

Protestant Evangelism in Guatemala:
Status Quo or Subversion?

The case of the Presbyterians, 1973-1982

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In May of 2002, Rev. Baudilio Recinos told the annual Synod meeting of the National Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Guatemala (*Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala-IENPG*), “When we stopped evangelizing, we started fighting with each other.” Recinos, a ladino pastor with many years of experience in the leadership structures of the IENPG, was referring to two particular moments in the recent history of the IENPG. The first was the programmatic focus on evangelism in the church in the period from 1973 until the centennial celebration of the IENPG and of Protestantism in Guatemala in 1982. The second moment was the dispute within the church which broke out in open schism in four of the ladino presbyteries of the IENPG in the southwestern part of the country in 1992.¹

In this paper, I propose to examine two of the assumptions behind Recinos’ statement. The first is that all Guatemalan Presbyterians mean the same thing when they talk about evangelism. Outside researchers often share this assumption when they look at the evangelistic activities of evangelical churches and organizations in Guatemala, especially during this period. The second is that evangelism carried out by Presbyterians in Guatemala in the 1973 to 1982 period was somehow isolated from and made the IENPG immune to the conflicts that were tearing apart Guatemalan society. This brief initial study shows that the term evangelism covered a variety of activities in the IENPG in the ten years leading up to the centennial celebration. These different forms of evangelism, though all aimed at increasing the membership of the church, had very different social and political implications. Though the IENPG is a relatively small historic Protestant denomination in Guatemala that is not part of the Pentecostalism that includes the majority of Guatemalan evangelicals, a study of the different ways Guatemalan Presbyterians understood evangelism provides a window into the complexities of the religious field in Guatemala during the 1970s and early 1980s.² In Guatemala, as in the rest of Latin

¹ The IENPG has the following structure. The local churches are organized into regional bodies called presbyteries, which are semi-autonomous governing structures. The IENPG has several presbyteries that are primarily ladino. The first Mayan presbytery was organized in 1959 and by 1980 there were two more Mayan presbyteries. These presbyteries overlap geographically with ladino presbyteries. The presbyteries of the IENPG together make up the Synod, the national body of the church that meets annually to debate and set policy.

² Historic Protestantism refers to those churches that trace their origins to the Protestant Reformation in Europe during the sixteenth century. Pentecostalism refers to a movement that originated in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century. Pentecostalism emphasizes the use of charismatic gifts, such as speaking in tongues, in worship that is often ecstatic. Pentecostalism first makes an appearance in Guatemala as part of an organized religious group in 1934, when fourteen congregations of the Primitive Methodist Church that had experienced Pentecostal preaching broke away and affiliated with the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee), a historic Pentecostal denomination. By 1970, sixty percent of the evangelical

America, ideological struggles over the shape of society take place to a large degree in the religious field. The structure of the IENPG has mirrored the surrounding society, as a small group of urban ladinos with access to education have dominated a church of poor ladinos and Maya. As these later groups have struggled to gain more power in Guatemalan society, those struggles also played themselves out in the life of the IENPG.

Protestant Evangelism in Guatemala

Among Protestants evangelism refers to the processes by which Protestants present their understanding of the gospel and recruit new members for their churches. Evangelism almost always takes place in a social context characterized by asymmetrical power relationships. This has been especially true in the highly stratified society of Guatemala. Foreign missionaries and their organizations introduce new elements such as religious ideas and related practices into a context, but the adoption of those ideas depends on the agency of local actors and their perceptions of both needs and possibilities for change. The way in which local actors adopt and employ these religious ideas and practices can either challenge or reinforce existing power relationships within a given locality or society.

All Protestant groups in Guatemala would agree that evangelism is an essential task of the church, but almost from the beginning of the organized presence of Protestantism in the country, there have been different understandings of evangelism. The Presbyterian Church of the United States of America (PCUSA) was the first Protestant group to establish a mission in Guatemala. The first missionary arrived in 1882, escorted to the country by President Justo Rufino Barrios himself. Like other missions founded by historic North American Protestant denominations in Latin America, the Presbyterian mission focused not only on the establishment of a Presbyterian church in Guatemala, but also on influencing Guatemalan society through the diffusion of Protestant values. For this reason the Presbyterians were more than happy to comply with the condition imposed by Barrios that they found a school in Guatemala City. The Presbyterians sought to persuade Guatemalans, at first urban ladinos, to join their church by presenting their version of the gospel as a rational alternative to Roman Catholicism.³

The Central American Mission (CAM), which established a permanent presence in Guatemala in 1899, had a much different understanding of mission and evangelism. The CAM was founded in 1890 by Cyrus I. Scofield, a congregationalist minister from Dallas

population in Guatemala was Pentecostal. Virginia Carroll Garrard, "A History of Protestantism in Guatemala" (Ph.D. diss., Tulane University, 1986), 91, 191. Most non-Catholic Christians in Guatemala use the term evangelical to refer to themselves. For the purposes of this paper, I am using the terms Protestant and evangelical interchangeably.

³ On the early history of the Presbyterian mission in Guatemala see Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, *Apuntes para la historia* (Guatemala: IENPG, 1982), 39-45, 66-92; Thomas E. Bogenschield, "The Roots of Fundamentalism in Liberal Guatemala: Missionary Ideologies and Local Response, 1882-1944" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1992); Garrard, "A History," 24-40; Virginia Garrard-Burnett, *Protestantism in Guatemala: Living in the New Jerusalem* (Austin: Univ. of Texas, 1998), 14-20.

who later gained fame for the reference notes he wrote for the Bible.⁴ The *Scofield Reference Bible* popularized in the United States a form of premillennialist theology known as dispensationalism.⁵ Scofield and his colleagues were convinced that the historic Protestant mission boards were not doing enough to evangelize Central America. CAM missionaries took their understanding of evangelism from the end of the Gospel according to Mark, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”⁶ As premillennialists, these missionaries believed they were living in the end times right before the return of Christ to the world. In addition, they believed that Christ would return only once the gospel had been preached to every person on earth. In their theological perspective, the only legitimate activity of the church was evangelistic preaching, for any other activity that took time and energy away from evangelizing would actually delay the return of Christ. For many in CAM, even the founding and building up of local congregations was of secondary importance to evangelistic preaching tours. The Presbyterian missionaries already working in Guatemala were horrified by the methods of the CAM missionaries, such as preaching in the streets, actions which the Presbyterians believed exposed the cause of Protestantism to ridicule and alienated potential converts, especially those from the emerging urban middle class.⁷

The tensions between these two understandings of evangelism, embodied in two mission organizations, were only slightly eased by the comity agreement reached by the Presbyterians and the CAM in 1902 or 1903. In this agreement, the CAM and the Presbyterians agreed to work in different areas of both the capital city and the countryside in order to avoid competing for converts in the same geographical space.⁸ The CAM, however, proved much more successful than the Presbyterians in reproducing their understanding of the church and of evangelism. For instance, the CAM founded its first Bible institute in 1926, to which the Presbyterians started sending their candidates for

⁴ On the founding of the Central American Mission and their initial work in Guatemala, see Mildred W. Spain, *And in Samaria: A Story of More Than Sixty Years' Missionary Witness in Central America, 1890-1954* (Dallas: CAM, 1954), 6-10, 153-72.

⁵ Dispensationalism divides human history into epochs or dispensations. In each dispensation, God deals with humanity in a different way. The system expounded by Scofield divided human history into seven dispensations. In order to interpret Biblical passages correctly, according to the dispensationalists, it is imperative to discern the dispensation to which a particular passage refers.

⁶ Mark 16: 15 KJV

⁷ On the tensions between the Presbyterian mission and CAM in Guatemala, see Bogenschield, “The Roots of Fundamentalism,” 117-25 and Garrard, “A History,” 42-6. Garrard reads the conflict primarily as a feud between the Presbyterian missionary Edward Haymaker and the CAM missionary Albert Bishop. I follow Bogenschield in locating the cause of tension in the different theological and ideological understandings of the two groups.

⁸ On the comity agreement see Bogenschield, “The Roots of Fundamentalism,” 128-9 and Garrard-Burnett, *Protestantism*, 29-32.

ministry.⁹ The Presbyterians did not found their seminary until 1935.¹⁰ These two forms of evangelism existed side by side throughout the twentieth century, both within the Guatemalan religious field and within the Presbyterian Church of Guatemala. The ubiquitous presence of evangelical preachers on street corners and in buses throughout Guatemala today shows which form of evangelism found cultural resonance with many Guatemalans.

The CAM also pioneered the use of radio in Guatemala for evangelistic purposes, contributing to its ability to set the tone of Guatemalan Protestantism in general. The CAM began purchasing air time on local radio stations for religious program in 1946. Two years later, the CAM opened its own radio station, TGOA, offering continuous religious programming.¹¹

In the 1960s, another group would introduce new methods of evangelism to the Guatemalan evangelical churches. The Latin American Mission (LAM) was founded in Costa Rica in 1921 by British missionaries Harry and Susan Strachan, who had previously worked in Argentina under the Evangelical Union of South America. While the CAM was strongly critical of existing denominations and defined itself as “undenominational,”¹² the LAM from the beginning strove to be interdenominational by seeking to strengthen and support the work of existing churches.¹³ By the late 1950s, the leaders of LAM were concerned about the slow rate of growth of evangelical churches in Latin America. They concluded that this slow growth resulted from the failure of the churches to mobilize all of their members in evangelistic efforts. In 1960, the LAM launched a new campaign of mass evangelism know as Evangelism in Depth, first in Nicaragua, followed by a smaller campaign in Costa Rica in 1961. The following year, the LAM turned its attention to Guatemala and organized, together with the Evangelical Alliance, activities throughout the country that lasted an entire year. Evangelism in Depth combined traditional evangelistic practices long employed by the evangelical churches, such as open air rallies, with the use of modern media and marketing techniques. In addition, Evangelism In Depth trained members of the participating churches to share the gospel message door-to-door. The

⁹ Garrard-Burnett, *Protestantism*, 34. Bogenschild, “The Roots of Fundamentalism,” 137.

¹⁰ IENPG, *Apuntes*, 204-5.

¹¹ Garrard, “A History,” 174. Garrard-Burnett, *Protestantism*, 109.

¹² CAM statement of purpose, cited by Spain, *And in Samaria*, 9.

¹³ Whereas the CAM founded a local denomination in each country where it worked, the LAM founded a local denomination only in Costa Rica. The LAM differed from other faith missions in several other aspects as well: 1) Since its founding the LAM showed considerable social concern and launched several institutions such as a hospital and an orphanage in Costa Rica. 2) The LAM was headquartered from the beginning on the field, in Costa Rica, rather than in the United States, from whence most of its funding came. 3) The LAM incorporated Latin Americans as missionaries. On the history of the LAM, see Wilton Mons Nelson, “A History of Protestantism in Costa Rica” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1957), 257-96.

Guatemala campaign was the most successful of the LAM's Central American efforts in that it resulted in the greatest number of conversions and had the most participation by local church people.¹⁴ The theological discourse of the LAM, which was conservative though not fundamentalist, downplayed doctrinal differences between churches and emphasized personal conversion. This discourse was well articulated into the predominant Cold War framework as some leaders of Evangelism in Depth tried to present evangelicals as both the "true revolutionaries" and as the best protection against the spread of Communism in Latin America.¹⁵ Yet even in the 1960s, the LAM was not an ideologically monolithic organization. Different sectors of the LAM would draw divergent conclusions from their analysis of the perceived successes and failures of the Evangelism in Depth campaigns of the early 1960s.

Presbyterian Efforts at Evangelism 1973-1982

The rate of growth of evangelical churches in Guatemala increased during the 1970s, to peak around 1982.¹⁶ As the oldest organized Protestant church in Guatemala, the IENPG rode the crest of the wave of sociological factors that fed evangelical church growth. Among these sociological factors were the social dislocations and new forms of community organization that resulted from the devastating earthquake of February 1976. Pressures for change from both popular organizations and armed revolutionary movements mounted in Guatemala after the earthquake. The government responded by intensifying the levels of repression directed at popular movements and increasingly at the general rural population, especially Mayan communities. As the army specifically targeted sectors of the Roman Catholic Church, especially activists affiliated with Catholic Action, evangelical churches provided a space that was perceived as removed from political turmoil. Repression by the military also made it too dangerous for the Roman Catholic Church to maintain a pastoral presence in many places, which opened up space for Protestant groups.¹⁷ The evangelical churches, especially those which stressed an apocalyptic vision of the approaching end of the world, provided a theological framework through which

¹⁴ Garrard-Burnett, *Protestantism*, 109-10. W. Dayton Roberts, *Revolution in Evangelism: The Story of Evangelism-in-Depth in Latin America* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1967), 29-64. For a description and evaluation of Evangelism in Depth, see Ray S. Rosales, *The Evangelism in Depth Program of the Latin America Mission*, Sondeos 21 (Cuernavaca: CIDOC, 1968).

¹⁵ See W. Dayton Roberts, *Revolution in Evangelism*. Roberts' book was translated into Spanish as *Los auténticos revolucionarios: la emocionante historia de Evangelismo al Fondo* (San José: Editorial Caribe, 1969).

¹⁶ Henri Gooren describes the years from 1976 to 1986 as the "boom years" for Protestant growth in Guatemala. Almost all denominations in the country grew, with six denominations reporting annual growth rates of more than thirty percent from 1978 to 1980. Henri Gooren, "Reconsidering Protestant Growth in Guatemala, 1900-1995," in *Holy Saints and Fiery Preachers*, ed. James W. Dow and Alan R. Sandstrom (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), 185.

¹⁷ See Garrard, "A History," 193-225; and Garrard-Burnett, *Protestantism*, 120-37.

those experiencing repressive violence could make some sense out of their suffering.¹⁸ While Pentecostal churches of Guatemalan origin grew fastest during this time, the historic Protestant churches in the country, including the IENPG, also grew.¹⁹

These sociological factors encouraging evangelical church growth coincided with a plan by the IENPG to double the size of the church's membership between 1973 and 1982. In 1973, as church leaders looked to the celebration of one hundred years of Presbyterian presence in Guatemala, they decided to use the years leading up to the centennial for church renewal. The initial goals included several which pointed to what has been called qualitative growth of the church: fighting illiteracy in the church, contributing to both personal and community development, and training church leaders. But the primary emphasis was placed on numerical growth of the church.²⁰ As these leaders sought to promote the expansion of the church, they had available to them different understandings of evangelism, expressed in different institutions, with radically different social implications. The emphasis on evangelism and church expansion allowed these concepts of evangelism, as well as local appropriations of these ideas, particularly by Mayan groups, to exist side by side in the IENPG.

Church Growth

One school of thought about evangelism which influenced some of the leaders, primarily among the ladinos, of the IENPG was church growth. The person who initiated this approach to evangelism was Donald Anderson McGavran, who developed his theories based on his reflections about the mass conversions to Christianity within certain ethnic groups in India during the 1930s.²¹ According to McGavran, the primordial task of the church and the primary sign of the church's faithfulness to the gospel is numerical growth. The upbuilding of congregations filled with regenerated individuals was a prerequisite for anything else the church could do, including demonstrating any social concern.²² McGavran also stressed that in order for churches to reach their maximum growth, any sources of potential conflict within a congregation should be minimized. Cultural and class

¹⁸ Heinrich Schäfer emphasizes the important of this cognitive function of religion, not so much in areas directly affected by violence, but in the surrounding areas. Heinrich Schäfer, *Protestantismo y crisis social en América Central* (San José: DEI, 1992), esp. 138-41.

¹⁹ From his analysis of membership figures reported by the IENPG, Gooren calculates an average annual growth rate of eighteen percent for the years 1978-1980. Average annual growth from 1980-1983 fell to 6.5 percent. Gooren, "Reconsidering Protestant Growth," 185, 193.

²⁰ IENPG, *Apuntes*, 392-7.

²¹ The principal books in which McGavran expounded his theory of church growth are: *The Bridges of God: A Study in the Strategy of Mission* (New York: Friendship Press, 1955); *How Churches Grow: The New Frontiers of Mission* (London: World Dominion Press, 1959); and *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970).

²² For example, see McGavran, *How Churches Grow*, 10-7.

differences were potential sources of conflict, so therefore congregations should be formed of people from only one cultural group or class.²³

McGavran first founded the Institute on Church Growth at Northwest Christian College in Eugene, Oregon in 1961. Four years later McGavran was invited to move his institute to the newly founded School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California.²⁴ In 1966, Ralph D. Winter, who had worked in Guatemala as a missionary of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (UPCUSA) since 1957, joined the faculty of the School of World Mission. Winter, along with his wife, Roberta Helms Winter, had worked in various institutions of the IENPG, especially among the Mam.²⁵ Ralph Winter had been one of the people behind the development of theological education by extension (TEE), which started with the Evangelical Presbyterian Seminary in Guatemala and soon became a worldwide movement. Ralph Winter was actually seconded to Fuller Seminary by the UPCUSA to promote TEE around the globe.²⁶ The Winters had always shown a strong interest in evangelism. One of his former students remembers Ralph Winter talking of “permanent evangelism.”²⁷ At Fuller, Ralph Winter became one of the principal proponents of church growth thinking.²⁸ Though the Winters were never reassigned to the IENPG by the UPCUSA, they remained involved with Guatemala Presbyterians and maintained a residence in Guatemala until the mid-1970s. In 1976, Ralph Winter left Fuller to found, together with his wife, the US Center for World Mission to promote the church growth concept of the missionary task to church leaders and mission agencies around the world.²⁹

²³ McGavran talked of groups sharing the same culture and/or class as “homogeneous units.” For example, see McGavran, *How Churches Grow*, 35-9.

²⁴ Arthur F. Glasser, “Church Growth at Fuller,” *Missiology* 14, no. 4 (Oct. 1986): 402-6.

²⁵ IENPG, *Apuntes*, 175-6, 503.

²⁶ Theological education by extension was intended to provide access to theological education within the different cultural contexts in Guatemala, rather than requiring people to leave their cultural contexts in order to receive theological training. Winter gathered together the early documentation from this movement in *Theological Education by Extension*, ed. Ralph D. Winter (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1969).

²⁷ Comment made to author by Rev. Rosalio Ruiz in Quetzaltenango on 27 Oct. 2002.

²⁸ Whereas McGavran had focused his thinking on the factors encouraging church growth within particular cultural groups, Winter has focused on the need for evangelistic efforts to cross cultural barriers to found churches within people groups where no church yet exists. Winter presented this idea of “unreached people groups” forcefully to the International Congress on World Evangelism held in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1974. Ralph D. Winter, “The Highest Priority: Cross-cultural Evangelism,” in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, ed. James Dixon Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975) 213-58.

²⁹ Roberta H. Winter, *I Will Do a New Thing: The US Center for World Mission—And Beyond* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1987).

Church growth thinking, known in Spanish as *iglecrecimiento*, did not have a permanent institutionalized home in Guatemala until Overseas Crusades established an office of *Servicio Evangelizador Para América Latina* (SEPAL) in August of 1979.³⁰ Yet church growth ideas had already been embraced by some leaders of the IENPG. José Adán Mazariegos, who served as the secretary of the executive committee of the Synod of the IENPG during the late 1970s and early 1980s, insisted that the most important task of the church was evangelism aimed at church growth.³¹ Another leader of the IENPG who embraced church growth thinking was Mardoqueo Muñoz, who was baptized by Ralph Winter at the church in San Juan Ostuncalco, a mixed ladino and Mam church, in 1964. After he studied theology in the extension program of the Evangelical Presbyterian Seminary, Muñoz moved into the leadership of the IENPG, becoming the pastor of the Central Presbyterian Church in Guatemala City, the most prestigious church in the denomination, in 1974. Muñoz was the only leader from the IENPG who actually studied at the School of World Mission of Fuller Theological Seminary, from which he graduated with a Doctor of Missiology degree in 1984.³²

Church growth thinking coincided with the dispensationalist vision propagated by the CAM and accepted by many in the IENPG on the need to exclude politics, a term used broadly by many Guatemalan evangelical leaders to refer to any demonstration of social concern, from the work of the church. The theological reasoning in each case was distinct. For the dispensationalists, the social situation in the world was going to deteriorate until the return of Christ. Any attempt to bring about change would be futile and would take energy away from the task of proclaiming the gospel. In church growth thinking, there were two reasons for avoiding social or political involvement. First, the Christian community would only be able to have a significant impact on the social order once it reached a certain size. Therefore, church growth must precede any social involvement. Secondly, social involvement represents a potential source of conflict within a congregation and a denomination. As the maximization of church growth requires the elimination of conflict from within the life of the church, any social involvement is to be studiously avoided. The practical effect of the two viewpoints was the same: the avoidance of any social concern. Both of these forms of theological thinking operated within, and perhaps contributed to, a political climate in which any expression of social concern on the part of Christians was construed as liberation theology, which in turn was seen as support for the armed revolutionary movements.

CELEP and Holistic Evangelism

³⁰ On the founding of SEPAL, see Veronica Melander, *The Hour of God? People in Guatemala Confronting Political Evangelicalism and Counterinsurgency (1976-1990)*, *Studia Middionalia Upsaliensia* LXXI (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1999), 106-110.

³¹ Heinrich Schäfer, *Church Identity between Repression and Liberation: The Presbyterian Church in Guatemala* (Geneva: World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1991), 57.

³² Mardoqueo Muñoz Castillo, "Un estudio del ministerio pastoral y del iglecrecimiento entre los presbiterianos en Guatemala," (D.Miss. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1984), 232.

As the decade of the 1970s was coming to a close and the preparations for the celebration of the centennial of Protestantism in Guatemala were picking up, the IENPG leadership focused renewed energy on the goals they had set for the church in 1973. As they looked for personnel who could motivate and train the grassroots of the church for evangelism, they didn't turn to an organization influenced by the church growth school. Instead, they turned to an institution of Latin American origin, the Latin American Evangelical Center for Pastoral Studies (*Centro Evangélico Latinoamericano de Estudios Pastorales*-CELEP).

CELEP had begun in 1971 as a research project within the newly established Institute for Evangelism in Depth (*Instituto de Evangelismo al Fondo*-INDEF). During the 1960s, Evangelism in Depth had existed as a program of the LAM. By the late 1960s, the LAM had discovered that the process of "latinamericanization" to which they had long aspired had to go beyond simply incorporating Latin American leaders into a North American structure. In 1971, LAM began handing over control to Latin Americans by converting its various institutions and programs into autonomous ministries headed by Latin Americans, many of whom continued to be supported as missionaries of the LAM. INDEF was one of these new institutions.³³

The founders of what would take on the name CELEP in late 1973 began their work by analyzing the experience of Evangelism in Depth during the previous decade. Despite the campaigns of mass evangelization carried out in different countries and the numbers of converts reported, the work of Evangelism in Depth had failed to produce vibrant churches capable of making an impact on the surrounding communities. Evangelism in Depth had turned out not to be very deep. The leaders of CELEP identified two basic problems with the approach used by Evangelism in Depth. The first was the traditional understanding of the pastor's role in the evangelical churches, which placed the pastor at the center of the church's action.³⁴ While Evangelism in Depth had mobilized many church members to participate in evangelistic activities, the mobilization had been short-lived. What was needed, according to CELEP founder Orlando Costas, was an "inversion of the traditional relationship between the pastor and the congregation, so that the pastor, instead of being the center of action, would be converted into a helper and facilitator of the pastoral action of the congregation."³⁵

³³ On this process in the LAM, see W. Dayton Roberts, "Mission to Community—Instant Decapitation," *International Review of Mission* 62, no 247 (July 1973): 338-45. On the founding of INDEF, see Guillermo Cook "EL CELEP en perspectiva histórica," *Pastoralia* 6, no. 12-3 (julio-dic. 1984): 13.

³⁴ Guillermo Cook used the term "*pulpitocentrismo*" or pulpit-centrism to describe this phenomenon. Guillermo Cook, *Profundidad en la evangelización*, Colección Iglesia y Misión 4 (San José: Publicaciones INDEF, 1975), 18-9. I often use the term "*pastorcentrismo*" or pastor-centrism.

³⁵ Orlando E. Costas, "El CELEP y la pastoral," *Pastoralia* 6, no. 12-3 (julio-dic. 1984): 82. CELEP took much of its understanding of pastoral action from efforts of pastoral renewal taking place in the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America following the meeting of the Latin American bishops in Medellín in 1968. In part, CELEP was modeled on the Latin American

The second problem of Evangelism in Depth had been the almost exclusive focus on numerical growth of the churches to the detriment of other facets of growth. “The tragedy of evangelization in Latin America,” wrote Orlando Costas, “is due in part to the fact that practice has been separated from theory, the message from action, the proclamation of the gospel and the invitation to faith from the urgency of the hour.”³⁶ In particular, churches needed to pay more attention to what Guillermo Cook called the incarnational dimension of growth, identification with the economic and social problems of the community.³⁷ Like the proponents of the church growth school, CELEP encouraged churches to use the tools of social science to identify groups that would be open to being evangelized and to set goals for their evangelizing efforts.³⁸ But CELEP, in contrast to the church growth school, urged church leaders to also draw upon the social sciences to inform their organized response to the problems facing the community.

Toward the end of 1978, the Centennial Committee of the IENPG invited CELEP to send personnel to Guatemala to help train leaders in the presbyteries in evangelism.³⁹ The persons CELEP chose to send to Guatemala were Andres García and Gloria Salazar, recent graduates from the Latin American Biblical Seminary (*Seminario Bíblico Latinoamericano-SBL*).⁴⁰ The SBL had been founded by the LAM in the 1920s. In the early 1970s, the SBL had gone through a very conflictive process of “latinamericanization” as Latin Americans moved into positions of authority and the institution opened itself up to the currents of Latin American liberation theology in both its Catholic and Protestant forms.⁴¹ The UPCUSA provided the funding for Garcia and Salazar’s work with the IENPG.⁴²

Pastoral Institute (*Instituto Pastoral Latinoamericano-IPLA*) in Lima, Peru. Costas, “EL CELEP y la pastoral,” 81-2.

³⁶ Orlando E. Costas, “El legado de los setenta,” *Pastoralia* 6, no. 12-3 (julio-dic. 1984): 91-2.

³⁷ Cook, *Profundidad en la evangelización*, 73-4.

³⁸ For example, see Cook, *Profundidad en la evangelización*, 36-49.

³⁹ The Centennial Committee of the IENPG was chaired by José Carrera, one of the most visionary leaders the IENPG has ever produced. IENPG, *Apuntes*, 392. In the 1980s, Carrera worked for CELEP’s branch in Central America, which was formally organized as a separate institution in 1985 as the Evangelical Center for Pastoral Studies in Central America (*Centro Evangélico de Estudios Pastorales en América Central-CEDEPCA*).

⁴⁰ Andrés García and Gloria Salazar, interview by author, 17 June 1997, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording. García was from the Christian Reformed Church of Honduras and Salazar was from the Church of the Covenant in Ecuador. They had met and married at the SBL.

⁴¹ On the SBL during this period see Karla Ann Koll, “*Por Cristo y América Latina—Seminario Bíblico Latinoamericano: A Case Study of Ideological Constraints Operating on Theological Practice*” (M.Div. thesis, Union Theological Seminary (New York), 1985), 35-47. The primary leaders of CELEP—Guillermo Cook, Orlando Costas, and Plutarco Bonilla—also served

García and Salazar arrived in Guatemala in 1979, as repression was increasing in the countryside. In their efforts to train church leaders, not just pastors, in the different presbyteries they held workshops on evangelism. They also conducted Bible studies with these grassroots church leaders in which they not only analyzed the Scriptures, but also analyzed the situation in the country and in the church. Salazar, who had been the first staff person for CELEP's Women's Ministry Program when it began in 1976, also worked with women's groups in the IENPG. As they worked in the Mayan presbyteries and groups of the IENPG, García and Salazar became aware of the repression to which the Maya were being subjected. They realized that it was much too dangerous for these local church people to raise their voices to denounce the military regime. Instead, they focused on nurturing what García calls "prophetic intuition," an awareness of the repressive situation in the country. This led to forms of evangelism that recognized rather than ignored the needs in the communities.⁴³ García and Salazar also depended on the Mayan leaders for their personal safety when they were in areas where the military was operating. As part of CELEP, an interdenominational organization, García and Salazar encouraged, where possible, the participation of people from other churches in the communities in their workshops. In some places, this broader participation even included, in the words of Salazar, "*los hermanos del CUC.*"⁴⁴

The approach used by García and Salazar was not well received by all sectors of the IENPG. They were given very little opening to work with the churches of Central Presbytery in and around Guatemala City, where any attempt to relate evangelism to social conditions was seen as suspicious.⁴⁵ In areas experiencing fierce local religious competition, there was resistance to working interdenominationally. This was true in the North Presbytery, around Guastatoya, where Pentecostal groups were growing at the expense of Presbyterian congregations.⁴⁶

Presbyterian Evangelism among the Q'eqchi': Two Interpretations

One of the sectors of the IENPG that experienced the highest rate of growth during the 1970s was among the Q'eqchi'. Presbyterian outreach among the Q'eqchi' was started at the instigation of a ladino landowner who acquired two farms in the municipality of El

on the faculty and/or in the administration of the SBL. On the relationship between CELEP and the SBL in the early 1970s, see Cook, "EL CELEP en perspectiva histórica," 13.

⁴² García and Salazar, interview. IENPG, *Apuntes*, 495-6.

⁴³ García and Salazar, interview.

⁴⁴ García and Salazar, interview. CUC stands for the *Comité de Unidad Campesina*, the Committee for *Campesino* Unity.

⁴⁵ García and Salazar, interview.

⁴⁶ Edgardo García, interview by author, 6 Feb. 2003, Villa Nueva, Guatemala, notes.

Estor, Izabal, in the northeastern area of the country, in 1962.⁴⁷ The workers on his farms were part of a group of four to five hundred Q'eqchi' who had recently migrated to the area from northwestern Guatemala.⁴⁸ These Q'eqchi' considered themselves to be Catholics, but in the absence of any pastoral presence and systematic religious instruction they had combined a few elements of Catholicism with their ancestral Mayan spirituality.⁴⁹ The landowner built a church building on each of his farms and contacted the pastor of the Central Presbyterian Church in Guatemala City, where he occasionally attended, to request evangelists to work among the Q'eqchi'.⁵⁰ The Q'eqchi' evangelist the landowner found was Julio Itzem, a former Nazarene pastor, who was supported by the Central Church to preach to the initial two congregations and evangelize the surrounding communities.⁵¹ As the Q'eqchi' responded to the preaching within their own cultural context, they developed forms of family-to-family and community-to-community evangelism that resulted in several "Presbyterian villages" in which the congregation and the community were virtually co-extensive.⁵² To combat the ninety-five percent illiteracy rate among the Q'eqchi', several leaders from the communities were sent to receive training in literacy education initially through the Ministry of Public Education. Later, ALFALIT was invited

⁴⁷ "Los presbiterios," *Apuntes*, 286. James Dekker describes the landowner, Manuel de la Cruz, as "relatively benevolent" and suggests that he had heard that Protestants made good workers. James C. Dekker, "Isaiah's Dangerous Dream," *The Other Side*, no. 155 (August 1984): 21. Mardoqueo Muñoz claims that de la Cruz was despotic and authoritarian, to the point of whipping workers who disobeyed him. Muñoz, "Un estudio," 180.

⁴⁸ Jaime (James) C. Dekker, "Conversión y opresión: análisis de una experiencia," *Pastoralia* 7, no. 14 (julio 1985): 77.

⁴⁹ Dekker offers a view of the religious situation of the Q'eqchi' that is fairly typical of a Protestant missionary appraisal of Mayan appropriation of Catholicism. "They practiced a nominal Roman Catholicism, brought by the *conquistadores*. This Catholicism lacked any pastoral care. Their Romanism was mixed more and more with traditional animism. No priest ever visited them. The Lord's Prayer in Spanish and a crucifix here and there put a Christian veneer on their religious life. Their virtual physical slavery was compounded by a confused religion of fear and distrust which had bewitched their individual and collective lives." Dekker, "Conversión y opresión," 78.

⁵⁰ According to Muñoz, de la Cruz decreed that all his workers were to attend worship services. Muñoz, "Un estudio," 180.

⁵¹ Muñoz, "Un estudio," 180. "Los presbiterios," *Apuntes*, 286. Izabal was part of the area assigned to the Nazarenes in the earlier comity agreements. By this time, Wycliffe Bible Translators had published the New Testament and portions of the Old Testament in Q'eqchi'. The Nazarenes had produced Q'eqchi' hymnals. Muñoz, "Un estudio," 179-80.

⁵² For a description of these evangelization methods, see Muñoz, "Un estudio," 184-7. Dekker uses the term "Presbyterian villages" in James C. Dekker, "Searching for Ways of Mission in Revolution," *Occasional Essays* 11, no. 1 (June 1984): 25.

to work in the area. The community paid the teachers and Central Church provided teaching materials.⁵³

The first five Q'eqchi' churches were formally organized by the Central Presbytery in 1977.⁵⁴ Due to the educational level required by the Central Presbytery for ordination, none of the Q'eqchi' leaders could be ordained at that time. In order to organize the K'ekchí Presbytery in 1978, the Central Church seceded from Central Presbytery to become part of the new presbytery.⁵⁵ The K'ekchí Presbytery was formed in December of 1978 with five churches and three pastors—the two pastors of the Central Church and Julio Itzem.⁵⁶ The newly organized presbytery was able to set its own standards for ordination and within two years twelve additional Q'eqchi' pastors were ordained.⁵⁷

The Q'eqchi' also received aid from beyond the IENPG. Of the many church-related relief organizations which came to work in Guatemala following the February 1976 earthquake, the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), an aid agency related to the Christian Reformed Church of North America (CRCNA), was the organization that worked most closely with the IENPG. At the request of the Synod of the IENPG, the CRWRC started working with Mayan presbyteries, training teams of Mayan community development workers.⁵⁸ The CRWRC also named a pastor of the Maya Quiché Presbytery, Moisés Colop, as country director for Guatemala. For the first time, a Mayan pastor of the IENPG was in a position of authority and had access to resources independent of the ladino leadership of the church. Once the Q'eqchi' presbytery was formed, the CRWRC began offering financial assistance to programs the Q'eqchi' leaders were already carrying out in literacy, preventive health and agricultural development.⁵⁹

⁵³ Muñoz, "Un estudio," 179, 189-90. Dekker reports that at first many of the Q'eqchi' wanted to learn to read only in Spanish because they identified their use of Q'eqchi' as a source of their oppression. As they learned more about the Bible, they came to enjoy hearing the Bible in their own language and the interest in reading Q'eqchi grew. Dekker, "Conversión y opresión," 80.

⁵⁴ "Los presbiterios," *Apuntes*, 286. Up until this time, all the Q'eqchi' who became Presbyterian were considered members of the Central Church, given that the work among the Q'eqchi' was considered a mission of that church.

⁵⁵ Though this move was supposedly intended to be temporary, the Central Church maintained a special relationship with the K'ekchí Presbytery well into the 1990s.

⁵⁶ "Los presbiterios," *Apuntes*, 286-7. Muñoz, "Un estudio," 188.

⁵⁷ Muñoz, "Un estudio," 188-9.

⁵⁸ Dekker, "Mission in Revolution," 25.

⁵⁹ Muñoz, "Un estudio," 188-9. Dekker, "Mission in Revolution," 25.

Non Q'eqchi' leaders involved in this outreach offered two very different interpretations of what was happening among these isolated people.⁶⁰ Mardoqueo Muñoz asserted that the Q'eqchi' experience fit perfectly in the theory of church growth. The Q'eqchi' had developed culturally appropriate forms of evangelism that depended on natural leaders within the communities.⁶¹ In general, Muñoz was against social service as a part of the work of the church because it distracted the church from the task of evangelism.⁶² Muñoz also distinguished between social service, a response to physical needs, and social action, which seeks to change the structures of society. The first was a legitimate activity for the church in his view; the second was not.⁶³ In the case of the Q'eqchi', Muñoz saw their interest in community development as acceptable for several reasons: the needs in the area were obvious and overwhelming, the needs had been identified by the communities themselves, the means chosen for responding to community needs did not go beyond social assistance measures to question social structures, and evangelism remained a high priority for Q'eqchi' leaders.⁶⁴ According to Muñoz, the repression Q'eqchi' Presbyterians began in experience in mid-1982 resulted from the identification of some persons involved with CRWRC with the "theology of liberation," which contaminated some communities with leftist political ideas that led to the disappearance of several Q'eqchi' pastors and the destruction of some villages.⁶⁵

James Dekker, a missionary with the CRCNA who arrived to begin work in Guatemala in 1978, offered a very different interpretation of what was happening among the Q'eqchi'. Like Muñoz, Dekker recognized that evangelism among the Q'eqchi' was being carried out by the Q'eqchi' themselves.⁶⁶ But for Dekker, this evangelistic activity had much different social and political consequences than for Muñoz. These consequences arose from how the Q'eqchi' began to read the Bible and to work to improve the living conditions in their communities.

The basic text the Q'eqchi used for their literacy training was the Bible. Because the Q'eqchi' had not been evangelized by other evangelical groups in Guatemala, they had

⁶⁰ I have not yet had the opportunity to interview Q'eqchi' leaders about what they thought was happening in this period. As far as I have been able to determine, no one else has asked these Q'eqchi' about their experience during this time.

⁶¹ Muñoz, "Un estudio," 179-96.

⁶² Muñoz was especially opposed to any outside funding coming into the IENPG for social projects. Muñoz, "Un estudio," 152.

⁶³ Schäfer, *Church Identity*, 79.

⁶⁴ Muñoz, "Un estudio," 189-93.

⁶⁵ Muñoz, "Un estudio," 181-2.

⁶⁶ James C. Dekker, "Some Pointers to Faithful Evangelism Visible in Latin America Today," *Occasional Essays* 11, no. 1 (June 1984): 29-31.

not been subjected to the widespread dispensationalist interpretations of Biblical texts. They had not been taught that the promises in Scripture pertain only to certain historical epochs. These newly literate Q'eqchi' tended to read the Bible as applying directly to their context.⁶⁷ According to Dekker, certain texts related to creation and the land became very important to the Q'eqchi, such as the eschatological poem found in one of the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures, Isaiah 65: 17-25. Part of this poem reads, "They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat."⁶⁸ The Q'eqchi' began to believe that the God of the Bible wanted their well-being. Given the primordial importance of land in the Mayan worldview, the Q'eqchi' understood that their well-being depended on access to land.⁶⁹

The efforts of the Q'eqchi' in community development arose from this reading of the Biblical text. With a small amount of financial assistance and technical help provided by the Christian Reformed Church, the Q'eqchi' were able to improve their methods of agricultural production to the point that they began harvesting not only enough for their own needs, but enough to sell in the market beyond their villages. The increased harvests also led to a vast improvement in the health of the communities. According to Dekker, it was the increased agricultural production of the lands worked by Presbyterian Q'eqchi' that attracted the attention of outsiders. A series of people appeared on the scene, claiming to have legal title to the land the Q'eqchi' had been working for over fifteen years. These supposed landowners threatened to use military force on the Q'eqchi' unless they moved or agreed to become sharecroppers on the land.⁷⁰ The Q'eqchi' decided not to give in to the threats. They turned to the Synod, the national body of the IENPG, for legal help in 1981. The committee appointed by the IENPG investigated and concluded that the land in question belonged to the state. As legal squatters, the Q'eqchi' could apply for title to the land they had been working for several years. The IENPG committee proceeded to help the Q'eqchi' apply for land titles.⁷¹

Muñoz blamed ideas introduced by foreign missionaries for the repression which befell the Presbyterian Q'eqchi' communities. Yet as Dekker pointed out, the missionaries had very little direct contact with the communities.⁷² Two of the villages destroyed by the

⁶⁷ Dekker, "Mission in Revolution," 25-6.

⁶⁸ Isaiah 65: 21-22a. RSV

⁶⁹ Dekker, "Mission in Revolution," 25-6. Dekker, "Isaiah's Dangerous Dream," 21-2.

⁷⁰ Dekker doesn't name these supposed landowners. In one article he does say that one was an army colonel. Robert Brubaker, James Dekker, Rich Sider and Pablo Stanfield, "Case Study: Guatemala," *Occasional Essays* 11, no. 2 (Dec. 1984): 26.

⁷¹ Dekker, "Mission in Revolution," 26-7. Dekker, "Isaiah's Dangerous Dream," 21-2. Brubaker, et. al., "Case Study: Guatemala," 26. Dekker, "Conversión y opresión," 80-1.

⁷² Dekker, "Mission in Revolution," 25.

army, Bella Vista and Río Blanco, had never had any contact with the foreign missionaries engaged in community development work.⁷³ All of the actions carried out by the IENPG committee to obtain land titles for the Q'eqchi' were within the framework of Guatemalan law. Yet these actions were seen as subversive by the military, which didn't perceive any distinction between social service and social action. The military sought to repress both the Q'eqchi' communities and the members of the IENPG committee who were helping them.⁷⁴

Room for the Kaqchikel in the IENPG

The IENPG began outreach among the Kaqchikel during the 1970s. It would be more accurate to say that the Kaqchikel reached out to the IENPG during this time. The Kaqchikel leaders who became the first Kaqchikel Presbyterian pastors had had experience with other evangelical churches.⁷⁵ These Kaqchikel leaders heard two new things in the Presbyterian discourse of the time. First, in the language about not only doubling the membership of the church, but also of doubling the number of presbyteries in the church, the Kaqchikel heard the possibility of organizing a space for themselves within the IENPG.⁷⁶ They also believed that Presbyterianism would be more open to allowing them to relate the Bible to their own culture, especially their inclusive Mayan worldview, than other evangelical groups.⁷⁷ The Kaqchikel also came into contact with a small, socially committed sector of the IENPG leadership which had a very different perspective from the rest of the IENPG.

According to Edgardo Garcia, who was sent by the Divine Savior Church of Central Presbytery to work with the first Kaqchikel congregation in Chimaltenango, the first congregation arose from the efforts of Vitalino Similox. Though not a Presbyterian at the time, Similox had studied at the Maya-Quiché Bible Institute of the IENPG. In Chimaltenango in the mid-1970s, Similox introduced ICTHUS, a program for preadolescents from ages ten to fourteen. ICTHUS had been started by the IENPG, but also worked in and beyond other denominations.⁷⁸ From this group of children and their

⁷³ Schäfer, *Church Identity*, 69.

⁷⁴ Dekker, "Mission in Revolution," 26-7. Dekker, "Isaiah's Dangerous Dream," 21-2. Brubaker, et. al., "Case Study: Guatemala," 26. Dekker, "Conversión y opresión," 80-1.

⁷⁵ José Antonio Otzoy, for example, had been a member first of the Central American Church, the denomination founded by the Central American Mission, then of the Baptist denomination started by Southern Baptist missionaries from the States. José Antonio Otzoy, interview by author, 7 July 1997, Guatemala, Guatemala, tape recording.

⁷⁶ Vitalino Similox, interview by author, 12 July 1997, Guatemala, Guatemala, tape recording.

⁷⁷ Otzoy, interview, 7 July 1997.

⁷⁸ On the history of ICTHUS, see IENPG, *Apuntes*, 201-4.

parents a congregation formed. Similox asked Central Presbytery of the IENPG to attend to the congregation.⁷⁹ Central Presbytery designated Divine Savior Church, which gave the task of accompanying the Kaqchikel congregation to García.⁸⁰

The Kaqchikel leaders already knew García, who had been very active in evangelical and ecumenical social projects. In 1970, García was ordained to the pastorate by an independent Presbyterian congregation in Guatemala City not affiliated with the IENPG. During the early 1970s, he worked for a small Protestant development organization called Community for Rural Service (*Comunidad de Servicio Rural*) financed by the Christian Childrens' Fund. After the 1976 earthquake, García was involved in the founding of an ecumenical committee which served to receive and channel funding from international ecumenical organizations to local organizations involved in earthquake relief.⁸¹ The Kaqchikel leaders who were interested in becoming Presbyterian were also very active in earthquake relief, as the epicenter of the earthquake and the area of greatest destruction was in the department of Chimaltenango. Similox and other evangelicals had formed an independent local development organization known as the Cakchiquel Coordinator for Integrated Development (*Coordinadora Cakchiquel de Desarrollo Integral-COCADI*), which received financing through the office of Church World Service (CWS) in Guatemala.⁸²

In about 1978, García was encouraged by people in the Divine Savior Church, the church in which he had grown up, to consider becoming involved in the pastoral leadership of that local church. At the same time, García was asked by the IENPG to take over the administration of their preventive health program called Pro-Salud. Even though García had already been ordained, he was asked to be a pastoral worker in the church, a designation usually given to seminary students, and within a few short months had been licensed to preach. García's ecumenical commitments and his involvement in social service placed him in a small sector of the IENPG's leadership. García began traveling out from Guatemala City to Chimaltenango to attend to the congregation.⁸³ The Chimaltenango congregation studied the New Life in Christ curriculum produced by the

⁷⁹ In the IENPG, the term congregation is used for a worshipping community that has not been officially constituted as a local church with its own governing structure.

⁸⁰ Edgardo García, interview by author, 6 Feb. 2003.

⁸¹ Edgardo García, interview by author, 6 Feb. 2003.

⁸² After the initial efforts of the Evangelical Alliance in Guatemala to organize an office to receive international aid and facilitate reconstruction efforts fell apart due not only rivalry between denominations but also blatant misuse of funds, Church World Service, the relief agency of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCCUSA), established an office in Guatemala. On COCADI, see Proyecto Centroamericano de Estudios Socio-Religiosos (PROCADES), *Directorio de iglesias, organizaciones y ministerios del movimiento protestante: Guatemala* (San Francisco de Dos Ríos, Costa Rica: IINDEF, 1981), 389-90.

⁸³ Edgardo García, interview by author, 6 Feb. 2003.

Latin American Evangelical Commission on Christian Education (*Comisión Evangélica Latinoamericana de Educación Cristiana-CELADEC*).⁸⁴ This curriculum, which applied the insights of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire to Christian education in Protestant churches, stressed the radical implications of Christ's incarnation for all areas of life and urged participants to analyze their context in order to transform it.⁸⁵ This curriculum was used in few other places in the IENPG.⁸⁶

In about 1980, as repression by the military increased around Chimaltenango, García felt it was dangerous to be traveling to be with the Kaqchikel congregation only once a week. Instead of expanding García's traveling fund to allow him to have a more continual presence among the Kaqchikel, Divine Savior Church decided to suspend their pastoral attention to the congregation in Chimaltenango. The Kaqchikel leaders continued to nurture the congregation in Chimaltenango. Their evangelizing efforts led to the founding of other congregations.⁸⁷ Andrés García and Gloria Salazar also held workshops with the Kaqchikel.⁸⁸ Central Presbytery refused to ordain the Kaqchikel leaders to pastoral ministry. In 1985, three Kaqchikel leaders—Vitalino Similox, José Antonio Otzoy, and Lucio Martínez—were ordained as ministers by the Maya-Quiché Presbytery. The Kaqchikel Presbytery was given formal recognition by the IENPG in 1987.⁸⁹ The Kaqchikel Presbytery has remained small and therefore has had little impact on the overall membership numbers of the IENPG. These Kaqchikel have continued to take Presbyterianism on their own terms, adapting both the theology and the ecclesiology to their cultural context.

Conclusion

This study has shown that evangelism had different meanings for different sectors the IENPG in the period from 1973 to 1982. The IENPG reported reaching its goal of doubling its membership in this decade.⁹⁰ The number of local churches grew from ninety

⁸⁴ CELADEC was formed in 1962 by a group of Protestant leaders shortly after the Second Latin American Evangelical Conference (*II Conferencia Evangélica Latinoamericana-CELA II*) held in Huampaní, Peru. CELADEC was one of the vanguard organizations of the most socially committed wing of Latin American Protestantism. Jean Pierre Bastian, *Historia del Protestantismo en América Latina* (México: CUPSA, 1990), 220.

⁸⁵ See *Manual general para el uso del curso nueva vida en Cristo*, 2^a. ed. (Lima: CELADEC, 1975).

⁸⁶ Edgardo García, interview by author, 6 Feb. 2003.

⁸⁷ Edgardo García, interview by author, 6 Feb. 2003.

⁸⁸ García and Salazar, interview.

⁸⁹ Edgardo García, interview by author, 6 Feb. 2003. Otzoy, interview.

⁹⁰ In 1982, the IENPG calculated their membership as follows. In 1980, the churches had reported 16,965 baptized members. But five local churches had not reported, so 500 was added to this number. This number, 17, 465, was then increased by ten percent to estimate the number of

in 1972 to 162 in 1982.⁹¹ The IENPG experienced two poles of growth during this period and three new presbyteries were organized. The Presbytery of the Southwest was founded in October of 1981 by sixteen churches that had been part of Pacific Presbytery.⁹² The model of evangelism followed on the southwest coast, an area that was a major front in the war, was primarily the church growth model. Schäfer suggests, on the basis of interviews conducted in 1985, that these poor ladinos were attracted into the church by an apolitical message.⁹³ But this is far from the whole picture. The IENPG experienced its greatest growth during this period among the Mam and the Q'eqchi', Mayan groups far less likely than poor ladinos to make a distinction between the spiritual and material needs of their communities. Membership surged in the Mayan presbyteries starting in about 1980, the year the Mam Presbytery was organized, while the membership levels in the ladino presbyteries of the IENPG stagnated.⁹⁴ Schäfer suggests that this linking of evangelism with social witness in the Mayan presbyteries led to "quantitative stability."⁹⁵

What can be said is that it became very difficult to sustain socially committed forms of evangelism within the IENPG in Guatemala after 1982. By the time hundreds of thousands of Guatemalan evangelicals gathered in the Campo Marte parade grounds to celebrate one hundred years of Protestant presence in their country in November of 1982, James Dekker, Andrés García, Gloria Salazar, and a number of Guatemalan Presbyterian leaders, both ladinos and Maya, had been forced to flee the country because their lives were in danger.⁹⁶ The tensions within the church over its relationship to the social context that had been expressed in different approaches to evangelism continued to tear at the life of the church. As peace negotiations between the URNG and the Guatemalan government began and some political space opened up in the country, the conflicts in the IENPG broke out into the open.

baptized members by 1982. The resulting number, 19,211, was then multiplied by four to estimate a total Presbyterian population in Guatemala of 76,844. IENPG, *Apuntes*, 405-6, 432.

⁹¹ Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, *Manual de evangelismo y misiones* (Guatemala: IENPG, 1989), 12.

⁹² IENPG, *Apuntes*, 275-6.

⁹³ Schäfer, *Church Identity*, 57-9.

⁹⁴ Schäfer, *Church Identity*, 83-4.

⁹⁵ Schäfer, *Church Identity*, 98.

⁹⁶ Dekker described the incident that led him and several others to flee Guatemala, the capture of a mission worker of the CRWRC whom state security forces mistook for Dekker in August of 1982, in "Guatemala: A Test of Faith," *The Other Side*, no. 137 (Feb. 1983): 26-7.

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