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SCHOOLS

“The development of our educational work is one of the most important and satisfying chapters in our history.” So wrote John W. Butler wrote in 1918.¹ In fact, education was one of the pillars on which the Methodist Episcopal Church constructed its mission in Mexico. Above all else, it aided the mission in the dissemination of its religious message. However there were several other important motives for the establishment of schools: they fostered group spirit, provided preparation for ministry, fulfilled a social obligation, and served as good publicity. Indeed, the social impact of the Methodist mission was always directly proportional to influence of Methodist schools.

From the moment that Methodists acquired property in the capital of the Mexican Republic, they saw the creation of schools as an important project that would encourage the mission’s growth at all levels. At the end of 1874, in just the second year of their labors, missionaries reported the establishment of two schools in Mexico City. One of them, a boy’s school, eventually gave rise to one of the most important educational institutions in the Puebla-Tlaxcala region: the Instituto Metodista Mexicano. The other, for girls, would become in time one of the largest and most respected schools in Mexico City: the Sara L. Keen School. By 1910, the Methodist Episcopal Church had seventy-six elementary schools with a total of 4,697 students distributed throughout eight states in the

center of Mexico. After the Revolution, Methodist educational institutions dwindled little by little. There were only forty-seven in 1922 and thirty-four in 1929. The decline of the Methodist school system took away what had been perhaps the most effective means of outreach that the mission possessed.

A. Why Schools?

Providing education to the masses was a popular reform throughout the western world in the nineteenth century. As Howard Zinn explains in his *People's History of the United States*, education was transformed into a principle element of American ideology. Establishing institutions of higher education became a kind of fad even for the great millionaires. Universities like Stanford, Duke, and Vanderbilt were tangible signs of the new industrial capitalists’ interest in creating an educated middle class. The founding of elementary schools also interested businessmen. A reflection of this attitude in the Methodist mission can be seen in the repeated references in *El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado* to the Vanderbilts’ creation of the university that carries their name and in

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whose foundation Bishop Mathew Simpson, the same bishop who sent William Butler to
our country, played an important role.\textsuperscript{6}

In Mexico also, both liberals and conservatives saw education as the cure-all for
the ills of their country. Both supported a wide range of educational efforts such as the
“Lancastrian” system.\textsuperscript{7} Another example was “the three Juans” in the mountains of
northern Puebla who promoted education as a way to encourage the development of their
region. The support given by the Robertson family, owners of the textile factory in
Miraflores, to the Hijos de Hidalgo [Sons of Hidalgo] school in the District of Chalco,
can be interpreted in the same way.\textsuperscript{8}

Methodists embraced this enthusiasm for education but they understood it in the
context of a particular eschatological vision that focused on the contest between Catholic
error and Protestant truth. According to Joseph Bellamy, an early formulator of this
viewpoint, ignorance rather than innate sinfulness was the true root of evil in human
nature. From this premise it followed that to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth, it
was necessary to combat ignorance by means of education.\textsuperscript{9} Echoes of this idea are
evident in the justification that Pedro Flores Valderrama, for many years director of the
Mexican Methodist Institute of Puebla, offered for the mission’s educational efforts:

\begin{footnotes}
\item[6] El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado, 12/12 (June 15, 1889), p. 67. Richard M. Cameron, Methodism
and Society in Historical Perspective, pp. 193.
\item[7] The Lancastrian system was introduced into Mexico in the 1830s by James D. Thomson as a way
to promote the education of the masses. In it, the instructor taught the more advanced students so that they
in turn could teach the others.—Trans.
\item[8] El Monitor Republicano, January 15, 1892.
\end{footnotes}
“Ignorance … is the mother of all the evils that afflict the human species.”

Methodists hoped that instruction would transform individuals into instruments of social regeneration. They believed that well-educated people were: “Intelligent, clean in their habits, accustomed to informing themselves about current issues via the press, capable of reasoning correctly, (and) free of the worries and prejudices that might inhibit the acceptance of positive change.” This last quality would make it possible, according to Methodists, to fight “fanaticism” and “the power of the Romanists.”

Already in 1874, William Butler argued before the Board of Missions that the creation and maintenance of Methodist schools was necessary for another reason: the children of the new converts were being picked on by their classmates and teachers. This made it urgent to create institutions in which Protestant children could be educated among their religious peers. In this way they would avoid clashes with Catholics. More positively, such schools would foster a greater spirit of unity among young believers.

In actual fact, a majority of the students in the Methodist schools came from Catholic families which pointed to another of their benefits. These students received

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12 Ibid.


15 E.g., 56th Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1874, p. 155.
Protestant religious instruction and Methodists hoped that the school environment, where there were students from Protestant families, Protestant teachers, and pastoral supervision by Methodist ministers, would draw Catholic children toward the new religion. They in turn would bring what they had learned, including the ethical values that the school had instilled into them, back to their homes. Thus, the schools served as a powerful tool for evangelization.

The schools also served as a way to recruit and train children and young people to take up the work of the mission, whether in the educational or the ministerial fields. John W. Butler pointed out that, “if we support [the schools] adequately, they will succeed, over time, in supplying us with the workers that we need.” A good illustration of this phenomenon is the career of Agustín Romero Lopez who served as Director of the Institute of Querétaro for more than fifty years. He came originally from Tlaxco, a small town in the state of Tlaxcala. From the Methodist school in Tlaxcala he went on to the Methodist Institute in Puebla. He graduated from there as a teacher and was ordained as a pastor as well. On leaving school he served in the ministry and taught in the states of Puebla and Tlaxcala. In 1917 he went to work in the Bajío where he was eventually appointed to be the head of the Benjamín N. Velasco Institute.

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19 Conversation with Ana D. De Romero López. February 18, 1985.
What is worth emphasizing here is that Romero López was educated in Methodist schools from the time he was a small child. In these schools he received special attention and had opportunities for studies well beyond the basics. With that support, this native of a municipality that had just 1300 inhabitants and few social or educational opportunities, became a very influential educator in a state capital. And he did it all without ceasing to be, rather while declaring himself to be, a member of the Mexican Methodist Church. By giving support to students who “showed promise” from the earliest stages of their education, Methodists were able to monitor their education, infuse them with the denomination’s religious and ethical values, and eventually incorporate them into the work of the mission.\(^\text{20}\) To complete the circle, “teacher-pastors” such as Romero López were not only appointed to be preachers, they were also responsible, according to an agreement of the Annual Conference in 1899, to supervise the schools in their pastoral districts.\(^\text{21}\)

Thus, Methodist schools were first and foremost a crucial method by which the mission disseminated its message of religious and social transformation. The schools, assisted or supervised by pastors, served to inculcate their students with the mission’s religious, moral, and ideological principles. In addition to the general curriculum which followed the Mexican government’s official plan of studies and which utilized the most advanced pedagogical methods of that time, the children received religious education and were urged to share the lessons they had learned in school with their playmates and relatives. The best students, like those at the Institute of Querétero, reached the point of


\(^{21}\) *El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado*, 23/7 (February 16, 1899), p. 62.
organizing themselves into groups that would leave their classrooms to preach in areas nearby.

Methodist schools also allowed the mission to do better and more holistic work for the betterment of society. The creation of the first mission school in Mexico City is a good example of this motive. It came about spontaneously when Clementine Butler, the wife of the mission’s superintendent, witnessed the needs of the neighborhood children and sought for some way to respond to them. Apparently her first intention was to gather orphans and give them lodging, food, and education. In the fall of 1873, the Female Society of Foreign Missionaries, a parallel organism to the Methodist Mission Society, named its first two missionary teachers for Mexico.  

The positive image that Methodist schools gave to the mission in the eyes of the people and the government was invaluable. Methodist educational work evoked the rare journalistic reports found in the secular press that were favorable to Protestants. One such case occurred when journalists from *El Monitor Republicano* and *El Hijo de Ahuizote* commented positively about the Methodist school in Miraflores.  

It should be noted that both periodicals had a reputation for opposing the regime of Profirio Díaz. At the same time, the Methodist schools’ reputation for academic quality and the emphasis they placed on celebrating patriotic festivals and paying homage to national heroes also brought them favorable attention from local authorities.

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22 Mary De Forest Loyd. “Las Escuelas de la Sociedad de Señoras,” in *Los Primeros Veinticinco años del Metodismo en México* (México, D.F.: Imprenta de la Iglesia Metodista Episcopal, 1899), p. 81. The Women’s Society or Female Division supported many missionary schools, especially those dedicated to girls and taught by women. Although they belonged to the Methodist mission, these girls’ schools were administered independently from the rest of the mission. See e.g., John W. Butler to Miss Hart, May 25, 1881, Methodist Episcopal Church Archive, Correspondence of John Wesley Butler, 1880-1885.

There were numerous cases of municipal presidents, sometimes even a state governor, attending Methodist school festivities.\textsuperscript{24} For example, when a Methodist church was inaugurated in the capital of Hidalgo in 1901, the state governor and prominent liberal politicians attended the ceremonies. And in September of 1926, interim governor Raymundo Gómez, though deeply involved in a violent religious conflict with the Catholic Church, attended the festival of education celebrated by the Julián Villagrán Methodist school.\textsuperscript{25} Conversely, preachers such as David M. Verduzco were invited to participate as official orators in local patriotic ceremonies in other locales because of the association of the Methodist church with education, Mexican nationalism, and “progress.”\textsuperscript{26} And in 1922, “Velasco” students in Querétaro actively participated in government-organized civic celebrations.

The Methodists’ school system gave them a presence in society that would have been difficult to obtain in any other way. Because of the missions’ association with education, Methodists frequently gained access to towns and regions that would otherwise have been closed to them. In Santa Ana Nextlalpan, for example, the missionary school came to rival the public school in popularity. In this way, animosity against Protestants was tempered, if not completely eliminated, in that community.\textsuperscript{27} A good number of the larger mission schools, those with a student body greater than 200,

\textsuperscript{24} For the most relevant case see \textit{Tzzin-Tzzi}, 1/2 (June 8, 1925).

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Tzzin Tzzi}, 2/6 (September 5, 1926).

\textsuperscript{26} David M. Verduzco to J. P. Hauser, April 17, 1919, \textit{Methodist Episcopal Church Archive}, Correspondence of J. P. Hauser.

were located in zones considered to be difficult for evangelistic work. The “Villagrán” boarding school in the state of Hidalgo received students from as far away as Durango, Morelos, Tlaxcala, and Veracruz including areas well outside the nominal boundaries of the mission.

The North American missionaries began to think that educational work might even be the key to entering the difficult field of the Bajío. Since 1876 Guanajuato had been considered to be a city of great importance for the mission. Nevertheless, the first missionaries who tried to establish themselves here were attacked and almost lynched. One of the mission’s workers died because of an attack that was motivated by hostility to Protestantism. Even so, the school established there by the Female Missionary Society grew to a student body of 285 girls by 1913. Thanks to the labors of this school, the Juárez Elementary School, and the medical clinic established in 1891, the Methodist congregation in Guanajuato was one of only three that achieved financial self-sufficiency prior to the end of the nineteenth century. Something similar happened in Puebla. In Querétaro, although they had more problems and fewer successes, the institute there aided the relatively peaceful development of the area’s mission. In fact, the Querétaro institute became the center where Methodists from the central-northern part of the country came to study.

In some places, Methodist schools were a response to an expressed interest in Protestantism rather than a means to allay hostility. The mining region of Hidalgo was

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29 54th Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1876. p. 158.
30 95th Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1913, p. 572.
always favorable to the establishment of Protestant undertakings. As we have seen, this was one of the first three centers considered by William Butler for the inauguration of mission work. The second Methodist missionary school in our country was opened there. Based on the statistics from the First General Population Census of the Republic and the reports of the Missions Society, by 1895 more than sixty percent of the students in Pachuca, the state capital of Hidalgo, were studying in Methodist schools.31

There are many instances in which the authorities, local organizations, or even individuals, called on the missionaries to establish a Methodist school in the area.32 Some isolated communities even invited Methodist preachers to come and begin work in their neighborhoods in the hope of obtaining a school. The presence of a Protestant school was especially important in small communities. As a consequence, a majority of the mission’s educational centers were found in rural communities or small towns where there were few if any other educational institutions. As one missionary boasted: “Ours is the only school in town.”33

The educational efforts of Mexican Methodists were not confined to elementary schools, they also developed seminaries and teacher training schools that prepared the personnel needed for work in the ecclesiastical and educational branches of church’s mission. The Methodist Mexican Institute of Puebla was the school that did the most in that regard. From it came the pastors and teachers (males) that were needed to keep the

31 First General Census of the Mexican Republic (Hidalgo), General Direction of Statistics, Mexico City, 1895.

32 David M. Verduzco to J. P. Hauser. January 4, 1921, Methodist Episcopal Church Archive, Correspondence of J. P. Hauser, 1916-1921.

mission running. The Mexican Institute of Teacher Training, also in Puebla, prepared women for the teaching profession. Of course these establishments changed their names in 1926, the first becoming the Mexican Institute of Teachers and the second the Mexican Institute of Teacher Training. The reason for these changes is obvious: the application of the 1926 Calles Law which severely restricted religious education.

Other schools such as the “Methodist Institute” of Querétaro, later called “Benjamín N. Velasco Institute,” the “Sara L. Keen” school in Mexico City, and the “Julián Villagrán” school in Pachuca, taught high school and preparatory classes. Starting in the 1890s, some of them gradually incorporated business courses and other subjects such as telegraphy and bookkeeping. In addition, these schools had an enrollment of mostly boarding school students and they never suspended religious teaching in the dormitories.

Two schools deserve special attention. Ms. Laura Temple founded the “Industrial School,” later “Sara Alarcón,” in 1910. This institution was something like a subsidiary of the Sara L. Keen elementary school. Girls from impoverished families, who normally came from small towns with either a mission church or school, made up the student body. The curriculum offered everything from horticulture to religion, and included domestic economics, weaving, and chemistry. The other was the “Farm and Industrial School” created by Gumaro García in San Lucas Atoyatenco, Tlaxcala, in 1926. The institution’s objective was almost an echo of the purposes of the Mexican rural school as conceived by Moisés Sáenz, then Undersecretary of Education: to “create around each student, boy or girl, the circumstances that allow them to obtain their own educational support…” and with it to “redeem people from the countryside through education…”
B. The Educational Philosophy of the Methodists

In 1898, Pedro Flores Valderrama characterized Methodist education as having two key objectives. The first was “to do away with routine, that old system which slows progress [and] paralyzes energies…” The other was “…to fight against stupid and wicked intolerance that refuses to accept freedom of conscience…” With these two elements, innovation in teaching methods and encouragement of freedom of conscience, Methodist teachers would provide their students with an educational foundation on which to create a better world.

Methodists believed that education should not confine itself to divulging the most recent advances in research and knowledge. There was another essential piece in the process of instruction: the creation of values they considered fundamental to making a more livable world. According to Lucius C. Smith, “Education by itself illuminates people’s intelligence, but it never changes their hearts…” Hence schools had the obligation to pass on a superior set of values. Thanks to this kind of instruction, “the arts of peace” would flourish; commerce would increase; the nation’s grandeur would increase because its public authorities would be more vigilant; “robbery and violence

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35 Lucius C. Smith, “El Crimen y la Educación.”
[would become] less common.”

Methodist schools would become “workshop[s] where national greatness is forged.”

Methodist schools had three ways to make their religious values felt. The first was through direct teaching of their beliefs, a procedure that had to be modified or abandoned after 1917. The second was the organization of “Epworth Leagues” among the students. These organizations functioned as lyceums, cultural clubs, or centers for Bible study. Third, was the inclusion of Christian practices in the daily life of the school. In 1896, El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado complained that there was no public prayer at the Hijos de Hidalgo school in Miraflores. “That school,” argued the commentator, “is a Christian institution, and Christians are never embarrassed to give thanks to God, publically or privately.” The editorial concluded that the school should reestablish prayer in the school’s public ceremonies.

In addition, teachers at Methodist schools were expected to be examples in every way. They were to have good academic preparation and be “completely devoted to their work.” They should support all the values that the church did; pastors and teachers should walk together. “Teachers who do not have any religious influence over the

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38 The Mexican Constitution of 1917 prohibited religious instruction in elementary education.— Trans.


students…should find themselves another career besides Christian ministry,’” concluded the Commission of Education at the Annual Conference in 1925.41

While the promotion of religion was a principal goal of the Methodist schools, they also aimed to improve the daily lives of their students. Speaking of the physical appearance of his students, Henry A. Basset, superintendent of the Eastern District, noted: “Our presence has changed them completely; they already wear better clothes, keep themselves cleaner, and, speaking from a strictly material point of view, have made great progress.”42 Methodists thought that a “new generation” of Mexicans was searching for “something more than the tottering traditions of the past.”43 Native Americans were counted among this new generation. Until the 20th century they had been forgotten or, more precisely, exploited. According to pastor Tomás García, Methodist schools were putting the indigenous people in contact with “our beautiful and wise laws” which would help them to escape oppression. Education would also give them new ideals—“light, heat, and energy”—and would give them a glimpse of “vast horizons, full of hope and freedom.”44 Elaborating on the benefits of education to the Native Americans, García wrote that indigenous people would exchange “the liquor bottle for the loaf of bread; the soldier’s carbine for the farmer’s hoe; fireworks and noisemakers for art and industry; … suspicion of others for social life; and lastly, the lure of idleness for the book.”45

41 Minutes of the Methodist Episcopal Church’s Annual Mexican Conference, 1925.
45 Ibid.
On the other hand, Methodists did not consider it proper or advisable for a person to use their education to abandon their place in society. That approach would lead to inactivity rather than the exercise of the full capability of the individual because it would carry the person toward “government job fever,” thought by Methodists to be the main defect of educated Mexicans. Speaking about this topic in 1894, missionary Lucius C. Smith indicated that, regardless of the role that a person has to fulfill in society, they should always seek to perform their assigned task in the very best way. To that end, education should be useful. He gave as an example: “the laborer who has received an appropriate and practical education will achieve incomparably greater success than the person who, wallowing in ignorance, merely follows the routine.” The missionary concluded that workers who educated themselves would better their position and receive their “just reward” and enjoy greater comfort and better living conditions.

Nationalism was another value spread by Methodist schools, one that came to be a foundation of missionary instruction. After the promotion of Christian faith, the second greatest concern of all Methodists in Mexico, whether American or Mexican, was to make known by every means possible their respect and support for anything that had helped or was helping to form the Mexican nation. For this reason, the patriot heroes, the same ones we still revere as our “plaster saints,” were objects of public veneration. In the first descriptions of the Methodist school in the Federal District of Mexico City we find

46 “Empleomanía” in the original Spanish.—Trans.
48 Ibid.
references to portraits of Father Miguel Hidalgo, Vicente Guerrero, and Benito Juárez as classroom decorations.\(^49\) The very names chosen for Methodist educational institutions: “Morelos” and “Juárez” in Guanajuato; “Hidalgo” in San Vicente Chico loapan, state of Mexico; “Julián Villagrán” in Pachuca, along with many others, were reminders of our national heroes.

Promoting nationalism allowed Methodist schools to show Mexican society that Protestant missions were not instruments of North American penetration. At the same time, it was a way to construct a better Mexico. One American missionary noted that when he asked a mule driver in the outskirts of Tulancingo, Hidalgo, if he knew who Hidalgo, Morelos, and Juárez were, the man replied: “Who knows?” According to the missionary, this encounter demonstrated the enormous task that confronted those who sought to improve their homeland; they would have to give its inhabitants an appreciation for their own country.\(^50\)

Perhaps the best example of this nationalism and its use is found in a presentation given by one of the graduates of the Methodist Institute of Teacher Training in Puebla. According to Guadalupe Rebeca Guarneros, people should know their strengths in order to face the struggles that they have, “they should know who their ancestor were, what they did, and why they acted as they did.” For this reason Methodist schools gave a prominent place to the knowledge of Mexican history. With it, they believed, Mexicans would gain an “intimate consciousness of our glory and our shame, our strengths and our weaknesses … we would know our ideals and our failures; in a word, who we are, who

\(^{49}\) _El Monitor Republicano_, April 9, 1876.

\(^{50}\) _El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado_, 12/8 (April 15, 1888), p. 59.
we have been, and who we can and ought to be.”

Guarneros concluded by pointing out that Mexicans did not need “to beg” foreigners for their customs or institutions, or for illustrious names to attach to their schools, “because we have our own language, our own poetry, our own national theater; in sum, we have the Mexico of Prieto, Altamirano, and Ramírez.”

Methodists expected education to accomplish many things; it would moralize, westernize, provide a ladder of social ascent and a means to incorporate the marginalized sectors into society, serve as an instrument of Christianization and as a fundamental tool for the construction of a better nation.

C. The Curriculum: High Ideals and Practical Realities

In 1899 Guillermo A. Sherwell, perhaps the most important educator to graduate from the Methodist schools, asserted that Protestants did not desire “a church of aging congregants who did not fully understand what they believed and were even less capable of explaining these ideas to others…” His position implied the need to give people, in Sherwell’s words, “the light of intelligence and at the same time enlightenment for the heart.”

Education should give human beings the tools necessary, “to investigate ideas

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52 Ibid. The individuals referred to appear to be Guillermo Prieto (1818-1897), a popular poet; Ignacio Manuel Altamirano (1834-1895), a novelist and politician; and Ignacio Ramírez (1818-1879), a free-thinking journalist and advocate of education for Mexico’s indigenous people. All three were vocal supporters of the liberal reform movement which made them heroes to the Methodists.—Trans.

for themselves.” As one female educator summarized it, graduates from missionary schools ought to make use of their “critical faculties” and think for themselves; they should be prepared to confront successfully whatever problems were placed before them.

In order to develop these qualities, Methodists thought it was necessary to follow a plan of study that would acquaint students with their environment. Natural sciences would help students “to appreciate their physical environment” and enable them to feel happy and contented, “whether on an isolated ranch or in a crowded metropolis.” Geography and history would acquaint students with the world at large and help them to see their place in it. Even social life should be included in school teachings: “our students should know how to treat the rich without becoming servile; the poor without showing arrogance; the wise with an appropriate humility, and the ignorant with kindness and tolerance.”

The means to achieve such ambitious ends was a process of instruction which itself rested on two elements: the teachers’ religious convictions with their consistent promotion of values, and the educational curriculum. With regards to the first element, we have already mentioned that Methodists wanted their teachers to display firm religious convictions, but they also expected other qualities such as responsibility, thorough preparation, an ability to relate to all social classes, and an attitude toward

teaching which valued it for the influence it had on the students and not for the honors or salary that came with it.\textsuperscript{55}

With respect to the study plans they thought up to develop these qualities, the oldest information we have on this subject dates back to 1881 and is found in a letter from John W. Butler to the mission’s superintendent, Charles W. Dress. It includes a report about the teachers in the girls’ school in Mexico City.\textsuperscript{56} This institution, which would later be called “Hijas de Juárez”\textsuperscript{57} and ultimately “Sara L. Keen Elementary,” had three groups or classes at the beginning of the 1880s. The basic level took reading, writing, arithmetic, and drawing. The second level had lessons in dictation, reading, arithmetic, writing, and catechism. The third level studied dictation, grammar, Greek history, geography, English, and catechism. All of the girls at the school, with the exception of the first grade students, studied materials prepared by the mission for religious education: the \textit{Hojas Bereanas}.\textsuperscript{58} And all of them, without exception, engaged in manual labor, usually weaving.

In 1889, the Methodist mission in Mexico established a uniform curriculum for all the mission’s schools. The course materials prepared for the students at “Hijas de Juárez” formed the backbone of the curriculum that all other Methodist schools were expected to follow. This was the answer to a need felt very early by the Methodist educators as well

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{57} Daughters of Juárez.—Trans.

\textsuperscript{58} Berean Pages. The name refers to a story in the Book of Acts in which the Jewish population of the Greek city of Berea studied the Old Testament scriptures to confirm for themselves the truth of what they had heard Saint Paul preach about Jesus.—Trans.
as a manifestation of the church’s position in the face of the provisions in the Federal Law of Primary Instruction passed by the government of the Republic in 1888. This law purported to make primary education an element in the strengthening of national unity and progress. To that end it established a general program for the entire country and decreed elementary education to be secular, obligatory, and free.\(^{59}\)

Under the direction of the Annual Conference, the educational program of the schools was divided it into five levels: basic, one year; elementary, three years; secondary, three years; preparatory, four years; and theological, three years. In the basic and elementary levels, the materials were practically the same as those at “Hijas de Juárez,” except that the new plan included physical education as an obligatory class for all groups. Morals, etiquette, and singing were included, according to the proposal of the Conference, in the elementary level. Mexican history became obligatory beginning in the second year of elementary school. English was eliminated from the curriculum until preparatory. The secondary level included subjects such as oratory, calligraphy, hygiene, and calisthenics. World history appeared in the curriculum after the second year in the secondary level.\(^{60}\) As for foreign languages, only students in at least their third year of secondary studied French, and seminary students took two courses in English, one in French, and one in Latin.

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\(^{60}\) “Dictamen de la Comisión de Educación,” *Minutes of the Methodist Episcopal Church’s Annual Mexican Conference*, 1889, pp. 29-32.
In general, this curriculum corresponded to the plan established by the Federal Law of Primary Instruction. For example, though it did not include civic education, it offered instead a course on constitutional law in the third year of the secondary level. The plan of study provided few courses in physical or natural science but music, on the other hand, received a great deal of attention beginning in the first year of the primary level. Evidently there was a strong tendency to impart the sorts of knowledge needed to carry on church activities.

The Conference’s proposals were never fully implemented. Schools in relatively large urban centers such as Orizaba, Puebla, and Mexico City, had already put this program into practice years earlier.61 Other schools, however, seemed unable or indisposed to follow completely the prescribed levels. The judgment of the Conference’s 1891 Education Commission was clear: “In some of our schools, the study programs have been utilized…”62 To remedy the situation, it was proposed that the presiding ministers of each district should supervise the implementation of the curriculum in order to spread Methodist-style teaching.

In reality, the instruction imparted at Methodist schools reflected each school’s peculiar needs and resources more than it did any centrally planned curriculum. For example, Pedro Flores Valderrama said that when he arrived at the children’s school in Pachuca, Julián Villagrán, he was obliged to establish the Lancastrian system even

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62 Minutes of the Methodist Episcopal Church’s Annual Mexican Conference, 1891, pp. 47. (Ruiz Guerra’s emphasis.)
though it was already antiquated, because he was the only teacher for sixty-four students in four distinct grades.\textsuperscript{63} Just eight years later the Annual Conference recommended use of the much more progressive Froebel system in its study program.\textsuperscript{64} Methodist educators embraced the pedagogical approach of this German Christian educator because the values he promoted—values such as order, harmony, altruism, and the careful use of time—corresponded perfectly to those that were professed by the Methodists.\textsuperscript{65} However, all such aspirations were subject to the practical realities of limited resources and weak administration.

\textbf{D. School Administration}

The problem of non-uniform instruction persisted in the Methodist schools for many years. Between April and June 1899, \textit{El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado} published an ongoing debate among Methodist educators about the curriculum.\textsuperscript{66} The discussion began when “C. Haro,” evidently a pseudonym, proposed that all the mission’s schools adopt the educational plan of the official schools in the Federal District. C. Haro alleged that this was the best curriculum among those currently being used in the country and it

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\item \textsuperscript{63} Pedro Flores Valderrama, “Algo de Historia de la Escuela Julián Villagrán,” in \textit{Tzzin Tzzi}, Annual, 1951.
\item \textsuperscript{64} “Dictamen de la Comisión de Educación,” in \textit{Minutes of the Methodist Episcopal Church’s Annual Mexican Conference}, 1893. Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852) was a German educator who pioneered the use of playful activities to stimulate the moral and intellectual development of young children.\textemdash Trans.
\item \textsuperscript{65} \textit{El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado}, 22/31 (August 4, 1898), p. 245. The name “Methodist” came from the systematic practice of these values by a Group of university students at Oxford.
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would be advantageous for the mission’s middle schools if all of their students had similar preparation. The response was not long in coming: Gorgonio Cora pointed out that he had his doubts about the benefits of the educational plan of the Federal District and that in addition it was practically impossible to unify the curriculum of schools in different zones of the country. C. Haro’s answer did nothing more than pick up a well-known idea used by the Methodist educational authorities: in the event that it was not possible to unify the scholastic programs under their own plan, they proposed adopting the program set up by the government.  

Cora’s answer gives evidence of the resistance that existed to adopting any measures that might undermine the autonomy of local mission schools.

Scattered widely across the Mexican landscape and heavily dependent on their own meager resources, Methodist schools generally operated beyond the control of mission authorities. Their failure to implement a uniform study plan was symptomatic of this independence. The practice of making pastors directly responsible for the schools in their area of ministry was another sign of the mission schools’ autonomy. But the clearest example is a letter that Bishop John Nuelesen sent to John W. Butler in October 1910. According to Bishop Nuelesen, the larger schools, those with boarding students, functioned well; but the situation in the smaller schools in more remote areas was “not so favorable… it seems that they do not have a defined system or goals. Each preacher or teacher can conduct their school in the way that best suits them.”  

And while the

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68 Bishop John Nuelesen to John W. Butler, October 1910, Methodist Episcopal Church Archive, Correspondence of John W. Butler, See “Bishops.”
situation appeared problematic in the eyes of the Episcopal authority, it left an even worse impression on outsiders: the educational work did not help the church nor did it demonstrate “a well-organized and uniform educational system to the Mexican people and government.”

The solution, according to the Bishop, was the creation of a Council of Education that would be charged with developing a uniform program of instruction. Something similar had been proposed as early as 1883 and it was finally realized in the middle of 1889. The Council was something like an executive arm of the Annual Conference with regard to educational questions. Its principle function was to determine the curricula of the schools. The seven members who made up this committee would name supervisors for final exams at the Institutes of Puebla and Querétaro, resolve issues that the teachers’ councils at these schools could not decide, supervise the quality of the faculty, seek the betterment of the schools, function as an advisory council in educational questions, and strive to make effective use of grants that had been awarded by the mission to improve the quality of the schools.

The Annual Conference approved the creation of the Council of Education and it began its work, however the results seem to have been negligible. In 1918, Carrie J. Carnahan, secretary of correspondence for the Philadelphia branch of the Feminine Society of Foreign Missions, wrote to J. P. Hauser, then head-treasurer of the mission, asking for trimester reports on the schools supported by her organization. Her letter

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69 Ibid.

70 Minutes of the Methodist Episcopal Church’s Annual Mexican Conference, 1911.
indicated that the request for information was not merely to satisfy the Society’s curiosity:

To be frank with you [said the secretary of correspondence], we have not been satisfied by the previous arrangement. We have invested a good quantity of money in these schools and have seen very few results. We would like these schools to be supervised more rigorously and to receive more complete reports.⁷¹

The Council of Education seems to have had two major faults. The first was that from the very start, it paid more attention to the large schools, those of Querétaro and Puebla that were directly dependent on the Missions Society, than to the others. Second, its members, John W. Butler, Vicente Mendoza, Pedro Flores Valderrama, Benjamin N. Velasco, Henry A. Basset, Raymond A. Carhart, and Victoriano D. Baéz, in 1912,⁷² were all ministers with pastoral duties and superintendents of districts—with the exception of Valderrama and Velasco who were directors of the institutes of Puebla and Querétaro—and so they were not in contact with the work of the small schools. By the middle of the 1920s it was evident that the Council was no longer working so the schools were obliged to report their activities directly to the Annual Conference. The only ones to do this were the large schools and some of those that were dependent on the Women’s Foreign Missions Society.⁷³

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⁷¹ Carrie J. Carnahan to J. P. Hauser, July 24, 1916, Methodist Episcopal Church Archive, Correspondence of J. P. Hauser, 1916-1921.

⁷² John W. Butler to Bishop Nuelsen, October 17, 1910, Methodist Episcopal Church Archive, Correspondence of John W. Butler, November 1906-March 22, 1913.

⁷³ Cf. Informes de las Escuelas Metodistas en México Correspondientes al Año 1927.
A complicating factor in this situation was the fact that only some of the schools belonged outright to the Missions Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church while others were dependent on the Women’s Foreign Missions Society. Only one thing united them—their oversight by missionaries of the Methodist Church in Mexico, all of them men. In the case of the Women’s Society’s schools, the missionaries merely advised, they were unable to give orders about what to do or not to do. For that reason, problems quickly arose between Butler and the Women’s Society over real or imagined interference in the day-to-day operations of the Society’s schools.\(^{74}\)

The persistence of these problems regarding effective control of teaching in the Methodist schools led to the creation of the Education Council of the Annual Mexican Conference in 1911. In the 1920s, in the face of the regulatory laws based on the third article of the Constitution which severely limited religious activities, Methodist schools were obliged to register with the local authorities. This led to the full adoption of the official government study plans and programs. Only large schools such as “Sara L. Keen” and the “Mexican Methodist Institute” of Puebla had sought and received official recognition prior to this period but now all of the schools would be subject to the new laws regarding religious education.\(^{75}\)

\(^{74}\) John W. Butler to Mrs. Doggest, April 13, 1881, Methodist Episcopal Church Archive, Correspondence of John W. Butler, 1880-1884.

E. The Fruits

The majority of Methodist schools were located in small towns. The success that they could have there was much more noticeable than what was possible in large cities. Being the best—or the only—educational alternative goes far to explain their popularity. But the possibility of broadening the educational horizons of their students by means of scholarships to higher institutions was another reason for their notoriety. The case of Panotla, Tlaxcala, is perhaps the clearest example of this reality. Pastor Epigenio Velasco tells how before the arrival of Methodism to this community in 1886, “not a single student had left the town.” By 1922, forty-six students had left Panotla, thirty-five from Protestant families, even though the Panotla Methodist congregation had only sixteen families. Thirty of the forty-six young adults—twenty-three of them Protestants—had finished what they called “the degree.” The most common professions were teaching and the military.

In Cuapiaxtla, in the state of Puebla, another interesting phenomenon occurred. In a congregation with a membership of just forty-four people, there were twenty-one subscriptions to El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado and twenty to Lecciones Bíblicas; while between thirty-five and forty people carried their own Bibles to church every Sunday.

It was the desire to read and study the Bible that pushed people toward education, but Methodists also emphasized education as a basic value in and of itself. In Panotla, a region that still today produces Methodist teachers, people like the Carros family made education into a good almost above all others. When Samuel Carro was asked about what he thought of his land (he was one of the richest landowners in the area) he asserted that
he would gladly exchange all of his lands for books. Mr. Carro’s children appear to have heeded his desires: one of them was the director of the Villagrán school in Pachuca for more than twenty years. This high value placed on education also led to the rise of a well-prepared clergy. By 1930, four Mexican Methodist ministers had received the degree of Doctor Honoris Causa from American universities.

The regional character that the educational institutions gave to the missions should not be overlooked. In Tezontepec, Hidalgo, and in Miraflores, Mexico state, schools attracted children from the surrounding areas who lived close enough to go home on weekends. The “Methodist Institute” in Puebla was, in the words of Pastor Carlos M. Amador, “respected here [Cuicatlán, Oaxaca] as one of the best institutions in the state of Puebla.”

The fruits of the Methodist educational system were expressed in another area: the production of scholarly books and texts related to pedagogical techniques. The Methodist Publishing House edited a goodly number of books written by educators who had graduated from missionary educational institutions. People such as Andrés Osuna, Adela Palacios, and Delrina Huerta had the opportunity of seeing some of their works in print.

A final aspect to consider is the economic importance of the Methodist educational institutions. In 1897, Victoriano D. Báez reported that of the 24,000 pesos collected by the Mexican mission—the missionary budget that year was 49,500 American dollars—“the largest part came from their upper-level schools.” Although Methodists never arrived at self-sufficiency in the maintenance of their elementary schools, the upper-level schools did contribute resources to the mission. Another benefit of Methodist
schools for church finances was that, beginning in 1913, ministers’ children were allowed to attend for free.

The mission’s educational efforts offered an alternative to those provided by the government and other private organizations, including the Catholic Church. This was especially true in zones neglected by the authorities—rural areas and small towns. Methodist schools served people by giving them the hope and the means to integrate themselves into a rapidly transforming society. Likewise, they helped the church to transform itself into a self-sufficient community at least as far as administrative staff and the clergy is concerned.

F. The Costs

Although schools were a powerful instrument in the mission’s development, they were also a source of difficulties and frustrations. In 1918, John W. Butler wondered where the children who graduated from the Methodist elementary schools had ended up. After taking stock, the missionary found that a large proportion of scholars who had passed through Methodist schools had left the church. This was clearly a disappointment. The schools had not accomplished one of the fundamental objectives of Protestant education. Butler’s solution was to reinforce the virtues of the schools, raising their quality, transforming them into living examples of what Christianity could do in the lives of converts, and encouraging nationalism. The treasurer’s suggestions did not seem to have much effect on the schools’ directors. In 1926, the student body of the Villagrán school was eighty percent Catholic, ten percent Protestant, and another ten percent who
acknowledged no religious affiliation. Even worse, in some towns it was understood that attending church was a way of “paying” for school.

Another problem was that supporters of the mission went far beyond what was feasible in the establishment of schools. Experience taught that it was easy to open a school but difficult to support it adequately once it was begun. Juana Palacios, one of the most influential Methodist educators to graduate from the mission’s teacher training college in Puebla, maintained that church schools could be classified into two groups: 1) those that were a lighthouse in the town, and 2) those that “had achieved meager success.” The majority of the small schools supported by the Female Society of Missions belonged to the second class. Ms. Palacios found that the reasons for this situation ranged from the existence of local resistance and strong competition to the absence of adequate facilities. The lack of personnel and resources were also notorious: “limited resources have made it impossible to adequately equip the schools; in some cases, the material conditions are inadequate; dark and stuffy rooms, a lack of desks, more children than seats, and poor educational materials.” In conclusion, it was necessary to invest more resources in order to permit the church schools to live up to their reputation.

Ms. Palacios’ complaint was well warranted. According to statistics provided by Moisés González Navarro in the Historia Moderna de México, in 1910 the Protestant missions in the state of Hidalgo spent the least amount per student in their schools. Non-Protestant private schools annually invested thirteen pesos, eighteen centavos per student, the Catholic Church spent eleven pesos, forty-one centavos per child, and the government devoted seven pesos, fifty-three centavos for each student in its schools. Meanwhile the
Protestants only spent seven pesos, ten centavos for each student in their classrooms. Not coincidentally, Protestant mission schools had the highest average enrollment per school.

G. Methodist Education and the Constitution of 1917

Methodist educators were profoundly concerned about reports that the new Constitution being discussed in 1917 would set strict limits on the influence of religion in education. In 1909 the Education Commission of the Annual Conference had declared: “Our schools must be, before anything and above everything, Protestant.” Hence they must not lose sight of three things: “instruction, education, and gospel proclamation.” It concluded that “without this last requirement, these schools would have no reason to exist.” Hence the promulgation of laws that prohibited the teaching of religion in elementary schools, restricted church ownership of schools, and forbade ministers from acting as directors or administrators of elementary schools, would be a “formidable blow” to the Methodist schools.

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76 This is the interpretation that the Committee on Cooperation in Latin America, an interdenominational organization that coordinated Protestant missionary work, made of the constitutional measures regarding education. Cf. Evangelical Religious Education in Mexico. Report of Conference held in Mexico D.F., Mexico, for the Committee on Religious Education of the Committee on Cooperation in Latin America, 1928, Methodist Episcopal Church Archive, Correspondence of J. P. Hauser.

77 Minutes of the Methodist Episcopal Church’s Annual Mexican Conference, 1909 pp. 99.

78 The Constitution of 1917 placed very strict limits on religious education including the following provisions: religious bodies could not establish or conduct primary schools and religious instruction was prohibited in all primary schools, public or private. These provisions were not put into immediate effect but a series of enabling laws passed in 1926 at the outset of a major conflict between the Mexican government and the Catholic Church led to their enforcement against Protestants as well.—Trans.
The discussions in the Constituent Congress seized the attention of Methodists and caused worry for the mission’s directors. The open conflict between Félix F. Palavicini, Minister of Public Instruction in the Carranza government, and Andrés Osuna, Director of Education in the Federal District, were reflected in the Congressional debates and in the Protestant press. Once again Protestants were accused of being instruments of Yankee penetration. The actions of people such Osuna or Moisés Sáenz in the field of education were depicted as patent demonstrations of American influence.\textsuperscript{79} \textit{El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado} published three articles attacking the anti-Protestant arguments of Palavicini and his periodical, \textit{El Universal}. As usual, the results of the conflict were negligible and things continued on as usual.\textsuperscript{80}

At the same time, and with a more practical purpose, several Protestant missions organized an informal commission to attend sessions of the Constituent Congress in order to explain the Protestant churches’ position regarding the Mexican government, religion, and education. It was hoped that the members of this commission would not only explain their ideas but “use their influence” to forestall radical anti-clerical measures.\textsuperscript{81}

Pedro Flores Valderrama, named to the commission, was skeptical about the endeavor. In a letter sent to J. P. Hauser, Valderrama asserted that Congress would not

\textsuperscript{79} Andrés Osuna was a Methodist and Moisés Sáenz was a Presbyterian; both were educators. Sáenz was Director of the National Preparatory School. Their prominence, and that of other Protestants, in the administration of Venustiano Carranza fueled the suspicions of both conservative Catholics and radical Mexican nationalists.—Trans.


\textsuperscript{81} Carranza wanted only modest revisions to the Constitution of 1857 but his supporters were outvoted in the Constituent Assembly by delegates who demanded a more radically anti-clerical document.—Trans.
change any of the measures they had taken against the Catholic clergy. Rather than oppose the anti-clerical radicals publicly, he suggested a subtler approach: “What the intelligent personalities of that group, the Jacobins, will do, is to show us a way of evading the law without anyone being aware of it…” The Methodist educator likewise thought that it was unwise to request special legislation for Protestants because such laws “would become as hateful as the ones that they had just passed.” Valderrama concluded that neither he, nor his influence, could help do anything to avert what seemed imminent. There was no reason to go to Querétaro; it was better to wait for the legislation to be amended, something which, in his opinion, would not be long in coming.

Most of the mission’s important ministers and lay people shared Valderrama’s attitude. On February 10, 1917, El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado reproduced an interview with Andrés Osuna that had appeared in El Pueblo. For this Protestant educator, the way in which article three of the Constitution had been edited implied a direct attack on the natural rights of the individual, such as the freedom of conscience and thought. According to Osuna, no laws existed that could prevent parents from favoring a religious element in their children’s education; moreover, the law could not correct the “excesses” of the Catholic Church since it “does not need its schools to maintain its dominion.” This was due to the simple fact that the schools cannot undo what the child experiences in the home. The remedy for the evils represented by the Catholic Church could not be found, according to Osuna, in a law against natural rights, but in Enlightenment, in the struggle

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82 Pedro Flores Valderrama to J. P. Hauser, December 21, 1916, Methodist Episcopal Church Archive, Correspondence of J. P. Hauser, 1916-1921.

83 Article three made elementary education obligatory and secular and it placed final authority over what constituted appropriate education entirely in the hands of the government.—Trans.
against fanaticism, and in avoiding the mixing of politics and religion. He concluded that
Protestants should support the less radical constitutional project laid out by Venustiano
Carranza, the “First Chief of the Revolution.”

Despite protests of obedience to the government, and patient hope for
constitutional reform, El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado continued publishing articles in
defense of the existence of Protestant schools and pointing to the benefits of their labors.
On May 3, 1917, El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado published Pedro Flores Valderrama’s
complete address upon taking possession of the directorship of the Mexican Methodist
Institute of Puebla. According to Valderrama, the nation’s evils derived from the
failings of Mexican education. Nevertheless the nation was making progress, in the view
of this preacher-teacher, because it had succeeded in dominating the Catholic clergy, “the
common enemy of liberty and justice”; it had established secular education; and it had
achieved advances in industry, agriculture, and railroads. In these tasks, said Valderrama,
Mexican Protestants were doing their part to prevent artisans from falling into vice,
farmers from sticking with dull routines, politicians from being “opportunistic,” and
teachers from being “resistant to every reasonable and just innovation.” Protestant
schools, continued the flamboyant director, were a necessity for the converts since
schools helped them to understand their own religion better and at the same time
promoted practical tolerance and mutual respect for other ideas and people. Protestant

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schools also encouraged respect for the constituted authorities. All in all, the mission’s schools were, according to Valderrama, a positive alternative to “Jesuit” institutions.

Protests against the anti-clerical articles in the new Constitution continued in journalistic comments and scholarly discussions. On May 31, 1917, the director of El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado published an editorial about the new Constitution and the Methodist schools. In this article, Miguel Z. Garza maintained that the Protestant educational system ought not arouse suspicions among liberals of whatever type, “except those in the league with the honored Director of El Universal”—Félix Palavicini. Nevertheless, said Garza, since the new Constitution had passed with its anti-clerical article three, there was no other remedy but to wait a little while. Garza was confident that constitutional revisions would occur soon. Meanwhile, there was no reason to be discouraged since other means of evangelical work remained. Pedro Flores Valderrama went even further in an article published in that same issue of El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado. He maintained that religious teaching in schools was not indispensible to missionary work and that Sunday Schools, worship at home, family prayer, and “the influence of the environment in our day schools” still existed to direct the religious lives of the children. In case the mission’s schools were closed, concluded Valderrama, “Protestant churches will create new schools.”

The new legal requirements did not affect Methodist schools immediately. On January 17, 1917, just a few weeks before the new Mexican Constitution was

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promulgated, John W. Butler commented to J. P. Hauser that it was appropriate to conduct schools as they always had: “we will let time decide what we ought to do.”

Only in 1928 did the mission take measures to alter the legal status of the mission’s educational institutions in accord with the post-Revolutionary requirements. For this purpose the schools began taking steps leading to the establishment of a foundation that would conform to the Law of Private Charity to administer “the schools in our possession including buildings, furnishings, and equipment…” The Foundation, this is what they called the new organization, was basically in charge of directing the educational establishments “in the most appropriate way,” while determining their character, curricula, regulations, personnel, “and whatever else was necessary.”

It seems that this organism never became functional. The minutes of the Annual Conferences of 1929 and 1930 do not record anything in this respect. Despite the new laws, the schools continued reporting directly to the Annual Conference.

Over time, however, the Methodist schools were affected. The teaching of religion was eliminated from the formal curriculum. Bible reading was removed from literature classes and the singing of hymns was eliminated from music lessons. But this only gave more importance to organizations such as the “Epworth Leagues” in which religious instruction could be taught after class in cultural and recreational programs for children and young people. Likewise, Methodist boarding schools had times of praise and

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88 John W. Butler to JP Hauser, January 17, 1917, Methodist Episcopal Church Archive, Correspondence of J. P. Hauser, 1916-1917.

89 Raymon A. Carhart to Antonio Carro, April 2, 1928, Methodist Episcopal Church Archive, Missions Society’s letters, see “Institutions,” 1928.

90 “Implementation of Statutes,” Methodist Episcopal Church Archive, Missions Society’s letters, see “Institutions,” 1928.
preaching at hours when the students were not in class. As late as 1928, the directors of Protestant mission boards in Mexico still considered this practice permissible even as they declared to the government, in “confidential documents, not to be cited or published,” that “no formal religious instruction existed in Protestant schools in Mexico.”

In this way Methodist schools continued to function even in the middle of the religious controversy unleashed by the Calles Law of 1926. The Julián Villagrán school in Pachuca was closed for a few days, “but when it was demonstrated that the school complied with what the law required,” it was immediately reopened. Not only that, but Governor Matías Rodríguez attended the school’s special festivals—Cinco de Mayo in 1925, and September 30 in 1926. Throughout these same years, the Secretary of Public Education in the state of Hidalgo was Leopoldo García, an old Methodist preacher who gave classes at the Villagrán school and published articles in the school’s student society periodical, the Tzzin Tzzi. While the case of the Hidalgo capital could be qualified as exceptional, in general missionary schools suffered few worries between 1925 and 1929. They did, however, have to adapt their curricula to the demands of the government. This allowed them to continue working almost normally. However any sign of the connection between school and church had to be completely erased.

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91 Evangelical Religious Education in Mexico, p. 27.
92 Tzzin Tzzi, 2/1 (March 26, 1926), p. 5.
93 Tzzin Tzzi, 1/2 (June 8, 1925), p. 7 and 2/7 (October 19, 1926), p. 2.
Numerically too, the Methodist schools were adversely affected by the new legislation. Beginning in 1917, an annual decrease is evident in the number of schools and in the student body. In 1917, there were 58 elementary schools with a total of 5,198 students.95 Already in 1924, there were only 47 elementary schools with 2,336 students.96 By 1929, only 35 schools with 2,290 children remained.97 Even so, the influence that some Methodist schools exerted was great, in some cases perhaps even greater than before. In 1916, the governor of Veracruz, Heriberto Jara,98 sent his government secretary to represent him at the September 16 celebration organized by the Epworth League of Orizaba.99 Something similar occurred in Guanajuato with the “Manuel Doblado” school.100 The rise to high public posts in education of people such as Andrés Osuna, Moisés Sáenz, Alfonso Herrera—who would become Director of the National University—and others who did not deny their connection with Protestant missions and who participated as fully as possible in both religious and educational activities, illustrates the fact that long after the anti-clerical legislation had put them on the
defensive, Methodist schools continued to possess a disproportionate influence over Mexican education.\textsuperscript{101}

**Documents for chapter V**

1) **DESCRIPTION OF A METHODIST SCHOOL**

On having been invited, the Director of El Hijo del Ahuizote and the author of this article, to christen the inauguration of the children’s department of the public school for the children of the workers of the factory of Miraflores in the District of Chalco, we had reason to establish ourselves by various deeds relative to that small population that we did not want to leave unnoticed, because of their significance.

The factory is made up of spinners, weavers, and printers and assembles at full cost, maintains some hundreds of workers that, with their families, form a population of a little less than 1,500 inhabitants.

A greater number of periodicals and greater quantity of copies circulate among this number of individuals of all sexes and ages at the factory of Miraflores, limited in comparison with other larger and more important populations, than villages five to ten times more populated.

But what we especially desire to give a quick piece of news on is the public school established, as we said, for the children of the workers and titled, “Children of Hidalgo”.

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Since no authorities help this school, not even a single peso, this school is sustained by uniquely private funds. It is a secular establishment in which tolerance reigns supreme and both Catholic and Protestant children attend. It was founded in 1879, having begun its work with the attendance of twenty students. This year three hundred and forty students of both sexes, the school is mixed, registered.

We believe to have found, in truth, with a relatively backwards establishment; since it is founded in a population so small and given the advances of public instruction among us, it was not possible to expect a school with all the requisites that exist in modern teaching. Yet we were greatly surprised and pleased at the same time. The first thing we encountered was a large salon forty rods long, eight wide, and six tall, ventilated perfectly well and constructed specifically for the school.

...In addition, the establishment has a series of good geographical maps...there are also wall maps for studying basic anatomy and physiology, brought from the United States.

Elementary instruction, like we said, is divided into three sections or grades with a professor in charge of each one. ... The three sections follow the simultaneous method, the system of oral lectures, and fully employ the objective system as well. The teaching of Mexico’s geography, and geography in general, is skillfully mixed with Mexican and world history and with civic and moral instruction. We have seen a brief exam given to the students of the third section, who responded to several questions about laws, citizens’ rights, and the political
organization of Mexico in ways that perhaps many great people of average learning would not answer. …

There is a choir, gymnasium, and military exercises for the children, and with respect to the two elementary sections, we believe almost without fear of being wrong, that there is no other school in Mexico that could demonstrate the progress that we note here.

The children, especially the girls, do truly notable exercises in the gymnasium. The entire gymnasium becomes a medium of music, as well as a medium for many student movements in the changing of classes, and entrance and exit of departments.

One ought to make note of the fact that the director requested the help of the factory workers in order to fund the department of children, which was inaugurated last Saturday and cost more than two thousand pesos, and gathered after a short time period, by subscription, more than one thousand pesos, from those poor workers. …Needless to say, the gifts of Froebel are completely at the children’s disposal, and the system of this illustrious teacher is that which is followed here for the teaching of the department’s students.

Finally, the school has established the teaching of manual labor, in which the students, in addition to their other tasks, learn the basics of carpentry. These same students made the strong wood that was used to construct the children’s department.

The establishment’s sustainment is owed to the philanthropy of various respectable persons, among them, Mr. Robertson, the owner of the factory who contributes one thousand- two hundred pesos annually, and also to the workers, who give
an annual quantity. To cover the costs of installation of the children’s department, Mr. Robertson supplied the quantity that lacked, after entirely covering the subscription for the workers, to complete the thousand and few pesos that the installation cost, a quantity advanced by a loan.

In review, the establishment is very good and honors the small town that possesses it, and that also counts with another two schools that have two theaters and attendance of sixty students. We desire to see this conduct imitated throughout the Republic, and with this objective in mind, we have extended the previous details, that honors the workers of the Miraflores factory, we believe being known, will serve as a noble stimulus that perhaps soon we can say of the entire country what today we say of a small village of a little more than one thousand inhabitants: in that village, more than 90% of the children able to go to school, attend school.

E.M. de los Ríos.

Source: *El Monitor Republicano*, July 3, 1890.

2) THE BENEFITS OF EDUCATING WOMEN

We have a strong interest in the argument that has arisen in these days between the periodicals of the capital with respect to the condition of working women and the most appropriate and convenient way to remedy their circumstances. It is a subject of vital importance for society and for the nation, and we sincerely hope that among the many plans and projects proposed to better the luck of this unhappy sector of society, something is found that benefits the poor working women. But, how could we improve the luck of those women that through their work earn little and precarious subsistence?
Periodicals say that we ought to follow the example given to us on this subject by the cultures of Europe and the republic of the United States, and give women employment in the clothing store, the telegraph offices, and the government, etcetera. All of this looks good on paper, yet to carry it out in practice, it is difficult. But why? Not because Mexican women are essentially inferior to the women of other nations, but because the education they have received has made them incapable, at least right now, of holding similar occupations. Then where is the difficulty? It is in the educational system that has been followed for so many centuries in Mexico. In Spain and Italy, working women are found in the same state of ignorance and ineptitude. Who is guilty? The clergy, those that have formed the character and way of thinking, or better stated, the way of “not thinking” for Mexican women.

So that women can work successfully and become respected in society, it is necessary that they are educated according to the modern educational system and not in the convent and confessional. Educate women; remove them from fanaticism and the dominion of the clergy; prepare them for their destiny by way of an adequate education for this centuries demands; put books in their hands instead of a rosary or a holy Christ; destroy in them the rancid worries which priests have instilled in them; raise them up in everything to the level of men, their partner; finally, treat them how they deserve to be treated and how God Himself commands, as equal to men in capacity, intelligence, rights, and dignity and you will have taken a great step in solving this difficult problem.

An ignorant woman is and always has to be a slave to men and a weak instrument, which serves to satisfy their passions or greed. Give women an education that will
reclaim their nature and their destiny, and you will find the remedy for many of your miseries.