I

METHODISM IN THE MEXICAN CONTEXT

The Methodists’ zeal to share their religious experience was an indispensable condition for the appearance of the new church in Mexico. Yet their desire to preach was not the only reason for the rise of Methodism. Circumstances in our country at the beginning of the 1870s were favorable to a change in people’s understanding of what Christian commitment meant and even more, to an understanding its social implications. The success of the liberals’ nation-building project was a necessary precondition for the Methodists’ evangelistic efforts as were earlier endeavors by other missionary agencies to spread the Protestant gospel. There were also indigenous sources of religious transformation. All three contributed to the appearance and growth of Methodism in Mexico.

In May 1873, the Mexican government of President Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada brought the anti-clerical policies of the liberal movement to a climax. The expulsion from the country of nineteen foreign priests and the secularization of the religious orders marked the beginning of the policy shift. In September of that year, the Reform laws were incorporated into the constitutional text, raising to the category of supreme law the principles of religious freedom, separation of church and state, civil marriage, the suppression and prohibition of religious orders, and the prohibition of religious groups from acquiring property not directly used in worship. The approval of the organic Law of
Reform in December of the following year, accompanied by the expulsion of the Brothers of Charity, marked the most drastic phase of this policy.¹

This final phase of the liberal revolution coincided almost exactly with the culmination of a half century of efforts on the part of Protestants in Britain and North America to establish a presence in Mexico. Beginning in 1825, British and American Bible societies had played a role in promoting freedom of conscience and access to the Bible in Mexico. Their alliance with liberals such as José María Luis Mora and their use of an invading U.S. army to distribute Bibles, were among their most noteworthy attempts to achieve a favorable result.²

Parallel with these external efforts were indigenous attempts to introduce new religious options such as the publication of the Mexican edition of the Bible prepared by Mariano Galván in 1833 and the actions of the previously mentioned “Constitutionalist Fathers.” Still, it was not until the 1870s that Protestantism began to move beyond isolated efforts and develop a palpable presence in Mexican society. That was the moment when the three separate lines of development converged: government policy permitted the arrival of North American missionaries who gave coherence to aspirations and undertakings already taking shape among Mexican nationals.


The Methodist Episcopal Church officially entered Mexico in December 1872.\(^3\) The decision to launch the mission to Mexico was made at the General Conference in May of that year, a few weeks after the publication of William Cullen Bryant’s writings about our country. The American poet, “one of the most renowned,” according to Ignacio M. Altamirano, painted a favorable picture of the development of non-Catholic missions south of the Río Bravo.\(^4\) In a country that just begun its industrial modernization and that was still struggling to establish a stable political order, the introduction of a creed such as Methodism was not a mere coincidence. Their theology placed strong emphasis on personal transformation. Their ecclesiastical organization emphasized the values of democracy and education. Methodist morality stressed hard work, saving money, and respect for authority. Their worldview idealized a society based on economic liberalism. Many aspects of Methodist belief and practice coincided with the values and desires of a nation that was on the road toward capitalist modernization.

In addition to preaching about a vital religious experience, the missionaries’ marked anti-Catholicism and their constant defense of liberal principles served as their calling card to the liberal government authorities and to Mexican society. As soon as he was established in Mexico City, William Butler endeavored to make contact with President Lerdo de Tejada. He succeeded in April 1873. His objective was to explain the mission’s goals and to request government protection for the mission’s activities. The interview, which was attended by the North American ambassador Thomas Nelson,

\(^3\) 54th Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1872, pp. 122.

\(^4\) Arnold Chapman, México y el Señor Bryant, pp. 157.

\(^5\) The Rio Grande in the United States.—Trans.
proved to be highly favorable to the missionaries present. Lerdo publically expressed his approval and support for the missionaries’ efforts: “I am sure that the opinion of all the enlightened classes in our society is ardently in favor of complete tolerance, and I will answer for the conduct of all authorities that are directly dependent on the federal government.” The reasons offered by the President for his support were straightforward: his constitutional duty, a spirit of tolerance, and the Protestants’ promise to respect the laws.\(^6\)

A. What Sorts of People Embraced Methodism?

The response to the missionary call, the appeal for preachers, or whatever one wants to call it, came from a very wide range of Mexican professionals: ex-priests, ex-soldiers, those who practiced the liberal professions, factory owners and rural proprietors, artisans, businessmen, and employees were all found among the promoters of the new creed. Nevertheless they seemed to have three things in common: they had rejected the Catholic Church, they had come to identify with the liberal program of modernization, and they were passing through serious trials with regards to their economic and/or social circumstances.

John Wesley Butler pointed out that among the first preachers affiliated with the mission there were five ex-priests, two ex-soldiers, a cadet from the Military College, and a policeman. Evidently the soldiers were unemployed at the time they joined the Methodist Episcopal Church. In fact, the only one who had a secure job at the time he

\(^6\) Diario Oficial, August 9, 1873.
embraced the new religion was the policeman, Doroteo Mendoza.\textsuperscript{7} Butler also called attention to the fact that among the priests there were two with doctorates and one who had been an ecclesiastical judge in the metropolitan cathedral.\textsuperscript{8} All of the former priests had in some way shown their disaffection with the hierarchy with regards to doctrine and politics and their preaching was determinedly anti-Catholic. Thus, their ideological predisposition to liberalism was accompanied by a precarious economic and social situation.

Although we do not have reliable information about the composition of most local congregations, it seems that the condition of those in the pews was not much different from that of their pastors in regard to material and social stability. According to John W. Butler, the Mexico City parish was comprised of people with scarce economic resources, especially domestic workers whose employers did not allow them to attend church services.\textsuperscript{9} In Arroyozarco, in the state of Mexico, two-thirds of the church members were machine operators in the textile factory when an economic depression in 1884 obligated “hundreds of families” to emigrate in search of work.\textsuperscript{10} Fluctuations in the mining sector so strongly the Methodist mission in the state of Guanajuato that a downturn in the industry led to the disappearance of one congregation disappeared and another was so greatly diminished that it has not recovered even today.\textsuperscript{11} In 1906, the Presbyterian

\textsuperscript{7} Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, XII, no 11 (June 6, 1888), pp. 86.
\textsuperscript{8} Butler, History of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Mexico, p. 137.
\textsuperscript{9} Butler, History of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Mexico, p. 54.
\textsuperscript{10} 66th Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church 1884, pp. 195.
\textsuperscript{11} ACAMIME, 1929, pp. 54.
President of the Eastern District, which included the state of Hidalgo and the areas along the border with the state of Veracruz, noted that the opening of work on the Necaxa dam caused the smaller congregations in the area lose members since the people were abandoning their usual locales to seek employment. In Pachuca, the first congregation members were organized by Marcelino Guerrero, a doctor and intellectual of substantial importance in the capital of Hidalgo, but also a man who managed pool halls to supplement his lack of income as a doctor. The English-speaking congregations in Pachuca and Real del Monte were created at the instigation of engineers and employees of the Real del Monte Mining Company. The firm faced a severe labor-management conflict between 1872 and 1875 that was also very disruptive in the lives of the young Methodist churches. The owner of the textile factory in Miraflores in the state of Mexico welcomed Methodist missionaries and gave them strong support, even ordering his employees to attend religious services. Like the Real del Monte Mining Company, the factory in Miraflores had passed through a difficult labor conflict in 1872 and there too the Methodist congregation was severely tried. In Arroyozarco, in the state of

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12 88th Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1906, pp. 266.
13 Cincuentenario de la Fundación del Metodismo en México, pp. 34. Haven, Mexico, our next door neighbor, pp. 340.
14 Butler, History of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Mexico, 96.
15 Cincuentenario de la Fundación del Metodismo en México, pp 34; 280.
17 Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, T. XX, No. 2, pp. 20, January 12, 1896.
18 Leticia Reyna, La Prensa censurada durante el siglo XIX, pp. 230-231.
Mexico, a Methodist congregation began at the insistence of the hacienda administrator who provided the locale and furnishings for the meetings.\textsuperscript{19} The hacienda was sold a few years after the start of the local congregation resulting in the church’s closure.\textsuperscript{20}

As can be seen, converts to the new creed were generally people who found it difficult to obtain the means of subsistence and when they did acquire the means, they lived “hand to mouth.” Yet many of the leaders possessed resources, if not economic, then intellectual ones which opened up new horizons and possibilities for action. Thus, there was an apparent contradiction among the members of the church during the first years of Protestant missions. On one side were intellectuals and small business owners, soldiers, and other groups who identified with liberal ideals and who saw the Catholic Church, at least as it functioned in Mexico at the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, as an enemy of progress and human well-being. On the other hand, the mission consisted of groups of people who had almost no other ambition beyond daily sustenance. Moreover many of them experienced the unhappy results of liberal policies first-hand. The privatization of formerly unclaimed or collectively owned agricultural land and rapid industrialization accompanied by harsh labor demands were destroying their previous ways of life.

Perhaps Methodist converts were simply individuals those who resolved this seeming contradiction by attributing their particular ills to the Catholic Church and finding their solution in the Protestant gospel. As they understood it, the Catholic hierarchy had supported oppressive conservative governments; it had embraced the

\textsuperscript{19} John W. Butler to Charles G. Drees, n.d. and Annual Report for 1883, Methodist Episcopal Church Archive, Correspondence of John Wesley Butler, 1880-1884.

\textsuperscript{20} 72nd Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1890, pp. 235 and . Interview with Saúl Carro, September 27, 1984, Mexico City.
French imperial effort; and, according to Jacobin liberals, it continued to exploit the people’s spiritual needs for its own political and pecuniary purposes. The presence of a new church that promised not to demand tithes, bonuses, or first fruits in exchange for its spiritual services; that offered personal improvement through educational opportunity; that valued the individual while calling people to be responsible to their fellow human beings; that offered new ways for people to incorporate themselves into contemporary society; and that viewed its missionary work as a way to satisfy both spiritual and material needs, was very attractive. By preaching about the possibility of transformed human lives, the Methodist mission offered something immediate and concrete to each group of people that entered its fold.

This explains the why strongly polemical spirit and marked anti-Catholicism of the first native preachers was more reflective of a political movement than a religious one. Their attitude can be interpreted as a protest against the religious demands of the Catholic Church, demands which they believed were not only “inconsistent with true religion,” but unbearable in the prevailing economic context as well. It is noteworthy that many converts, evidently attracted by the siren song of a “free church,” incorporated themselves into the mission only to drop out after a few years.

Ten years after the Methodist mission’s founding, this obsession with the faults of the Catholic Church was beginning to be replaced by a more positive message of personal transformation. Half of those first anti-Romanist preachers had left the Methodist mission by 1885. Curiously, those who were the most radical in their attitudes were the ones most likely to abandon pastoral work. Beginning in the mid 1880s, a new generation of Mexican preachers who had studied in Methodist seminaries was put in charge of the
growth and administration of the new church. Certainly the fundamental values and concepts of the mission had not changed, yet Methodist discourse after 1885 put a notably greater emphasis on the inner changes that the convert should experience and on the progress that an individual should be making in their personal life.

Despite the racist views of some missionaries alluded to earlier, they never rejected poorer converts. Nevertheless, one of their oft stated goals was to reach out to the higher social strata. With the help of adherents from the upper layer of society, they hoped to make Methodism a significant force in the development of the country. North American missionaries demonstrated, more than once, their desire to convert the rich and influential. Such people would bring additional resources to support Methodist undertakings and, at the same time, they would give greater reach to the mission’s efforts to win a respected place in Mexican society. However members of the upper class rarely converted. Only a few political bosses or commanders of military garrisons cooperated with the missionaries and those who did often based their decisions on political rather than religious grounds. High status converts such as Jorge A. Manning, from a family “of the best society of Omitlán” in the state of Hidalgo, or Victoriano D. Báez, who in this youth possessed a fortune left by his father, were more the exceptions than the rule.

Nevertheless, from 1917 onward a significant change can be seen in the evolution of Methodist congregations. Beginning in that year, the pressure to create new centers of mission work moved from rural and semi-urban zones to the urban centers, especially to well-populated neighborhoods. Little by little, the Methodists’ middle class social project

adjusted to its circumstances. Or more properly, it evolved in the same direction as the whole of Mexican society. Educational undertakings, personal contacts, and the ideals of well-being infused into believers were the causes of this change. Elements in society that had been displaced from their traditional ways of life found in Methodism something more than a mere spiritual refuge. In their new church, they could obtain the means to integrate themselves into a society that had become far different from the one in which they had lived previously. Beginning in 1917, Methodists leaders began pointing out that a special feature of Protestantism was its appeal to the middle class, a group that, according to then, did not fit into the Roman Catholic worldview. What Methodists offered to believers was greater stability and security in daily life, an emphasis on the value of education above all else, and reasonable levels of well-being for the majority.

B. Rich and Poor

The Methodist Missionaries who came to Mexico brought with them the vision of an ideal society formed by small proprietors that were hard working, honest, thrifty, and abstemious. They poured their energy into promoting that kind of society. However the reality these missionaries encountered was a more humble one: artisans who found themselves with less and less work each day; workers and miners who received low salaries and endured poor living conditions; farmers scratching out a living by ceaseless, backbreaking toil; and members of the service sector who needed ever more and better preparation in order to adapt to new living conditions. These were the people who filled

the pews of the Methodist churches. In the United States, Methodism was turning itself into a middle-class religion by the end of the 19th century, but Mexican Methodists found it difficult to identify themselves with that reality.

North American preachers especially, but also many Mexican preachers, maintained that the gospel was for everyone. Yet some of them put forward the notion, based on John Wesley’s ideas and attitudes, that Methodism “had a special obligation to minister to the poor,” and some even qualified that work as Methodism’s “raison d’être.” 23 In fact, some local preachers, such as Felix Ramírez, of Huatusco, Veracruz, went so far as to declare that “what [the evangelical church] has come to do is announce good news to the poor.” 24 Ramírez argued that Christ “did not come to seek out the great and the powerful,” for it is well known that the “rich egotists…who meet in the Romanist church to beat their breasts and immediately leave to exploit the work of the poor farmer and the honest artisan…” could never accept the doctrine of “the crucified one.” 25 The poor, according to Juan C. Martínez, a local preacher in Zaachila, Oaxaca, were “chosen for God’s honor,” because “the gospel is announced to the poor.” 26 And “Tácito” (Victoriano D. Báez) asserted in a controversy with El Amigo de la Verdad, a Catholic periodical from Puebla and a principle target of El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado’s attacks,

23 *Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado*, 18/14 (July 15, 1894), p. 119.


25 Ibid.

that “A thousand times blessed be the evangelical church that brings the bread of eternal life to the poor and humble.”

Evident in these statements is the notion that a deep division exists between rich and poor. Yet the Methodist mission was guided by the concept that the Gospel was for everyone, rich and poor alike: an editorial in *El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado* in 1898 held that “the Gospel gives good news and hope to the poor, and teaches, consoles, and directs the rich.” Likewise the means proposed to better the conditions of the poor and the definitions of well-being and progress that were the goals of the mission can hardly be described as revolutionary. Methodists announced that “poverty is a vice,” and the remedies they proposed to help the poor were schools and libraries to “wake up the working class.”

Even the most radical of Methodists such as José Rumbia, a leader of the 1907 Río Blanco strike which ended in violent conflict between factory owners and workers, drew his inspiration not from secular ideologies but from strong anti-Catholic sentiment and fundamental theological doctrines. The aim of his labor militancy was not anarchy or revolution but the creation of mutual aid organizations to better the lot of workers in incremental ways.

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27 Tácito, “Otras Piñas de El Amigo de la Verdad” in *Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado*, 22/24 (June 16, 1898), 188.

28 *Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado*, 21/17 (April 21, 1898), p. 131.


30 *Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado*, T. XIV. No. 6, pp. 42, March 15, 1890.

Over time, contact with the reality of poverty that was too pervasive and too deep to ignore modified the Methodists’ initial attitude towards the poor. Initially, most of them considered the poor to be impoverished simply because of widespread alcoholism and ignorance. Thus, solving the problem of poverty consisted of offering those who suffered the means to overcome it: education and elevated morals. While this represented a long-term solution, other, more immediate responses were needed as well such as the “open subscription for the poor,” organized by the Mexico City congregation in 1892.32 Little by little, Methodists, both Mexicans and North Americans, realized that rapid social and economic changes were making the disinherited more unhappy “if that were possible,”33 and prompted them to take more interest in the material needs of the poor. Reflecting the particular interests and ideas of various preachers, groups of Methodists created organizations to better their communities in a variety of practical ways. Mutual benefit associations, literary clubs, unions, anti-alcohol leagues, educational enterprises, and other efforts at material and moral regeneration were initiated by Methodists. The Methodist Preachers’ Mutual, organized in 1903, the Melchor Ocampo Institute, the Epworth League of Orizaba, the workers’ organization at Río Blanco, the temperance leagues in the state of Guanajuato at the end of the 19th century, the network of Methodist schools, and the Good Will Industries in the Los Doctores neighborhood of Mexico City, all are examples of social improvement organizations that grew out of the Methodist mission.

32 Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, T. XVI. No. 21, pp. 177, November 10, 1892.

33 70th Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church 1888, pp. 322.
The adoption of the so-called Social Gospel, by the American Methodist Episcopal Church marked out the path to follow. This movement of a strongly urban— and sometimes paternalist—character, urged concern for the problems of the poor in order to help them in their struggle to achieve a fuller life in an industrializing society. The Social Creed approved by the 1908 General Conference and disseminated in our country in 1916, endorsed the equality of rights for all human beings; “the principle of conciliation and arbitration of industrial disputes;” the abolition of child labor; the regulation of women’s work; the gradual reduction of work hours “to the lowest point possible, giving work to all and giving the necessary time for recreation which is indispensable for a decent human life;” the best possible distribution of the products of labor; and the application of the golden rule and the knowledge of Christ “as the supreme law of society and the surest remedy for all social ills.”

The adoption of these principles responded to a particular conception of the world and social reality. Methodists preached the values of love, work, responsibility, saving, temperance, brotherhood, freedom, and respect for the individual. According to Mexican Methodists, violence and disobedience to authority were not justifiable as a first resort, although they were not ruled out entirely when conditions demanded them. The mission’s position with regards to some labor problems exemplifies this point. The first reference to capitalist-worker conflicts found in El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado dealt with the North American strikes of 1886. An unsigned editorial claimed that there could be no doubt that workers in the United States, “and in other countries,” had “reason to complain of

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injustice and oppression."\(^{35}\) The author declared that “practically” the only resource workers possessed to effectively express their rights “was to associate in large groups that arranged and unified their action.” But it laid out a series of conditions for considering whether these groups were true agents of progress “and indispensable counterweights to the power of capitalists and monopolists.” According to the editorial, the conduct of the workers’ associations must comply with public order and authority, it must not attempt to violate property rights, it must respect the rights and liberties of the individual, and it must not resort to violence or vandalism. According to the Methodists, it was acceptable to ask for the recognition of rights or even to denounce injustices as *El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado* did, but always within very specific limits.\(^{36}\)

This way of understanding the problems of modern society and the solutions to them provides an idea of which social groups Methodism appealed to. Whoever adopted this new religion, whether poor or rich, middle class or marginalized, expected to enjoy a certain security in their daily life as a material manifestation of their religion. For instance, there were Methodists who preached that “God pays in advance,” meaning that we ought to trust in a Creator who provides us with “our daily bread.”\(^{37}\) Yet Methodists also declared that wealth corrupts mankind\(^{38}\) and that luxury “is a social gangrene” which believers should flee “like a contagious plague.”\(^{39}\) We can say that the Methodists’

\(^{35}\) *Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado*, T. X. No. 10, pp. 77, May 3, 1886.


\(^{37}\) *Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado*, T. XXIII. No. 10, pp. 86, March 9, 1899.

\(^{38}\) *Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado*, T. XXIII. No. 19, pp. 158, May 11, 1899.

\(^{39}\) *Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado*, T. XXII. No. 26, pp. 202, March 31, 1898.
position was that everyone should receive what justly belonged to them in order to secure a humane existence and that, while poverty was an evil that ought to be remedied, wealth was not to be regarded as good in and of itself. The Methodist social ideal was found in the middle ground: neither such poverty that the individual was kept from leading a full life consecrated to the Creator nor such wealth that people forgot their obligations to God and their neighbors.

C. The Opposition

Converting to a new religion was not a simple matter of leaving one church to attend another. Nor was it as simple as changing one’s social circle. It was expected that Mexicans who left their old faith would encounter a certain degree of opposition from their relatives, friends, and neighbors. William H. Cooper complained about attacks that he received from a segment of the Orizaba population. And one missionary had to be accompanied by a policeman during his first months of mission work.

The reprisals against Methodist converts varied in methods, intensity, and results. In general, at the very least, part of the family would quit speaking to the new convert if they did not run them out of the house entirely. It was common for businessmen and neighbors to avoid all contact with Protestants. For example, pastoral letters from the

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41 Cincuentenario de la Fundación del Metodismo en México, pp. 37.
Bishop of León recommended that course of action. As a consequence, the Methodist congregation in that state’s capital disappeared several times. In 1886, it reached the point that the missionary in charge of this area, Samuel P. Craver, complained that the membership had been completely “renewed” two times during that year. As late as 1925, it was said of Querétaro that there were stores that would not sell even “a grain of salt” to the members of the Methodist church. This policy caused serious problems, especially in times of crisis. The superintendent of the Northern District reported only half in jest that the Catholics’ policy was to kill off the Protestants by starvation.

In some localities this policy went even further, ending in physical attacks, some of which were lethal. In Mexico City, Puebla, and Pachuca, “fanatics” interrupted religious services on several occasions. The Methodist congregation of Hércules, a textile center in Querétaro, was closed after a pitched battle between Methodist and Catholic workers. Methods of terror, such as burning homes and crops, or just the fact of public condemnation, were used to make converts desist from their decision. This

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42 José Ma. De Jesús Diez de Sollano, *Pastoral XVI Sobre el Catolicismo Comparado con el Protestantismo*, León, s.e., 1876.


44 *Cincuentenario de la Fundación del Metodismo en México*, p 39.


47 *Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado*, T. XII, No. 5, March 8, 1888.

48 In Santo Tomás, Tlaxcala; *Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado*, T. XXIII, No. 48, pp. 397 November 30, 1899.

49 In León, Gto., *Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado*, T. XXIV, No. 40, pp. 319 October 4, 1900.
situation produced some notably painful experiences for Methodists. Missionaries in Guanajuato, Querétaro, and León came close to death by lynching during the first years of their labors. Some of their followers were not so fortunate. In 1881, Epigmenio Monroy died, murdered on the road between Santa Anita Huiloac and Apizaco, in Tlaxcala. In 1882, Catholics from Atzala, Puebla, instigated by the priest, attacked Methodists from the same town. Conrado A. Bamboa came close to death as a result of an attack he suffered on the Silao-Cuérámaro road in 1884. Nearby in Tequisquiaco, state of Mexico, Felipe Ruiz was murdered at the end of 1900. A policeman killed Tomás García in Guanajuato in February 1906. Physical aggression against Protestants was incessant throughout the first fifteen years of mission work, especially during the presidential administration of Manuel González, however little by little, the acts of aggression became less violent in character. During the revolutionary years, there were few reports of violence specifically directed against Protestants. This tendency reversed itself after 1925. With the resumption of the dispute between the Catholic Church and the Mexican government, Protestants came to be regarded as in some way responsible for the conflict and, because they were protected by the government, became targets of anger and attacks by Catholics.

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50 Cincuentenario de la Fundación del Metodismo en México, pp. 46.
51 Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, T. IV, No. 5, pp. 56 March 10, 1881.
52 Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, T. VIII, No. 16, pp. 104 August 15, 1884.
53 Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, T. VIII, No. 8, pp. 57 April 15, 1884.
54 Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, T. XXV, No. 2, pp. 18 January 10, 1901.
55 Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, T. XXX, No. 5, pp. 224 June 8, 1906.
The experience of suffering for being Protestant provided its own relief for the pain. Those who suffered persecution were helped by the group spirit and the close relationships that grew up among those who considered themselves to be “brothers and sisters” in suffering. The assistance given to those who were attacked was considered to be a material manifestation of the Spirit of God “that bears us up on the wings of the faith…”56 The case of Epigmenio Monroy is illustrative. At his death, his “brothers,” the Methodist Episcopal Church pastors, gathered several collections to pay for all of the expenses caused by the murder such as the funeral and the monument to the memory of “the martyr.” These same preachers contributed between fifty and one hundred pesos each—at a time when the average salary of a national preacher was forty pesos per month—to provide for the education of Monroy’s son. The same thing happened when persecution led to arrest, military draft, or loss of a job: the mission used all its resources, in some cases appealing all the way to President Díaz, to help “a brother in distress.”

In some cases, persecution was not a product of merely religious issues. For example, when John Butler was negotiating for the release of District Secretary José Rumbia from jail after the Río Blanco strike in which Rumbia was involved, he alleged that Rumbia was the object of “religious persecution.”57 To the authorities, however, Rumbia’s real “crime” was his labor militancy. This shows that Methodists were not attacked merely because of their divergent theological ideas. Sometimes, as in the case of Rumbia, the actions for which Methodists were prosecuted were in harmony with their religious ideas. For example, Felipe Cruz, the Methodist assassinated in Tequisquiaco, was

56 Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, T. XXV, No. 2, pp. 18, January 10, 1901.

much hated in that town not only because he lent his house for Protestant church services but also because “he made accusations to the authorities…of infractions of the religious laws” by Catholics.\textsuperscript{58}

\textbf{D. Methodism and Liberalism}

In practicing a new and unpopular religion, Methodists were exercising one of the rights Mexicans had won with great effort just a few years earlier: freedom of conscience. On their conversion, the new believers knew that they were enjoying a privilege that until recently had been forbidden to Mexicans. And they were conscious that this right was part of an entire system of ideas that formed a project of national importance. That is why Methodists identified themselves with the liberals. In the eyes of the Protestants, liberals had opened the doors of individual rights for all Mexicans, even for those in whose veins “ran the blood of the Aztecs.”\textsuperscript{59} As Methodists told the story, liberalism had brought numerous benefits to Mexico. \textit{El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado} listed some of them in 1879:

freedom from foreign domination; a government that responds to the aspirations of the homeland based on reason and justice—freedom of thought and of conscience; an emphasis on public education and the promotion of the elements of

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado}, T. XXV, No. 2, pp. 18, January 10, 1901.

\textsuperscript{59} “Independencia,” \textit{Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado}, T. XIX, No. 18, pp. 148, September 15, 1895.
progress such as railroads, telegraphs, factories, and everything else that leads to peace and the exaltation of the Mexican nation.  

These were great achievements, thought the converts, but they maintained that two things were still lacking: a strong moral foundation and a determination to fight to the end to establish and expand the rights of the individual. The first was necessary in order to liberate people from ignorance, error, superstition, and vice “because only when people are raised above all these human miseries, are they truly free and independent.”  

This is where religion intersected with the social project. For the believers, only the truth of the Gospel could provide the moral support that every human community needs. The second could only emerge from familiarity with the moral, social, and patriotic values that made up the nation. These would give rise to a purified form of patriotism.

Initially the missionaries sought an open alliance with liberals in what they viewed as a shared undertaking. Little by little they realized that while association with the liberals opened some doors, it also diverted the mission’s work away from its proper course. The opposition of William Butler to explicitly anti-Catholic preaching can be interpreted in this way. In their actual experience, however, Methodists found that the identification of Protestantism with liberalism was practically indissoluble. The social groups that Methodist leaders came from made this inevitable. Recall, for example, that in order to open new fields for mission work, Methodists always looked for liberals in the vicinity as likely supporters of a traveling preacher.

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A study of Methodist thought illustrates the overlap between liberal and Protestant ideas. In 1888, for example, an anonymous preacher described what was needed by landowners “like those of San Pedro,” a hacienda en the state of Hidalgo, in order “to move ahead in their business.”\textsuperscript{62} According to him, they needed a society at peace, “an economic and patriotic government,” education “for the masses,” “freedom from religious fanaticism,” work, machinery, and “the other advantages that this century is providing.” In sum, where there was individual initiative, all that was needed were material and cultural conditions favorable to progress. The modernizing regime of Porfirio Díaz was generally given high marks by Methodists for providing those conditions. For example, an 1891 editorial in \textit{El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado} declared that the country was experiencing “tremendous prosperity…railroads, numerous factories…capitalists starting up industrial enterprises…, the peace and public security that we enjoy and the prestige of the government” all promise an epoch of prosperity,\textsuperscript{63} although it acknowledged that there was still much work to be done.\textsuperscript{64}

Methodists had an immense faith in the riches of our country. Gold and silver were the traditionally exploited resources but they believed that it was necessary to expand production in other areas in order to make them competitive in foreign markets. New methods of cultivation, the opening of more arable land, investment in new industries, more and better lines of communication, and the opening of commerce to the

\textsuperscript{62} “Un Viaje a Caballo por el Estado de Hidalgo,” in \textit{Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado}, T. XII, No. 9, pp. 66, May 10, 1888.

\textsuperscript{63} “México Moderno,” in \textit{Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado}, T. XV, No. 5, pp. 36, March 10, 1891.

\textsuperscript{64} “Un Viaje a Caballo por el Estado de Hidalgo,” in \textit{Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado}, T. XII, No. 9, pp. 66, May 10, 1888.
interior of the country as well as to foreign markets, all were thought to be necessary. Given such ideas, it was logical for them to look favorably upon the Díaz government’s efforts to construct more railroad lines. *El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado* was constantly publishing news of railroad construction. When the Interoceanic Railway was completed, Pedro Flores Valderrama commented, “I wish that… we could give our readers this kind of news in every issue of our periodical.” 65 Another way that the Díaz government encouraged commerce was by abolition the sales tax and this action too was applauded by *El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado* when it took effect in 1895. 66

According to the Methodists, one should promote commerce using all available means. Without it, they said, “it is impossible for Mexico, despite the numerous treasures contained in her bosom, to become a truly rich country.” 67 The problem was that for commerce to flourish, several other things were needed, labor and capital most especially. With more investment, the economy would be more dynamic and the possibility of acquiring even greater wealth would grow. Thus, Mexico would enter fully into “the cycle of progress,” an almost magical concept for Methodists. Methodism offered to do its part by educating the people so that they would understand the value of work, but it had no capital to offer. That would have to come from rich investors. What was needed was for wealthy Mexicans to invest but, as the Methodists explained it, they preferred to engage in speculation or to spend on their idolatrous, i.e., Catholic, religion.

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the capital that was so desperately needed. Economic progress was both the measuring stick and the great achievement of the turn of the century.

The road to progress began, of necessity, with individual responsibility and initiative. It was up to the individual and no one or nothing else, said the Methodists, to try out possibilities and strive for progress. Speaking on this subject, Gorgonio Cora argued that waiting for somebody else, the government for example, to make the reforms needed to obtain social improvements, “is not the road that progressive people follow.”

Cora believed that it was up to individuals to look after their own interests, of which the government was only a repository. “Today,” concluded Cora, “thanks to the Supreme Regulator of the peoples’ destinies and to the leaders of the Republic, the people and the ruler in unison, think, work, and develop industries, sciences, and the arts.”

In spite of the marked influence of economic liberalism in Methodist circles, there were some aspects of this approach that were foreign to Methodist thinking. Competition is a good example. For converts, especially during the 1910s and 1920s, competition was an acceptable principle but it was not the most valuable for the proper functioning of society, cooperation ranked higher. People were right to aspire to improve themselves, but in that undertaking they should also help one another. Real progress would only come through a combination of several influences: through the efforts of individuals, their initiative and their sense of social responsibility; through the advances and

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68 Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, T. XIX, No. 8, pp. 69, April 15, 1895.


70 Ibid.

inventions of the century; through efforts at international and domestic peace, and through a government that encouraged rather than discouraged the achievements of every individual in the nation. These were the means that Methodists regarded as necessary to make a better world.

E. Ethical Values

Methodists believed that “the great problem” of the twentieth century would be “the reconciliation of freedom with order.” They found the solution to this problem in the observance of divine law. While individuals ought to be free, they were also “mutually dependent” and everyone, even presidents and legislators, should be subject to the laws of God. The labor of the church was precisely to teach the people about these laws. For Methodists, the business of bettering society implied the changing of every single person; the social mission of the church was rooted in this widely held idea. “Each one of us is a part of society,” maintained an editorial of El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado in 1890, and this society is nothing more than the reflection of the individuals who make it up. Hence, the regeneration of society depends on me, on you, on each one of us individually.”

Ultimately, this was how Methodists understood the social responsibility of the church.

Each person had to be given the possibility and the opportunity of a moral and material change for the better. “Not charity, but opportunity,” was the motto of Good Will Industries in 1926. A person always had to begin with an inner confidence, a higher

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72 “El Adelanto Social,” in Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, T. XXIII, No. 32, pp. 263, August 10, 1890.
morality, an elevated conception of human nature and of humanity’s role in the world. Converts believed that these could come only from true religion. Two characteristically Methodist attitudes flowed from this understanding. On one hand, they preached a set of values that served to “elevate” mankind; and on the other hand, they opposed the Catholic religion because, in their opinion, it encouraged vice instead of virtue.

Methodists placed great importance on the teaching and practice of ethical values because they were the path to Christian perfection, a fundamental aim of Methodist preaching. In matters of morality, they began with Paul’s principle that everything is permissible, but not everything is beneficial. In that vein, El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado pointed out that there are things that do harm or damage to the individual and to society. From this, they developed the idea that everything “which impairs or destroys the body, mind, or character should be condemned.” A number of Mexican customs fell into the category of condemned things according to this Methodist value system while others, those which “elevated” a person’s body, mind, or character, were encouraged. Interestingly, the Methodists’ list of virtuous behaviors resembled those of groups that had very different goals from theirs such as secular liberals, socialists, anarchists, even factory owners. Hard work, thrift, hygiene, and temperance were some of the virtues that all of these groups advocated. Likewise, games of chance, cockfights, bull fights, drinking, “Saint Monday,” and Catholic religious festivals were some of the vices that all of these groups condemned.

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73 “Lo que Sea Legítimo,” in Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, T. XXIII, No. 32, pp. 263, August 10, 1899.
Alongside hard work and anti-Catholicism, Mexican Methodists probably placed their greatest emphasis on abstinence from alcohol. “Temperance” as it was called, was the only theme that was present in Protestant literature from the very beginning until the moment when the mission gained autonomy. The topic came to have such importance that in 1891 Methodists created a specialized periodical on the subject: El Defensor del Hogar.\(^74\) This publication, under the direction of Lucius C. Smith, only lasted two years, but it was succeeded by a special section in El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado in 1893.\(^75\) The organization and encouragement of anti-alcohol leagues was undertaken with great zeal by Methodist men and women. It went so far that children who drank pulque were not accepted into the Methodist schools in the state of Hidalgo.\(^76\) This occurred in a country in which the consumption of spirits had increased to a level that seriously worried even the secular authorities.\(^77\) From 1901 onward, the mission’s anti-alcohol efforts were identified more and more with similar government and non-denominational efforts.

The technique used to promote Temperance and other values was simple enough, perhaps even naïve. They would tell a story in which the protagonist passes through great problems while surrendering to vice or bad customs—alcohol, tobacco, sloth, etc. After a very bitter experience, the character decides to leave his “master” and finds a better life, obtaining work, overcoming his familiar problems, and achieving a well-being that until

\(^74\) Defender of the Home—Trans.

\(^75\) V.g. El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, T. XX, No. 10, pp. 80, May 15, 1896.

\(^76\) 88th Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church 1906, pp. 246.

recently he could not even have imagined. The moral was that Temperance, or whatever other virtue was being touted, would lead to a full and happy life as the believer’s entire life was transformed into an instrument of praise to God.

An illustration of this moralistic narrative can be seen in a story John W. Butler told about two workers in the state of Tlaxcala. Their employer noticed that these men worked on Catholic festivals days, were clean and well dressed, that they did not take “Holy Monday” off, and were never drunk. Of course, he wanted to know where they had learned these habits. Their answer was: in the Methodist church! This type of teaching not only benefitted those converts who received it and put it into practice, but also everyone around them. Methodists believed that this was the main benefit of these virtues; they transformed converts into better people and as a consequence, society as a whole was improved.

F. Patriotism

“In whatever situation or location a man finds himself,” wrote Rodolfo Menéndez in 1896, “he belongs to his homeland and he is obligated to defend it” by whatever means necessary. Menéndez was a young man from a Methodist congregation in Mexico City who had been educated in mission schools. His statement was the greatest

78 V.g., “Compra tú Mismo tus Cerezas,” in Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, T. XII, No. 19, pp. 147. October 10, 1888.

79 John W. Butler, History... Op. Cit. pp. 64.

refutation that could be made against those who pointed to the work of Protestants as an instrument of North American penetration. As Flores Valderrama had said ten years before: “we are Mexicans first, then Protestants.”\textsuperscript{81} Both Mexican and North American Methodists expected that their labors would strengthen the Mexican nation. At the same time, they did not see any contradiction between this hope and their profound admiration for North American institutions and ways of life.

Methodist patriotism displayed some peculiar characteristics. It rejected the sort of patriotism that was “bigoted, bellicose, combative, and blind” in favor of a truer patriotism that was “rational, prudent, loyal, and peaceful in character; a patriotism that is not a product of over-excitability…or the hatred of foreigners…”\textsuperscript{82} Developing this kind of patriotism required reflection, love for one’s neighbor, and a knowledge of the past.

Like other Mexicans, Methodists exalted the memory of national leaders who had built the nation. They favorite heroes were those who had not only fought for liberty, equality, and democracy, but also sought to limit the influence of the Catholic Church. Hidalgo, Morelos, Guerrero, Juárez, Ocampo, and regional leaders such as Juan N. Méndez and Julián Villagrán, became part of the Protestants’ patriotic pantheon.\textsuperscript{83} Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada and Porfirio Díaz, while objects of veneration because they were the ones who had allowed missionary societies to enter our country and under

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\textsuperscript{81} Pedro Flores Valderrama, “Deuda Satisfecha,” in \textit{Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado}, T. X, No. 16, pp. 121, August 15, 1886.


\textsuperscript{83} Fra. Miguel Hidalgo, Fra. José Mariá Morelos, Julián Villagrán, and Vicente Guerrero were all leaders of the independence struggle against Spain. Benito Juárez, Melchor Ocampo, and Juan N. Méndez were leaders of the liberal movement that fought to limit the wealth and power of the Catholic Church in the 1850s and that fought against the French occupation in the 1860s.—Trans.
whose protection the missions had prospered, never managed to fully integrate themselves into the Methodists’ national celebrations. Only a few missionaries and preachers expressed appreciation for these two. Although, to be fair, the admirers of Díaz, above all William Butler and to a lesser degree his son John W. Butler, were not slow to sing praises to “the hero of April 2.” However in 1889, El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado justified its decision not to publish a eulogy of President Díaz on the anniversary of his victory in Puebla, claiming that it was because the date referred to a still living Mexican politician.” Of course, the way Lerdo’s government ended explains the omission of this other figure.

However, of all the glorious national heroes held up by Methodists, Benito Juárez was by far the most popular. In 1899, Valderrama asserted: “Dr. William Butler shared the satisfaction of having been the first who, in a popular book, placed Juárez on the same level as North Americans have placed Washington...” Protestant veneration of Juárez evidently began in 1888. That year El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado published the first proposal by Methodists to commemorate July 18 (the anniversary of Juárez’s death) as a great national festival along with a request for contributions to erect a monument to the hero. The treasurer of these funds was to be John W. Butler. The interest of Methodists

84 Porfirio Díaz captured the city of Puebla for the liberals on April 2, 1867, thereby helping to end the regime of Emperor Maximilian of Austria.—Trans.

85 Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, T. XXI, No. 10, pp. 98, May 15, 1889.

86 Lerdo attempted to perpetuate himself in office in violation of the liberal principle of anti-incumbancy and was overthrown by Porfirio Díaz in 1876.—Trans.


88 Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, T. XX, No. 13, pp. 103, July 10, 1888.
in the Zapotec Indian who rose to be President can be explained by Juárez’s identification with liberal ideals and his struggle against “the conservative or clerical reaction.” In September 1888, an editorial in *El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado* declared that “with a strong arm and an unbreakable will, [Juárez] knew how to keep the Republic’s flag high and shining when the nation was invaded by foreign enemies who were aided by contemptible Mexicans.”

Over time, with the political rehabilitation of the Catholic Church and the growing corruption of the Díaz government, the figure of Juárez grew in the eyes of Mexico’s anti-clerical liberals, including Protestants. Juárez embodied patriotic zeal and firmness in the face of clerical resistance. For that reason, *El Benemérito de las Américas* was used as a symbol, by the most politically radical groups, to identify themselves as opponents of Díaz. For Protestants, too, Juárez became the “incorruptible” liberal hero. According to Valderrama in 1895, the President who had enacted the separation of civil and ecclesiastic power ought to serve as the exemplar of unity and the nation’s striving. By 1900, the “immortal Juárez” had become, in the mind of one Methodist, “the priest of progress, the illustrious champion of the Reform,” who raised “the homeland to up to the sublime heights of liberty and the cloudless realms of

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89 *Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado*, T. XX, No. 18, pp. 137, September 15, 1888.

90 The term is an honorific title that was applied to Juárez by his admirers. It roughly translates as “the Meritorious One of the Americas” and also recalls his first name “Benito”—Trans.

democracy…”\textsuperscript{92} As another Methodist panegyrist wrote: “Juárez is a symbol…Juárez means ‘Republic,’ ‘Democracy,’ and ‘homeland.’”\textsuperscript{93}

Yet while Methodists found in Benito Juárez a potent symbol to use against the Catholic Church and the “reactionary party,” his memory was not the only image that could be converted to promote their version of national ideals. The battle of \textit{Cinco de Mayo} was also an object of attention in the mission’s schools and publications. For Protestants, the defeat of the conservatives and of the French Empire was not consummated on June 19, 1867,\textsuperscript{94} but on the fifth of May, 1862.\textsuperscript{95}

Protestants’ identification with national festivals and celebrations could produce some interesting results. In 1898, for example, the Methodist school, the public school, and the authorities of San Felipe Teotlaltzingo, Puebla, celebrated \textit{Cinco de Mayo} together.\textsuperscript{96} In Zacaola, Puebla, something almost unimaginable happened in 1899, a Methodist woman, Cecilia González of Jiménez, used the “letters to the editor” section of the newspaper during the celebration of the 16\textsuperscript{th} of September “to encourage the inhabitants of the town to be good citizens and good patriots.”\textsuperscript{97} In 1904, José Rumbia

\textsuperscript{92} Agustín Arroyo, “Benito Juárez,” \textit{Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado}, T. XXIV, No. 29, pp. 229, pp. 254, August 9, 1900.

\textsuperscript{93} M.P. García, “El 18 de Julio en Oaxaca,” in \textit{Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado}, T. XXIV, No. 32, pp. 254, August 9, 1900.

\textsuperscript{94} The date that emperor Maximilian von Hapsburg and his two chief lieutenants, Generals Miguel Miramón, and Tomás Mejía, were executed by the victorious liberals.—Trans.


\textsuperscript{96} \textit{Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado}, T XXII, No. 21, pp. 164, May 26, 1898.

\textsuperscript{97} \textit{Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado}, T. XXIII, No. 40, pp. 326, October 5, 1899. September 16 is celebrated as Independence Day in Mexico in commemoration of Fra. Miguel Hidalgo’s call for a revolt against Spanish control in 1810.—Trans.
reported that the Methodist school of Santa Ana Atzacán, Veracruz, had suggested to the town’s authorities that they celebrate, “for the first time,” the anniversary of Mexico’s independence.\textsuperscript{98}

Methodist nationalism also evolved to incorporate Native Americans. Methodists had never considered Native Americans as a part of the Mexican nation; though they had lived in Mexico since time immemorial they had yet to be integrated into the population. The contrast between Native American virtues and Spanish vices was the path by which Native Americans came to be identified with Mexico. For example, Guadalupe Rebeca Guarneró, contrasted the courage of Cuauhtémoc with the cowardice and treachery of Cortés.\textsuperscript{99} In 1902, Vicente Mendoza described a parade “to the memory of the great Cuauhtémoc … the great warrior who was violently hanged by the Spanish.”\textsuperscript{100} This tendency to lionize indigenous heroes intensified in the 1920s when a strong anti-Hispanic sentiment became evident in all Protestant literature while our country as a whole was fighting to rediscover its pre-Hispanic past. An example of this tendency comes from 1927 when a Methodist school in Pachuca celebrated “Native American day,” with a program organized by groups of young people. Among the acts presented was a recitation of the poem, “Popular Soul,” that begins: “To be a Mexican Indian is my pride…”\textsuperscript{101}

\textsuperscript{98} 86th Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church 1904, pp. 348.

\textsuperscript{99} \textit{Vid.} Quotation 52 in Chapter V.

\textsuperscript{100} \textit{Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado}, T. XXVI, No. 29, pp. 373, August 12, 1902.

\textsuperscript{101} \textit{Tzzin Tzzi}, Year III, No. 3, pp. 5, April 30, 1927.
In general, displays of nationalism were deemed necessary by Methodists. On one hand, they were trying to show that they were not seeking to eradicate Mexican values or replace them with imported ones. On the other hand, they thought that knowledge of the past known would permit the construction of a better Mexico. Finally, identifying with the values that were then in vogue was a way to integrate themselves more fully into the life of the nation.

G. Methodism and Politics

The Methodist Episcopal Church’s *Discipline* required the obedience of its members to the authorities of the country in which they resided and encouraged them to behave like “calm and peaceful subjects.” But obedience did not mean lack of involvement. Participation in the processes of government was viewed as a good thing and was even encouraged. This made converts’ participation in politics seem natural. Moreover the example of how North Americans had acted during their Civil War was still very clear in the consciousness of the missionaries. Churches from the northern United States had taken advantage of the Union army’s advances to occupy southern pulpits. In Mexico, the alliance that the missionaries established with the liberals reflected this experience as they often found themselves preaching in sanctuaries that had only recently been Catholic churches.

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102 *Doctrinas y Disciplina de la Iglesia Metodista Episcopal*, 1876, Mexico City, Methodist Episcopal Printing, 1882, pp. 19.
During the three successive presidential terms of Lerdo de Tejada, Porfirio Díaz, and Manuel González, politicization did not represent a great conflict for Methodists in Mexico. The identification of liberal ideals with the pronouncements and daily activities of these presidents allowed converts to dedicate themselves to tasks of evangelism and preaching against the Catholics. The few references Protestants made to political life in documents distributed outside the country during these years were positive and pointed to the progress being made in Mexico toward the establishment of peace and the promotion of economic growth.103

On the other hand, from the foundation of their mission’s periodical, El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, Methodists had been preoccupied with denouncing Catholic violations of the Reform Laws. The years of Manuel González’s government—1880 to 1884—were a watershed in that regard. Every month, El Abogado would ask the government for military protection on behalf of religious freedom or would accuse Catholics of some violation of the law. By the end of Díaz’s second term in July 1887, the editor of El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado felt compelled to publish an editorial expressing his fears about what he saw as a resurgence of Catholic political influence in society:

A political-religious conflict has recently begun in Mexico between the defenders of the republican ideas and democratic institutions that run this country, and the

103 Cfr. 62nd Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church 1880, pp. 185.
followers of the counter-reform. Liberals look with displeasure and even alarm on the resulting manifestations of clerical activities.\textsuperscript{104}

The editorial continued by describing manifestations of this disturbing trend:

the commemorative book for Leo XIII printed by the government; the Concordat with the Vatican; the coronation of the Virgin of Guadalupe; the triumphal arches that they are planning to erect in the streets of the capital in honor of that event; the revolutionary sermons that the priests are preaching; the innumerable infractions to the Reform Laws; and thousands upon thousands of other events that occur daily and publically with no concern to disguise their alarming character.\textsuperscript{105}

Two weeks later, Pedro Flores Valderrama published, once again in El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, an article titled “Now or Never!” in which he openly criticized the government for its excessive sensitivity “to the defenders of counter-reformation.” The essay claimed that the Catholic clergy were mocking “those principles for which that starry host of democratic notables, whose names are preserved in history with letters of gold, fought with such courage.”\textsuperscript{106} According to Valderrama, the author of the piece, the concessions made to “clerical apologists, pious women, altar boys, and other people of the vestry,” explained the lack of progress that Mexico had made in “the field of liberty.” This Protestant critic finished by insisting that he was not calling for persecution of the

\textsuperscript{104} Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, T. XI, No. 13, pp. 109, July 10, 1887.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.

Catholic Church, only for enforcement of the country’s anti-clerical laws and for the government to refrain from awarding posts of importance to individual who sought advantage from “a policy of reaction.”

Despite such severe criticism of Díaz’s policy of conciliation, which had not yet reached its furthest extent, El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado was able to declare in October 1887 that “if President Díaz’s discourse (a report given to Congress on September 16) is a faithful portrait of the country’s condition, Mexico has many reasons to congratulate itself.” Evidently while there was some skepticism about Díaz’s relations with the Catholic Church, there was agreement with regards to the way he was promoting the nation’s economic progress. The editorial concluded by stressing the need to keep the principles of the liberal reform movement “unharmed,” “because the people’s happiness and the nation’s future depend upon them.”

Within the mission, there were divergent views of the Díaz administration. To the missionaries, Díaz was a capable and progressive statesman. To some of the Mexican converts, the President’s attitude was heavy handed. Still, both North Americans and nationals approved of the constitutional reform of April 1887 that permitted Díaz to be reelected for another, consecutive term. However the government’s increasingly tolerant stance toward the Catholic Church and its disregard of some of the liberal principles that had cost the lives of many Mexicans began to undermine Methodist enthusiasm even for the economic achievements of the Díaz administration. “Where will this end?” asked El

\[107 \text{ Ibid.} \]

\[108 \text{ Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, T. XI, No. 19, pp. 149, October 10, 1887.} \]
Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, in an article denouncing violations of the Reform Laws. In July 1888, when local legislatures had approved the reelection reform, an editorial in the mission’s periodical expressed skepticism about the government’s desire “not to alter the peace that [we] have enjoyed for twelve years and to continue marching along the road of progress.” Once the reelection of Díaz was confirmed in August 1888, Flores Valderrama declared his hope that the reelection would help to “affirm the work of our political regeneration…” respecting the laws, especially those of the Reform. By November of that same year, Valderrama had already lost this hope and was asking: “What will come next?” in reference to the government policy of pardoning “many reactionaries and false Mexicans of their past unfaithfulness.”

In addition to its policy of reconciliation, other reasons for complaint against Díaz’s government began to be voiced. Excessive military spending was an object of criticism. Another reason for worry was the lack of guarantees on the free exercise of


111 Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, T. XII, No. 13, pp. 98, July 10, 1888.


the liberties of conscience and religion. Then, at the end of 1889, something happened which prompted many Methodists to distance themselves from the government. In November of that year a movement began to promote the indefinite reelection of the holder of executive power. “This initiative seems very bad to us,” said the “Political and Social Chronicle” of El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, “because from this law to a full-blown dictatorship is not more than a single step.” Beginning from that moment, for almost six years, the mission’s periodical quit publishing messages about the exercise of public authority, with the exception of violations of the Reform Laws. There were no more commentaries on Presidential reports and no praises for the country’s economic advances.

Two circumstances could explain this change. One is the possibility of censorship exercised over the periodical, either from the outside by the government or from inside by the mission’s own authorities. With regards to censorship, the only thing one can say for certain is that Flores Valderrama, the most bellicose of the Methodist writers of that period, remained at the helm of the publication. On the other hand, there was clearly a difference of opinion among the mission’s members with respect to “the hero of April 2” and his policies. In 1888, William Butler published Mexico in Transition… The missionary, who had left Mexico ten years earlier, continued to exercise substantial influence over the ministers of the mission. In his book, which reached its fifth edition by

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1892, he pointed out that “the current prosperity of Mexico is mainly due to the efforts and incorruptible character of its noble president, Porfirio Díaz.” It is possible that in the face of such a range of opinions, political themes were simply avoided.

This silence was interrupted in October and November of 1895. On October 1, Lucius C. Smith published an article in which he praised the government for its efforts in the field of education. The missionary placed great hope on the possibility that these efforts could improve the lot of the indigenous people. Two issues later, a series of articles appeared by the indefatigable Valderrama which examined the situation of the Mexican Indians, the “race of Juan Diego.” The Mexican preacher analyzed their situation during the colonial period, describing their long hours of work, the indignities their patrons subjected them to, and their lack of political participation. Afterwards, Valderrama compared the colonial situation to his time and noted that indigenous people had not made much progress. Evidence cited included their poor diet, their use of coarse cotton clothing, and the persistence of bad living conditions in general. They needed to be educated, said the Mexican, imbued with better social ideas, and Christianized in order to put them on the road to improvement. All of Valderrama’s arguments were steeped in a strong anti-Catholic discourse. The point of the essay was to show how the Virgin of Guadalupe had not proven to be a protector of Native Americans.

\[118\] Ibid.


\[120\] Pedro Flores Valderrama, “El Pasado, el Presente, y el Porvenir de la Raza de Juan Diego,” in Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, T. XIX, No. 21, pp. 172, November 10, 1895, and in Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, T. XIX, pp. 199-180, November 5, 1895.
The turn of the century witnessed another episode of political enthusiasm with the Annual Conferences and various assemblies sending letters of greeting to the President of the Republic. In December 1900, *El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado* published a manifesto signed by “various citizens of Matehuala” which urged respect for the Reform Laws as long as these laws were not repealed in “a fair fight.”

Published letters relating to pastoral trips and congregational activities began to make reference to the creation of liberal clubs. Nevertheless, the Methodist position remained ambivalent about governmental politics: while in general, economic achievements were recognized, the “ill-conceived policy of conciliation” was criticized.

By the beginning of the 20th century, everyone was aware of the appearance of liberal clubs. The flag that they flew was principally anticlericalism, although they did not ignore other reasons for protest. A statement by the Bishop of San Luis, Ignacio Montes de Oca y Obregón, before the General Assembly of the International Congress of Catholic Agencies in Paris in June of 1900, which celebrated the growing political influence of the Church, provided a catalyst for these liberal groups. The meeting of the Confederation of Liberal Clubs in San Luis Potosí in February 1901 represented a watershed in the history of Mexican liberalism. Subsequently, government repression on one hand, and the ascendance of anarchists to positions of leadership in the liberal clubs

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121 *Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado*, T. XXIV, No. 50, pp. 397, December 13, 1900.

122 *Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado*, T. XXV, No. 8, pp. 75, February 26, 1901.


on the other, moved the more moderate members of these organizations, among them Protestants, to distance themselves from the movement.125

This retreat was also seen within missionary circles. In August, *El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado* commented on the “excesses” of the Zacatecas Liberal Club “Benito Juárez,” which was asking, among other things, “for abstention from participation in worship or services of any religion.”126 The editorial asked believers not to fall into extremism pointing out, “You cannot find a more sincere, progressive, or patriotic liberal than a Protestant.”127 It concluded by claiming that “there is no worse form of intolerance than that which is exercised in the name of liberty.”128 In the same vein, “The Pastor” of Tulancingo, Hidalgo, as the writer of the letter identified himself, warned that the Liberal Club of Tlacuilotepec, Puebla, not only sought enforcement of the existing laws but based its position on hostility to religion in general.129 At the same time, Vicente Mendoza commented on student demonstrations in Monterrey, Pachuca, and Mexico City, indicating his fear that they were not only anticlerical “…but antireligious.”130

However, we find the clearest demonstration of this divergence in a sermon given—once again—by Pedro Flores Valderrama on the occasion of the dedication of the

125 *Loc. Cit.*


Methodist church in Pachuca. In front of the state governor and many prominent liberals and masons, Valderrama based his sermon on the Biblical passage: “not by armies or by force, but by my spirit…” The orator sought to explain the violence of the anticlerical demonstrations in Europe and contrast them with what had happened our country. According to Valderrama, the enactment of the Reform Laws, and with them the separation of church and state, gave a different character to Mexico’s anticlerical demonstrations. This suggested that our legislation marked the desirable road. Yet Mexico still had problems with extremism. It brought harmful attitudes: “the revolutionary with his ideas, or any other inclination that only proposes to tear down without constructing something new and useful on the ruins cannot be considered as a true benefactor of society.” This seems to have been a very clear warning about positions such as anti-religious anarchism, “that hydra”—as another Protestant described it—“that feeds only on the blood of noble and great people, but that grows in the mud and in the shadows.”

The growing opposition to Díaz and the ever worsening conditions of life for Mexicans chipped away at Methodist support of the government. Apart from their announced political leanings, Methodists concerned themselves with their neighbors’ well being which meant that they were already radicals or at least moderates. Recall that

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131 Surely based on the text from Zachariah 4:6 that says, “Not by armies or by force, but with my spirit, has said LORD of hosts.”

132 The sermon was summarized by Carlos M. Amador in “Solemn Inauguration of the Methodist Church of Pachuca,” in Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, T. XXV, No. 35, pp. 376, August 29, 1901.

133 Ibid.

one of the more extreme positions taken by secular liberals was mutualism. Methodists expressed concern for their neighbors through mutualist societies along with educational undertakings and the organization of charities. Of course, this attitude of concern also included an element of vocal anticlericalism. El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado harshly criticized the Catholic Congress of Morelia in 1904 because instead of deliberating it should have been performing concrete actions to aid the poor.\textsuperscript{135}

Although the absence of references to the strike at the textile factory of Miraflores in 1906 is strange because it surely affected some members of the local church, the textile strike at Rio Blanco at the beginning of 1907 caught the attention of Methodists. The active participation of José Rumbia, district superintendent of Orizaba—meaning he was the representative of the bishop in the zone—may explain this sudden attention by Methodist authorities. However, as events unfolded, what had looked to the Methodists like a movement for just claims was transformed, in their eyes, into an event manipulated by leaders who had no connection to the workers.\textsuperscript{136} Miguel Z. Garza, an old Presbyterian preacher had recently joined the Methodist mission, argued that to avoid this type of manipulation in the future, they needed publications dedicated to combating the spread of “socialist” ideas.\textsuperscript{137}

The events of Rio Blanco had repercussions inside the mission. Rumbia’s participation in the strike led to the abandonment of the church in Orizaba where he had been a preacher. North American missionaries worked for the liberation of Rumbia and, \textsuperscript{135} Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, T. XXV, No. 30, pp. 158, August 19, 1904.  
\textsuperscript{136} ACAMIME, 1908.  
\textsuperscript{137} Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, T. XXV, No. 3, pp. 30, January 18, 1901.
upon obtaining it, decided to avoid more problems by sending him to the Bajío district. By thus exercising this right that the *Discipline* gave to the bishop, they hoped to avoid further unpleasantness with the authorities, regather some of members of the scattered congregation, and calm the situation. By the end of the year, Rumbia had been reintegrated into the mission and had even gained two new converts. Nevertheless he abandoned the mission a year later in the face of charges of immorality.

Whatever the lapses of the Díaz administration when it came to enforcement of the laws or respect for liberal constitutional principles, Methodists themselves sought to maintain a reputation for scrupulous obedience to the laws and respect for the governing authorities. Nevertheless, some of their patriotic celebrations, especially after the turn of the century, have been viewed as protests hidden behind veneration for Juárez. Despite the plausibility of this interpretation, several questions remain. How could Methodists have organized within the church, an environment presumably favorable to the existing government and with so few resources, the network of revolutionary contacts that are said to have arisen from these demonstrations? What exactly happened is still not clear.

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138 The mission’s negotiations are referred to in the letters of F.P. Lawyer, the substitute for Rumbia as superintendente, to John W. Butler Turing 1907; and in John W. Butler to Bishop Hamilton, August 23, 1907, in John W. Butler’s Letters, Bishops, Methodist Archive. The reincorporation of Rumbia in *Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado*, T. XXXI, No. 50, pp. 402, December 10, 1907.

139 ACAMIME, 1908.


Madero’s presidential campaign and the outbreak of hostilities in 1910 caused little more than skepticism in the mission’s ranks. Missionaries such as John W. Butler, who were supposedly well informed of what was going on inside the church and in the country, expressed confidence that things would soon return to normal. Nevertheless, many traveling preachers and local ministers joined the Madero revolution and were soon placed in important posts. The explanation for this can be found in the material conditions from which coverts had been recruited and in the possibilities for advancement that the mission had given them. In general, Protestants came from social groups that were living in precarious conditions. The mission had given them education, the possibility of knowing something more than their hometown, and a certain local prominence from participating in the activities of groups of people who were striving to better their living conditions. Along with all of this, converts had acquired a vision of life that prompted them to identify with middle class professionals. Thus, the converts perfectly fit the profile of the Revolution’s mid-level leaders.

With some exceptions, the position of Methodists before the revolution could be classified as moderate liberalism. Once Díaz fell, Pedro Flores Valderrama declared that the cause of his downfall was his utter failure to respect the laws. Methodists generally

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144 Frederick Katz defined the profile of the intermediate leader in the revolution with the following characteristics: to have ancestry in that locality; know how to read and write; have a greater contact with the area outsider that location than the rest of the people; be in a better economic situation than the majority; there are many Protestants and practically no unskilled laborers. Verbal Communication, August 1984.

participated in the Madero and Carranza revolutions, precisely those most moderate revolutions that were based on the defense of liberal principles. Some Methodists also participated in the Zapata movement, as was the case with Benigno and Angel Zenteno and José Trinidad Ruiz, all from the Puebla-Tlaxcala and volcanic zones. In the most studied examples, this seems to have been a case of radicalization produced by participation in the political struggle itself rather than a position developed in agreement with Methodist ideas. For the rest, there was much pragmatism in the Methodist attitude toward the Revolutionary movements. The Huerta government, for example, prompted an expression of opinion from the mission’s authorities similar to that which was manifested by Luis Cabrera in March 1913: “if the government in power manages to establish peace, their actions will be forgiven.” Bishop Hamilton likewise declared that he believed that “any government, even one that ruled by force, was better than anarchy or total lack of government.”

What finally led Methodists of all types to rise up in favor of the Revolution was the crisis provoked by the North American invasion of Veracruz and the later “Punitive

146 For an analysis on the participation of Protestants in the revolution see Jean Pierre Bastian, Protestantismo..., Op. Cit., pp. 105-152.

147 María Eugenia Fuentes, El Metodismo en Tlaxcala, Graduate thesis, UNAM, 1992. Jean Pierre…”José Rumbía…” in Cristianismo y Sociedad, Both authors consider that the militant politics of Methodists is owed to their political training while in the ranks of the Methodist church. It does not seem to be the case. In support of this opinion, one would have to consider the lack of references, for example the labor conflicts in Miraflores in which Methodist involvement ought to have existed (1900, 1906, and 1912).


Expedition” of 1916. Students in Methodist schools, the Institute of Puebla for example, were caught up in the armed defense of their homeland. Probably the best expression of their common sentiment is an editorial published in *El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado* in January 1917, on the topic of the Pershing expedition. In the face of Carranza’s refusal to sign the Atlantic City protocol while North American troops were still on Mexican soil, the periodical maintained that “although we do not see ourselves as unconditional followers of Carranza, we enthusiastically applaud the patriotic and proud decision adopted by the First Magistrate of the Nation and as Mexicans we are with him and think as he does.”

Methodists’ identification with liberal values, the class origins of the converts, and the practical difficulties of all possible paths to economic integration and social progress could explain Protestant Mexicans’ participation in the revolution. But North Americans, in their own way, also participated in the revolutionary process. Bishop Francis C. McConnell, who made his first visit to our country in 1913 and later developed strong links with Mexican Methodism, commented to John W. Butler about his work in New York City: “Sunday morning I spoke about the Mexican situation in Grace Church of New York City; and in the afternoon I did it again in Brooklyn, on New York Avenue, and on Monday morning I was in a pastors’ meeting… [much later] I

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150 President Woodrow Wilson ordered the U.S. Navy to occupy the Mexican port of Vera Cruz in April, 1914, to punish General Victoriano Huerta who had seized the Presidency of Mexico in a coup d’état the previous year. Two years later, Wilson ordered General John Pershing to invade northern Mexico in pursuit of Pancho Villa, after the Mexican leader attacked a U.S. border town. On both occasions, President Venustiano Carranza protested the presence of U.S. troops on Mexican soil. —Trans.

wrote an article for the New York Advocate.”¹⁵² The bishop sought to make known his point of view about the Mexican situation and to awaken sympathies for a people that were passing through difficult times.

Other missionaries expounded on their version of what was happening in our country during the Revolution. This effort was especially important amid rumors of North American intervention in 1913, or when intervention actually occurred in 1914 and 1916. Missionaries used every argument possible to avert an international war, but mainly fell back on the idea of the injustice of a struggle against an enemy that, distracted by internal struggles, could hardly represent a danger to a strong nation. It was “unjust” to take advantage of a neighbor’s weakness, just as it had been when the United States invaded Mexico in 1846-48.¹⁵³

Mission work was seriously affected by the revolutionary struggle. Individual congregations and entire districts remained isolated from the rest of the church for long periods of time. Reports came in of attacks against members and property. Famine and epidemics affected both congregations and preachers. Some churches closed their doors permanently. But the most serious medium and long-term consequences resulted from the enactment of the Constitution of 1917. The application of constitutional provisions regarding education removed the mission’s most powerful weapon: the schools. Article

¹⁵² Francis McConnell to John W. Butler, March 12, 1913. In order to learn how the bishop understood the Mexican situation and how he worked, see his report to the 1916 General Conference, General Conference Minutes, 1916, pp. 1026-1030.

¹⁵³ John W. Butler wrote articles for different religious and secular American publications, demonstrating his desire that Americans not intervene in our country and trying to defuse the rumors about violence and vandalism. Refs
130, which allowed the state to regulate ecclesiastical life and impede foreigners from acting as ministers, undermined the foundation on which mission work had been built.

Methodists maintained that although this type of legislation restricted individual rights, they would obey it. Curiously, they continued acting normally, even while they ignored the law. An article appeared in *El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado* signed by Miguel Z. Garza, director of the seminary since 1913, in which he maintained that Christians are “invincible.” Although the “Jacobins” could establish laws that deprive us of property and ministers, Garza said, would they be able “to prevent us from raising our thoughts to God from whatever spot in the Universe… [Or from] proclaiming the glory of ‘He who fills all and is in all’?” He concluded that this was not possible; therefore, there was no reason to worry.

In fact, by virtue of a few minor adjustments Methodists managed to calm their consciences before God and avoid problems with the law. Their reduced numbers, the promotion of ex-preachers and church members to influential posts in Federal and state governments, and their ideological identification with the victorious groups of the Revolution help to explain their equanimity. The desire of the Carranza and Obregón governments to avoid problems with the United States and so to smooth the path to diplomatic recognition could also have been an influence, albeit a very slight one.

Beginning in the 1920s, and despite efforts as praiseworthy and well planned as the “Centennial,” a five-year plan to celebrate the Methodist Episcopal Church’s one hundred years of mission work, the mission lost influence in the country. The execution

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of the Cincinnati Plan which established specific boundaries for Protestant mission work, compliance with the new anti-religious laws of the country, the implementation of middle class social projects by the revolutionary governments—the educational program of José Vasconcelos for example—and the reduction of missionary budgets in 1924, explain the lowest rates of growth in the mission’s history: an average growth of 2.35% in the 1920s compared with the 7.9% in the 1890s.

The enactment of the Calles Law in June 1926 also affected Protestant missions to a degree but they certainly did not suffer or have as many problems as the Catholic Church did. Of course, the Protestants did not provoke the church-state conflict. Moreover President Calles’s connections with Methodism—his daughters studied at the Sara L. Keen School—and with Protestantism in general—one of the charges made against Calles is that he “surrendered public education to foreigner-loving Protestants”155—along with the affinity between Protestantism and the official ideology, have traditionally been cited to explain the government’s more lenient attitude toward Protestants. It is also undeniable that the presence of individuals such as Moisés Sáenz in the Ministry of Education or Leopoldo García at the state level had a degree of influence. But it is also true that the shallow roots of the Protestant churches in the population made attacks against their missions unnecessary. Besides, the fact that the missions were sponsored by North Americans weighed heavily on the thoughts of those who might have wanted to attack them.

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155 ACAMIME, 1926, Table 4; 1927, “Informe Estadístico de la Conferencia Anual de México for 1926.”
For their part, Methodists professed their obedience to the country’s laws. They took the position that the actions of the government were legal and just because they were in agreement with existing law. Consequently they maintained that the problem was not religious, but clerical. Hence, for them there was no religious persecution in Mexico.\footnote{156} Events such as the creation of the schismatic Mexican Apostolic Church merited only disparaging commentaries from Methodists.\footnote{157}

Obedience is the best policy, declared Protestants through *El Mundo Cristiano*, the official Protestant periodical beginning in 1919. Methodists did obey. Sixto Ávila, later superintendent general of the Mexican Methodist Church, reported at the Annual Conference in 1927 that preachers in the state of Hidalgo had been subjected to the anti-clerical regulations of constitutional article 130 which meant that they

[are] acting as minister in one municipality only; if their circuit includes additional municipalities, the minister is restricted to visiting other brothers and sisters in the faith, writing them, and maintaining their religious fervor in that way. Every minister needs their authorization signed by the State Executive …\footnote{158}

Times were bad for Methodists. Their church was not growing like it should. The report of the Commission about the State of the Church pointed this out in 1927. They had to make the best of bad times and remind themselves “that there are no masses or


\footnote{157} *El Mundo Cristiano*, T. VII, No. 8, pp. 45, February 22, 1925.

\footnote{158} ACAMIME, 1927, pp. 65.
public religious services in the Catholic Church…“159 and that the religious problem should therefore be considered as “a new opportunity for evangelism.”160 In this regard, Protestants wanted to convert themselves into fishermen in the troubled river as someone pointed out during the Calles government.161 At any rate, as indicated by their low growth numbers and lack of impact on the political life of the country, their achievements were few.

The religious struggle that started in 1925 had important consequences for Mexican Methodism. The strict application of legal limitations on the missionaries’ ministerial activities exacerbated nationalism inside the church and opened the doors for Mexican ministers to occupy decision-making roles in the mission’s ranks. The District Superintendents were all Mexicans, and the Annual Conference was presided over by nationals. With these new leadership roles, Mexicans took the final steps in demonstrating that Mexicans could administer the Mexican church. With Mexican administration, it was much easier to develop unification plans with the other Methodist mission in our country, such as the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, which was working in northern Mexico. From there to autonomy only one more step was needed.

159 Ibid, pp. 93.
160 Ibid.
161 Francis Patrick Dooley, Los Cristeros, Calles, y el Catolicismo Mexicano, Mexico City, SEP, 1976, pp. 48-49.
Documents for chapter V

1) ADVICE TO A MISSIONARY ABOUT LOCAL POLITICS

The official periodical published this letter that Bishop Matthew Simpson sent to missionary Samuel P. Craver, notifying him of this nomination as missionary to Mexico.

Methodist Episcopal Church’s Office
1018 Arch Street
Philadelphia, December 20, 1875
Reverend Samuel P. Craver

Dearest Brother,

By now I am sure you have found out that you have been named missionary to Mexico and we desire that you head out as soon as possible by New Orleans to Veracruz route. On your arrival to Mexico City, report to Reverend Guillermo Butler, Superintendent of the Mission, under whose direction and with the help of our brothers who reside here, you will undertake your work in this new mission field.

Among your first objectives will be the acquisition of the Spanish language, so that in the least time possible you will be capable of giving the advice that you regard as relevant to the native workers and of leading congregations in their own tongue.

You must realize that while residing in a foreign country, it is your obligation to support, whenever possible, the government under whose protection you live; thus, by
example of your personal obedience to the laws, like by your advice to those who are under your care, to be good citizen and faithful observers of the law.

Likewise, you understand that your principal objective and preferential obligation will be to save souls. To this end, avoid all speech that is too lively. Preach Christ and explain the truth in the Spirit, of love. Above all, “believe in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ,” personal and experimental, seeking to conserve among “brothers the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”.

As a Methodist missionary, you will teach your congregations the doctrine of the Methodist Episcopal Church and establish the uses and disciplines of said church; but at the same time, you ought to cultivate the greatest spirit of Christian liberality and of true courtesy and communion with our brothers, the members of sister evangelical churches.

Wishing you a happy success, and praying that God’s blessings fall upon you and Mrs. Craver, and your undertakings.

I shall await further word from you and until then I remain sincerely yours,

M. Simpson


2) METHODIST ETHICS EXPLAINED AND DEFENDED

Temperance

Temperance consists in the moderate and permissible use of that which you enjoy and the total abstinence of that which harms you. It’s a term as wide in its significance,
that it not only includes the question of alcoholic drinks, but also all our actions and
whichever customs that are maintained in your relationships and character. Considered in
this way, temperance is not anything more than morality, and therefore, the establishment
of this section in our periodical, conforms to the recommendation at the last annual
conference, let us be allowed to combat vice and immorality in all forms and encourage
all types of virtue and good habits.

We will fight the fire of intoxication, since it is the greatest of all the plagues that
afflict our society. It impoverishes the artisan and day laborer, destroys the peace and
tranquility of the home, fills tombs with its filthy victims and hell with lost souls, and
sows disgrace, misery, and ruin wherever it wants.

In the same way, we will combat the so-called social vice that is sexual impurity:
since, after drunkenness, there is no other evil more generalized and unfortunate in its
consequences. It definitively breaks the sacred bonds that unite spouses, leaves unhappy
children abandoned, makes innocent and virtuous people suffer unspeakable torments,
fills the world of wretched beings whose very parents are embarrassed of them, spreads
the most repugnant and dreadful of all sicknesses, and alongside the body, it ruins
irremediable the soul.

We will struggle against gambling, abundant source of so many quarrels and
deaths, inseparable companion of laziness, and all kinds of other vices.

We will fight tenaciously against that laziness, staunch enemy of ingenuity,
progress, and human well-being.
Finally, we consider ourselves authorized to combat all impurities, all that harms mankind in its temporal and eternal interests, and makes him unworthy of its position as the noblest creation of God.

On the other hand, we will defend with all the energy and certainty we are capable of, the good, the pure, the noble, the virtuous; and we will consider it our special mission to encourage sobriety, fidelity in marriage, and industry.

We are Christians and this allows us to support our arguments and exhortations with citations from the Holy Bible, since we consider its authority as nothing less than divine.

We are rational beings, and therefore we will appeal to reason and human experience to justify our doctrine in the face of human judgment.

We beg all friends and defenders of good and virtuous habits to lend us the contingent of your cordial cooperation.

All articles, communications, questions, and issues that you desire to publish or discuss in this section of El Abogado, ought to be directed to Lucio C. Smith,

8a. Hidalgo Street, 49,

Oaxaca.

Modern Mexico

Mexico has just finished another year of its national life and of celebrating another September sixteenth with the commemoration of the sacrifices and praises of the heroes of its independence.

People have once again met around the altar of the homeland to pledge fidelity to Mexico’s institutions and to repeat the always-pleasant story of the memorable years that that fight lasted that ended in the birth of a new people in the world. It is good that the children of Mexico remember the history of their homeland and mention the notable deeds that make up the most brilliant pages of their annals; yet while we speak of the past, we should not forget the future. Mexico was made free and has written its name on the list of independent peoples; but everything we are for nothing if the children of Mexican soil do not know how to conserve the glory of their heroes and perpetuate the free institutions that the founders of their nation left behind.

The greatness of a people does not so much consist in conquering their freedom as in conserving it and maintaining it by means of morality, virtue, justice, and the practice of those noble principles that ought to characterize free peoples.

Mexico has large elements that can contribute to its exaltation and material prosperity; its fertile soil, beautiful countryside, rich mines, and inexhaustible natural resources, but all of this is not enough to assure the stability and perpetuity of a nation. It needs morality, integrity, intelligence, and virtue in its people. Mexico has a well-equipped and disciplined army, but the perpetuation
of a people does not depend on armed forces. Rome had absolute military power and war-seasoned legions, but with all this it fell because there was no morality in its people. Modern Mexico should raise itself by the unmovable foundation of law and justice. It is good to speak of the passed and extol its glories; yet at the same time, it is necessary to secure the future.

Source: *El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado*. October 1, 1890, pp. 146.

4) DEFENDING METHODISM FROM CHARGES OF DISLOYALTY

**Slander or Ignorance?**

In an editorial of number 355 corresponding to the November 9th that just passed *El Obrero*, a weekly magazine that is published in Pachuca, made some appraisals in respect to the reform project of our constitutional laws referring to the expulsion of the foreign clergy from churches that are property of the nation.

First, said *El Obrero*, Protestantism tends to uproot Mexican patriotism, to which we answered the already mentioned periodical that this statement is totally unfounded, entirely false, and also slander.

1. Because THERE IS NOT ONE PERSON among Protestant converts who has disowned their homeland, our beloved Mexican Republic.

2. Because Mexican Protestants, in general, are calm and peaceful, follow the country’s laws and joyfully submit to the general dispositions of their governments.
3. Because if spontaneous demonstrations in festivals celebrating the homeland is any measure of love for one’s country, Protestants are first rate citizens, and have had the satisfaction of having prominent people of the great liberal party at their patriotic gatherings.

4. Because not El Obrero, nor any living person in a country where the sun shines, could present us with even one case or person that, due to Protestantism’s influence has rejected their homeland and has asked for a document of naturalization from the United States or any other nation where Protestantism is located.

5. In addition, El Obrero believes it is correct saying that Protestants try to destroy the feelings of love for one’s country among Mexicans, quote our deeds, not our ultramontain advice, tell us the name or the names of the Mexicans instructed in Christian doctrine for the great American republic by Protestantism’s influence or of the converse, these roles that the aforementioned weekly magazine gives us, we take AS SLANDER.

Second, El Obrero assures that Protestantism –in Mexico– gives “a false protection to teaching,” and on this subject we say with honesty that we cannot understand how El Obrero can call “false” what is truth. We invite El Obrero – understood as all their editors– to visit our scholastic establishments –without exception– so that they can have a more precise idea of our schools; but if El Obrero finds it is not possible to visit all our schools, they can, at the hour of their choosing, pass through the schools that support Protestantism in the city of Pachuca, where they will find close to five hundred boys and girls registered, and with an attendance of an average of four
hundred pupils who, at the same time do not pay their teachers, nor do they pay for the school’s equipment. These students truly receive as good an education here, as they would at any of the country’s best institutes.

Thus, it is not right that El Obrero speaks badly of an institution that, by the looks of it, it does not know, and therefore, after reading an article with the heading, “The Expulsion of the Foreign Clergy,” published in its November 9 issue, we have asked and today ask El Obrero, Is this slander, or is it the consequence of being ignorant of our society’s actions?

Finally, if El Obrero and various other daily papers of the capital, including El Combate, succeed in erasing from our homeland’s laws the articles that guarantee the freedom of conscience and the freedom of religion, and come to close our borders and our ports so that more Protestant ministers do not enter, and go as far as to issue the law of expulsion for all foreign clergy, they could then achieve their desires of expelling all ministers of religions that are not Mexican; yet had El Obrero and its colleagues understood, that we do not have churches that are owned by the nation, nor do we request them or even need them. We buy our houses and install in them our schools and we invite our fellow believers to praise God in the way that our conscience dictates and conforms to the regulations of our church.

As we have stated, the press, that tries to harass us in some way, will understand that we are not worried about questions of the expulsion of the Catholic religion’s foreign clergy, like the additions that it wants to make to the projected law presented by Mr. J. A. Mateos to the Congress.
Abd-Er-Rachman

Source: *El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado*, December 10, 1898.