moment" when a new relationship between religion and the state has been created. The Foro does not claim to represent all Evangelical Christian churches or groups, only those which officially join. The dues-paying members are from all parts of the nation; chapters exist in many of the states and in 51 cities. The Foro exists to support its members by helping them adjust to the new church-state relationship through providing information and counsel. It supports them in their goal of evangelizing the nation. Members will receive help in understanding their rights and responsibilities as they are addressed in the new laws regarding juridical personality, public worship, registration of churches, and fiscal matters (taxation).

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[19]Noteworthy about the Palau crusades is that for only the third time in history the Mexican government welcomed an evangelist as a "distinguished visitor." It appears that the government is intent upon showing no partiality among religious groups, having welcomed both the Pope and Palau with equal honor and ceremony.

Moreover, the Foro will represent members before the civil authorities in political and legal matters. It is not a forum for any single church or denomination to express personal views, neither is it ecumenical or partisan: the Foro does not support any political party. As to theology, much of the Foro's pronouncements contain a Pentecostal flavor, and members of the top leadership are all Pentecostals; nevertheless, the Foro represents all denominations, Pentecostal and nonPentecostal. As to politics, the Foro is respectful of the authorities, but it is clear from their statements that they intend to take full advantage of their newly-won civil rights and will defend them with determination.

Some of its recent and ongoing activities are the following:

**forming and operating a Human Rights Commission to aid those who are persecuted by petitioning the government on their behalf;

**holding press conferences to make Evangelical views known in the country;

**informing Evangelicals of the views and plans of the government via presidential audiences;

**providing members of the legislature with information on Evangelical views, as well as Christian literature;

The Foro's standing organizations include:

**The National Evangelical Commission for Social Orientation

**The National Evangelical Institute for the Sciences of Communication

**The National Evangelical Commission of Human Rights

**The National Evangelical Commission for the Rights of Women

**The National Evangelical Commission for Education[20]

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[20]The work of this organ of the Foro is rather unique; most Mexican Evangelical associations don't directly address the issue of education, both public and private. But there is an increasing interest in education, both on the part of the government and Evangelicals in general. Several news reports of the last few years report on official reforms and the subsequent political conflicts which arose among the Church, the teacher's unions and the government over these reforms. One other Evangelical association, the Latin American Theological Fraternity discussed in Chapter Six, is active in this area, holding conferences and publishing materials on Christian perspective of education. Their latest publication is "La Educacion en Mexico: Tercera Consulta de Reflexion Biblica" (Mexico City: 1992). This work is comprised of the work of about fifteen contributors, including Luis Scott, who discuss the recent governmental education and constitutional reforms, and how these affect secular and private education at all levels in Mexico. Foro activities and these Fraternity materials, as well as information gathered during my interviews, suggest that this topic will be debated for quite some time to come. As Evangelicals find more opportunities to assert their presence and express their views in society, they are more likely to take a role in education.

The Institute for the Sciences of Communication is a very important organ of the Foro since one of its main goals is to obtain government permission to use the airwaves. In May of 1992, I attended a Foro conference on Evangelicals and the use of the media. Ironically, this meeting of a rather political nature was held in the First Baptist Church: during the 1968 student movement Scott reports that this church took a very conservative and "apolitical" approach to society and politics. Also, holding this meeting in a Baptist church testifies to the Foro's ability to gain the support of nonPentecostal denominations and leaders. The media conference was attended by about 100 Evangelical leaders who

In an open letter to the authorities which defends Foro actions, the Foro states that it is fully aware of the dominance of the Catholic Church in times past, and that this historical fact explains the previous legal situation. The Foro also states that for the past 131 years Mexican Evangelicals have been good citizens, obedient to the law and the authorities, respecting the symbols and institutions of the nation, all while bearing up under the persecution of the Catholic Church. The Foro rejects the pejorative term "sects" used by much of society to label them, and the suggestion that Evangelicals are under foreign influence. Next, the letter spells out Foro's theological beliefs, which include belief in the Divine inspiration of the Bible, allegiance to it and to the gospel message of salvation.

Noteworthy in the statement of purpose is the assertion that Evangelicals recognize their social responsibilities and seek to fulfill them. On this issue, the Foro sets itself apart from most of the other Mexican Evangelical associations: by concerted effort it plans to organize Evangelicals for social action, to supply material as well as spiritual needs. In sum, the Foro apparently intends to engage in total ministry, and to do this on a national scale, encouraging regional and national activism, including as many

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paid a fee and received material and heard speakers, some of whom were not Evangelicals but sympathetic civic leaders and journalists.

denominations and churches as possible. The organization's agenda for its first year reflects these ambitious goals.

Included in the introductory packet of materials supplied to new Foro members are several announcements of the various seminars and conferences to be held, suggestions for regional and local meetings, and general information on understanding the new church-state relationship.

Since its inception, the Foro has enjoyed a meeting with the president, as other Evangelicals did during the debates over constitutional reform; this event is referred to several times in the Foro packet as the beginning of a new and historic relationship and is apparently a source of great pride and encouragement to the leaders of the Foro.

Finally, the packet includes several press clippings revealing how much publicity the Foro has received and what some of its public pronouncements have been. They include discussions of abortion, human rights violations in Chiapas, and religious uses of the means of mass communication. In particular, several of these articles include Montalvo's reactions to the Catholic Church's recent statements and historical treatment of Evangelicals. One cannot help but conclude that the Foro feels it is necessary to defend Evangelicals from the continuing opposition of the Church. The tensions described in Chapter 6 and in the previous section of this chapter apparently are not receding; one can speculate that with both religious groups enjoying new

freedoms and rights, they may remain at loggerheads for several years.

The primary means by which the Foro communicates with its memberships is "Notiforo," a newspaper announcing meetings, seminars, and other announcements, as well as general information of interest to Evangelicals. Such an Evangelical publication is novel in that it addresses political and legal matters, as well as evangelism issues, from an advocate's point of view. It also regularly publishes secular news reports about Foro activities and photographs of meetings, marches and demonstrations organized by the Foro.

Although the Foro is involved in many areas of civic life, from Evangelical ministry to social work to concern for women's issues, its activities in one specific area, human rights, deserves special treatment here. This involvement demonstrates the association's commitment to thwarting the attempts of some members of Mexican society to persecute Evangelicals or at least to discourage their growth and emerging public voice.

The Foro's Evangelical Christian National Commission on Human Rights (CONCEDH) asserts that Evangelicals fully support human rights and will work to see that they are guaranteed; thus the commission was established to work with the government's human rights offices (recently created under President Salinas). CONCEDH issued a report on the expulsions of Evangelicals in the rural areas entitled "What is the

Priority for Mexico, Its Liberty or Its Tradition?" This report includes a strong defense of the liberty of conscience, and a rather harsh critique of the Catholic Church's history in Mexico. According to the document, Mexico had a long history of paganism under the Aztecs and other indigenous nations, but such paganism was not terminated when Catholicism arrived; rather it was simply replaced with a new form of paganism, Catholicism itself. The report refers to the veneration of the saints and use of images in Catholic worship as evidence of the Church's paganism. Further, Mexicans have liberated themselves several times before from "visible" tyrannies, but continues to be subjected to the "invisible" tyranny of the Catholic Church, an "imposed religion." Sounding similar to the discussion in Chapter 6, the report states that this religious hegemony requires citizens to follow traditions and customs at the expense of liberty and the development of the nation.

In the past, some relief came in the form of heroes of the Mexican people which were raised up by God to beat back the Church. Now, says CONCEDH, God has raised up Carlos Salinas as President to combat the Church by changing the laws and providing freedom for all religious groups. Clearly, the Foro is putting great faith in what Salinas has done and will do regarding the reforms. It is hoped that he will lead the reform of society against oppression and in favor of positive Mexican traditions, such as freedom of conscience, cultural

and linguistic diversity, and patriotism; most importantly, Mexicans have the positive tradition of searching for God, and all citizens must be free in this area. The report reminds Mexicans that, according to its figures, about 16 million Mexicans are not Roman Catholic but Evangelical, yet they are very good citizens. Moreover, Mexico is a signatory to international treaties which commit the nation to guaranteeing religious freedom.

As to the expulsions, the report asks which is more important: preserving the negative traditions of Catholic hegemony which encourage the expulsion of citizens from their communities, or encouraging the positive traditions of Mexican civic life, such as religious freedom? The laws of Mexico clearly show a preference for the latter. Expulsions and other persecutions must be ended if Mexico is to become the modern pluralistic society that citizens and authorities desire.

In the final section of this human rights report, the Foro draws its conclusions: it supports the constitutional reforms; it supports the nation's positive traditions; it encourages pastors and Bible teachers to learn all the nation's languages in order to teach all citizens the Bible; it supports the freedom of belief and expression for all; it supports the practice of the nation's various folk customs and the arts; it gives honor to the nation and its symbols; and it calls upon the Catholic Church to stop encouraging and

supporting the negative traditions, from "idolatry" to drinking festivals, to expulsions. Those who have been persecuted should receive back their property and be paid for their losses. The report includes a letter to the Foro from the Mexican Commission on Human Rights. In this letter, the president of the Commission assures the Foro that the government is working for justice, that the incidents of persecution are declining in number, and most importantly, that the government has implemented a law to make expulsions a special type of crime subject to special sanctions. Included is an invitation for the Foro to attend a public discussion with the Chiapas state legislature and the federal government over the issue.

In June 1992, the Foro president, Alberto Montalvo, and his top executives allowed me to interview them in their offices. They told me of the Foro's goals and reason for existence. Montalvo stated that in addition to gaining access to the media of communication, the Foro was also working to get Evangelicals involved in the civic and political life of Mexico, not simply as voters, but as knowledgeable political activists. As of yet, most Evangelicals do not know that "they should be involved;" they are not "politicized," to use Montalvo's term, as they are in Puerto Rico, Guatemala, and Peru, for example.

Another goal is to show the Mexican people and the government who the Evangelicals are, "to make known their

presence," to acquaint them with the views of the Evangelicals, and to end the "confusion" that has resulted from the societal criticism of them. Access to the media would greatly aid in this effort, which he generally describes as being "salt and light" in Mexican society. Montalvo advises stridently that the Foro does not seek political power or position, nor is it aligned with any party, but it does want to encourage Evangelicals to participate in this fashion.

Regarding the political leanings of Evangelicals, the Foro leaders note that church members are diversified: some are PRIistas, some are Panistas, and a few even are Perredistas (Cardenas's PRD). But on the whole, most remain significantly uninvolved; the Foro leadership confirms much of what was said in Chapter 6 of this study. If there are any pronounced political leanings, they exist among some of the Evangelical youth where a few Perridistas may be found. However, these are few in number, and the Foro leaders do not think this is a problem.[21]

The leaders discussed the various organs of the Foro; these commissions and institutes are designed to provide

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[21]Readers should keep in mind that for most Evangelicals, especially those in the leadership who usually hold to theologically and politically conservative positions, the PRD is not an option because of its ties to Communists and the radical left. The Foro leaders jokingly told me that if a young person expresses support for the PRD, the leaders will "hold his feet to the fire." The leaders of the Foro also allowed that they and most Evangelicals lean toward the PRI as the "least bad" of the available options; but they refrain from open support for it or any other party.

training and information so that Evangelicals can enter the political and social arenas as knowledgeable citizens. The commission on fiscal matters was set up to deal with the issue of taxation since religious organizations are to begin paying taxes under the new church-state relationship. The commission on women is led by women to give them a voice in society--as Evangelical women, acting specifically on Christian principles as they address social and political issues. It is not a feminist organization nor one concerned with "liberation" as secular organizations might be; rather, one might more accurately compare it to Concerned Women for America in the United States, which is a specifically Christian response to the National Organization for Women.

As to the human rights issue, the leadership confirmed the discussion in Chapter 5 regarding the economics (festival drinking) and the politics (priests allied with caciques) of the persecutions and expulsions. Montalvo and the others had much to say about their work in obtaining justice for those persecuted. At one point is this interview, they stressed that although they did not seek ecumenical relationships with the Catholic Church, they and the Foro did not consider themselves to be "enemies of the Catholic Church:" said Montalvo, "We all believe in Jesus Christ as Savior."

Conclusion

In order to fulfill its goals, the Foro's work will have to be as dedicated, involved and complex as its statements of purpose and its ambitious organs. But it is nothing short of historic for Mexico that an Evangelical association has been created to inform Evangelicals about politics, encourage them to activism, and help them to express their views to the government. In many ways Foro typifies the recent profound changes in attitude and behavior of some influential Mexican Evangelicals. Such organizations as the Foro have existed among more liberal Evangelicals for some time due to the presence of the World Council of Churches and its affiliates, but until now conservative Evangelicals have not had such a voice.

The Foro is quite young, and it is already beset with divisions among Evangelicals (the split with CONAMEX), and a potential public and heated battle with the Catholic Church given the Foro's pronouncements and continuing opposition to and from the Church. Moreover, there is the lingering problem of apathy among church members. Still, this organization has promise: it is rather well-received by the authorities and the press, and it has other advantages which are shared by the other Evangelical leaders and groups. These advantages are: 1) the open lines of communication which exist between the government and the various denominational and umbrella groups as demonstrated by President Salinas's hosting of Evangelicals

and the federal Human Rights Commission's invitation to Evangelical leaders to participate in conferences; 2) the leadership's considerable access to Evangelical groups as demonstrated by Foro's newspaper Notiforo and the various other sources of news on Evangelical activities and views; and 3) Evangelicals have the ability to hold semianrs and conferences for the purpose of training and educating Evangelicals for political and social action, as demonstrated by the various Foro branch organizations.

If the changes in attitude and behavior that have been exhibited among certain leaders are adopted by a greater number of Evangelicals, organizations such as the Foro also may be more attractive to a greater number of Evangelicals in the future; importantly, its publication of" Notiforo" may help to build its membership and extend its influence. It appears that the Foro may be able to accelerate a nascent political awakening among Evangelicals in all of Mexico, not just the capital. Perhaps not to capture the presidency as Guatemalan Evangelicals have done; but the Foro may serve its constituency as the Moral Majority did in the United States. That is, it may produce leaders among pastors and laymen who will encourage activism, train church members to work in campaigns and perhaps even to run for office. Other leaders such as Monzalvo and Flores may also have this type of influence. In the final analysis, only the leadership and Evangelicals in general can determine what they will do with

their newly won freedoms and opportunities, and as yet many remain disinterested in the political arena; there should be many research opportunities in the future as the situation unfolds.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusions

In the preceding chapters I have addressed the question "Why have Mexican Evangelicals not been involved in politics, when many Evangelicals in other Latin American countries have engaged in politics, often quite successfully?" I have attempted to explain what accounts for the differences between Mexican and other Latin American Evangelicals regarding political attitudes, behaviors, and success in influencing the societies around them. While I have noted some of the similarities among the region's Evangelicals: Spanish monarchical and Roman Catholic hegemony, dictatorial rule and lengthy battles between liberals and conservatives for political power; I have also discussed the marked differences between Mexico and other Latin American states where Evangelicals have been politically active: liberals ruled Mexico in the latter part of the 19th century and broke much of the Church's temporal power, the Constitution of 1917 enshrined anticlerical and antireligion principles, and a political party has ruled Mexico for over sixty years by controlling politics and society via the tools of centralism, authoritarianism, and corporatism with only a hint of democracy for legitimacy purposes. The other Latin American

states studied here do not share such characteristics. The basis of my argument has been that these profound differences produced in Mexico several constraints--generated both outside the Evangelical community and from within it--which have militated against an Evangelical presence in politics in particular, and in society in general.

Below, I will review the constraints and the subsequent dissolution of some of them in an effort to weigh the influence of each and to justify them as evidence supportive of my argument.

The externally generated constraints are due to several circumstances. First, the tumultuous political and social history of Mexico presents a foreboding image for any group desiring to influence society and politics. Since independence in the early part of the 19th century, the Mexican nation has been ruled mostly by authoritarians who allowed only the privileged elites to take part in government. Usually these were religious (Roman Catholic) or monied elites. Such a small and insignificant group as Evangelicals--dissenters from the traditional religion of Mexico--had no standing or ability to influence society for any great length of time or in any significant way. The exceptions, such as when Evangelicals were favored by liberal reformers, are few in number. Mostly, Evangelicals simply kept out of the way, attempting to win converts out of the view of the Church and the state for fear of being repressed.

Their situation is understood more clearly when one considers how history has treated Evangelicals in other Latin American states. In countries such as Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Chile, they have been able to participate more freely, whether under democratic or nondemocratic rule. That is, when some Latin American Evangelicals survey their nations' histories, they do not encounter perennial hostility to the presence of religious groups in civic life; when Mexican Evangelicals take the same survey, they find that politics has been closed to them for almost the entire life of the nation, as it has been for numerous other groups which dissent from "official" ideology.

Along similar lines, Mexican Evangelicals have been prevented from influencing society by their country's political system as it has existed since the 1920s (Chapter Three). This unique system of government and politics was built and has been preserved by a semi-authoritarian party, the PRI. This party uses aspects of corporatism, centralism, and authoritarianism to build a system that keeps a certain group of elites in power. These elites, the Revolutionary Family, are defined by their party membership--not their religion, money, ethnicity, or military prowess. The system recognizes only those groups under PRI control, and only those affiliated with the PRI may influence society, or at least, only PRI-recognized groups may attempt to influence society without fear of repression or pressure to be coopted. Clearly, Evangelicals are not members of the Revolutionary

Family, just as the Roman Catholic Church has not been; indeed, the system was designed to terminate the influence of religious groups in social and political life. Other countries of the region have had more open systems which not only allow diverse groups to participate, but some have even encouraged religious groups to be involved. In particular, the Church has been quite powerful in some Latin American countries.

Chapter Four revealed one of the most potent determinants of Evangelical withdrawal from society: what history had taught them, and the reality that the PRI political system created, was codified in the 1917 Constitution. Anticlericalism was enshrined in this document and made to be the law of the land; it affected Evangelicals no less than the Church. This legislation made absolutely legal what tradition and the PRI had created for 20th century Mexican Evangelicals; worse for them and all religious persons, the Constitution took away religious associations' standing in law (juridical personality), told them to worship only indoors, and not to attempt to influence society and politics. To violate these laws was to risk loss of property and freedom. Again, the contrast with other countries in Latin America is revealing, since most have not restricted the activities of religious groups nearly so much as has the Mexican state.

One last externally generated constraint is that of societal actors such as the Catholic Church and the news media

as discussed in Chapter Five. While some of the Church's more militant partisans have persecuted Evangelicals verbally and physically--mostly out of fear over the latters' phenomenal growth and altering of indigenous culture--some in the press have proclaimed that Evangelicals were part of a U.S.-sponsored conspiracy to influence Mexican society and politics. To say the least, Evangelicals have been faced with a societal attitude that does not accommodate them, and for such a small minority, such pressure can be quite powerful.

Finally, the sixth chapter dealt with an internal constraint, that of Evangelical theology and doctrine which has traditionally been conservative. Since the Revolution of 1910, most Mexican Evangelical leaders have discouraged their followers from being politically active, and to some degree even from being socially active as to poverty concerns. Leaders have traditionally admonished followers to stay out of the "worldly" and "dirty" business of politics; they discourage believers from losing sight of their heavenly mission to win souls for eternity; and they tell them to "render to Caesar what is Caesar's" and not to be further involved in society. In other parts of Latin America, Evangelical leaders have spearheaded political movements among their followers, encouraging them to be involved in all parts of society, including public life. The response to these calls has been tremendous in some parts of Latin America, as the presidency of Jorge Serrano in Guatemala attests.

The second part of this study focused on the many changes that have taken place in Mexico regarding these several constraints. The Constitution has been changed, Evangelical attitudes have been altered, and behaviors have also changed; there appears to be a political awakening among some members of this religious community. What has happened in Peru, Guatemala, and other parts of the region may be taking place in Mexico. Clearly, some leaders are working toward such a goal.

These chapters strongly support the contention that four kinds of constraints--the social/political history of Mexico, legal restrictions, actions of other societal/political actors and the doctrinal views of Evangelical leaders--account, at least in part, for the relative lack of involvement in politics by Mexican Evangelicals as compared to other Latin American Evangelicals. Other factors, such as socio-economic position, may also have an effect, but the existence of possible additional factors does not negate the effects of the constraints discussed here.

There is the risk that the evidence given in support of some of the constraints is "impressionistic." Nevertheless, two points should be made. First, the impressions are those of prominent Evangelical leaders who have authority to speak on all the constraints. Second, two of the constraints in particular--the legal restrictions and the doctrinal views--are more "measurable" than the others in that there is

documentation for the former and much testimony for the latter; as I have noted several times above, these constraints seem to have had the greatest impact. The effects of the legal restrictions on religious persons and associations can be rather easily determined. Also, the doctrinal views analyzed here may not apply to all Evangelicals, but certainly they have been shown to be widespread enough to influence attitudes toward politics.

The evidence for the importance of the legal and doctrinal constraints is supported by the second section of the study; it discussed changed Evangelical political attitudes which appeared at the same time that the legal constraints were rescinded. As was discussed in Chapter Seven, during the debate over constitutional reform most Evangelical leaders continued to follow tradition and remained out of politics.[1] However, a few Evangelical leaders, most notably the Foro, did become involved as the President's intention to amend the constitution became clear; they appear to have been emboldened by his ending of restrictions on their political speech and the possibility of winning access to radio and television airwaves. These leaders publicly and

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[1]This study discussed the few incidents of Evangelical political activity during the PRI's tenure, most notably the activities of a few rural church leaders and their congregations over land reform issues, and the church youth involved in the 1968 student protests; however, as was demonstrated, the vast majority remained withdrawn during most of this century, and remained so even as the country openly debated the ending of the very restrictions which hindered significant Evangelical and Catholic societal influence.

stridently supported the reform, and soon launched a massive organization to present their views on a wide array of public policy issues.

But why did they now choose either to change their attitudes and behaviors toward politics, or to reveal activist attitudes which they had held in check until it was safe to reveal them? The answer to this question is not easy to obtain because in essence we are asking which constraint most effectively stifled political activity for these particular leaders. It appears from the statements of Pablo Monzalvo, Jonas Flores, Jose Gonzalez, and the leaders of the Foro (as discussed in Chapter Seven) that doctrinal views have been the primary constraints, while Luis Scott argues that, for many leaders, fear of official repression and Evangelical apathy have been the real reasons for lack of involvement and that doctrinal views were adapted to provide cover for timidity and apathy. But it is important to state clearly that all the leaders who have provided evidence for this study's argument regarding the legal and doctrinal constraints attribute lack of involvement to both: none stated that either of the constraints was more influential and most referred to all of the constraints analyzed in this study.

Further research, perhaps based upon survey research might allow stronger statements about the relative importance of these constraints. Nevertheless, the fact that both constraints played so obvious a role in keeping Mexican

Evangelicals out of politics strengthens the argument made in this dissertation: Mexican Evangelicals have not been involved in the political and social life of their country because history, politics, law, society and religious beliefs have acted as constraints against involvement, whereas in other Latin American states where Evangelicals have been politically active, such constraints have not been present.

As to the other constraints, the affects of social history decline as people have new experiences with politics and the other actors, although important, may have less impact if Evangelicals have legally acceptable political resources. As has been shown, Mexican Evangelicals have certainly had numerous experiences with politics in the last few years, and with the recent constitutional reforms they have many more legitimate opportunities and resources to act politically.

The remainder of this chapter is a discussion of the implications this awakening might have for Mexican democracy since the constraint of a closed political system appears also to be weakening.

Mexico is currently undergoing an economic boom, due primarily to the free market policies of it president, Carlos Salinas, and to expectations engendered by the North American Free Trade Agreement yet to be implemented. The income of the top strata of Mexican society is growing phenomenally, while more Mexicans are being employed as indigenous industries

expand and North American companies move to Mexico to take advantage of lower wage rates and less government regulation of enterprise. It appears that all boats are rising, although those at the top are rising more quickly. The PRI hasn't been more popular with the public for quite some time.

What is most interesting about these events to political scientists is the renewed and increasing calls for more democracy in Mexico: these have coincided with Salinas's economic reform. He and his immediate predecessor, President Miguel de la Madrid, have encouraged a more open political system by stressing the need for Mexico to join the family of democratic nations. While actions have fallen short of rhetoric, some real gains have been made: a few opposition victories have been recognized and the electoral system has been reformed yet again. Most importantly, the PRI has endured five years of agitation for more openness from the traditional opposition parties and even from such societal sectors as the Church: every election is contested, fraud is alleged, and the PRI has chosen more often to negotiate rather than to crack down on dissent. Since Salinas's election, civic leaders and journalists, both in and out of Mexico, have constantly engaged in public debate about democracy and the state's integrity or lack thereof. The PRI has for the most part willingly engaged in such debate. It seems that the public mood and Salinas's attempts at further democratization demonstrate what social scientists have witnessed in China and

other developing countries: as economic freedom is broadened, the people demand matching reforms in politics. Salinas is cautiously taking the road more secure for the PRI and the state which is to open the economic arena first, attempt to stabilize economic growth, and only then begin to really reform the political system. If for no other reason, he has made a few strides in the political arena in order to gain legitimacy for his party and the system it created, operates, and from which it benefits.

We may speculate that when a traditional semi-authoritarian party faces the need for economic reform and experiences calls for more democracy, either it will shut off debate, close the political system further, and go forward with economic reforms only; or it will open the political system a bit to "let off steam." In the case of the PRI, it appears that it has chosen to open the political arena a bit more. Observers may then expect to see more issues discussed and more groups heard, placated, and coopted. In the case of Mexico, the PRI may attempt such. Which groups and which issues might play a greater role? For starters, the Catholic Church would appear to benefit most from this attention since it is the largest and most influential of the unofficial societal groups. But Evangelicals probably will receive such attention also if the last few years are any indication. Having entertained them at the presidential residence at least twice, it is not likely the government will go back to

ignoring them as it did for sixty years. Evangelicals and the issues of importance to them may have the opportunity now to become a full-fledged part of the new "Mexican debating society" where the country's political future is concerned.

How then is Mexican society reacting to the PRI's acceptance of more political discourse and criticism of the state? That is, are interest groups taking Salinas and the PRI at their word, and are they showing signs that they expect him and the PRI to make good on their claims?

Perhaps it is too early to tell, but it appears that they are.[2] As soon as Salinas began to campaign for the presidency in 1988, the Roman Catholic Church requested changes in the anticlerical constitution. Although the Church was not joined by the Evangelicals until Salinas had made clear his plans for reform, both groups were applauding the changes when they were announced. Perhaps Scott was correct (Chapter Seven) when he

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[2]The data presented in this study have led this author to draw a conclusion at odds with Bastian's latest observations: he describes modern Protestants in Latin America as eschewing politics and political reform because they have been assimilated into the Latin American corporatist system (Latin American Research Review, Vol. 28, #2, 1993, pp. 33-61.). On the contrary, as has been shown, some Mexican Evangelicals have joined their activist fellow believers in Latin America and become involved in politics; rather than accepting a limited role in a corporatist society, or no role at all, they are engaging in public debate and taking a role in politics and public policy issues, much as they did in the late 19th century and during the Mexican Revolution of 1910. True, they have not yet challenged the state but have supported the president's initiative, but in doing so they were openly opposing some members of the PRI unhappy with the reforms. Moreover, by simply speaking out they are breaking out of the Mexican corporatist system which has traditionally denied a role to such an unofficial group as Evangelicals.

said this was purely a political move, but I think we can argue confidently that this event set in motion a political awakening among some Mexican religious persons. Certainly the Church is in motion, and many Evangelical leaders are taking advantage of their new freedoms. These leaders, as has been noted, appear to be the key to greater Evangelical political activity; indeed, that is the argument of this chapter. The leaders shape the attitudes of the mass of followers and they are primarily responsible for any Evangelical political activity; when they are silent or discourage activism, it often doesn't exist. The other constraints that are being relaxed or terminated, such as the closed political system and the legal strictures on religion-based political activity, have certainly allowed Evangelicals more opportunity to be involved. However, it is the contention here that without the leaders acting as the catalyst for greater involvement, there probably would not be much involvement, nor would there be much interest. As in the United States in the 1970s, some Evangelicals may have been inclined toward political activity, but it is arguable that it took the creation of the Moral Majority and the encouragement of several prominent preachers to motivate large numbers of Evangelicals into the political arena.

The creation of the Foro and the statements and activities of other Mexican Evangelical leaders bear witnesses to the new attitude and behavior. If the Evangelical

leadership which desires a political voice for its followers is successful, we may be about to witness a significant political movement among this group. Perhaps it won't be as dramatic as what has occurred in the United States or in Guatemala, for Mexican Evangelicals are too few; but if the President's warm treatment of them and their few victories in elections are any indication of what the future portends, they may be only beginning to influence Mexican politics and society.

What might such increasing Evangelical influence entail? Certainly, we might expect new issues to be raised and debated which are of great interest to religious persons, such as church use of broadcast airwaves, population control (abortion and birth control), pornography, corruption, and various human rights concerns. And while many Evangelicals may join forces with other religious persons and groups over these issues in order to influence public policy, we might nevertheless expect conflict over them as well: denominational, liberal-conservative, and Catholic-Protestant rifts have not abated: if anything they have deepened in some respects over the last few years. How Evangelicals cope with such potentialities will in large measure determine not only their influence on Mexico's politics but also the amount of political and societal conflict.

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