

Guatemalan Pentecostals: Something of Their Own

EVERETT WILSON

Guatemala has become the focus of special attention for observers of Latin American religion. A remarkable religious efflorescence, Protestant, Catholic, and indigenous, has been taking place in the country. Some observers have held the anxiety arising from prolonged violence and social dislocation responsible for these religious stirrings.¹ This simplistic view has given way to more probing questions about foreign influence, sectarian preferences, cultural traditions, and pragmatic choices in conversions. I shall examine these questions here with reference to Guatemala's Pentecostals, seeking a more comprehensive explanation that affords greater room for Guatemalan initiative and better reveals Pentecostals' motives, expectations, and institutional life.²

This chapter sheds light on the largest and most widespread of the new religious movements, the popular Pentecostals—their origins, their relationship to preceding Protestant efforts, their place in Guatemala's troubled history, and their actual or potential role in national life.³

These religious movements, mainly among indigenous Maya and marginal rural and urban ladinos, are viewed as the purposeful creation of Guatemalans. Living in perpetual crisis, through religious motivation and cohesion they have formed religious associations as a means of exerting control over their own lives. This religious initiative provides insight into the sentiments, options, and approaches of other Guatemalans living on the margins of society.⁴

The contemporary era in Guatemala and the emergence of an increasingly visible evangelical movement began with a failed effort at reform. The post-World War II political movement led by Juan José Arévalo (1945-1950) and Jacobo Arbenz (1950-1954) was overthrown by a U.S.-supported counterrevolution in 1954. Speaking for the emerging middle sectors, these leaders addressed their country's social ills and moved toward political modernity by adopting a new

constitution with reform measures that protected civil rights, supported organized labor, and promised land reform.⁵ The movement's abrupt ending, with reprisals against popular leaders and the political opposition, introduced a period of repression and heightened tensions while the condition of the popular groups continued to deteriorate.

The main resistance to the counterrevolution came in the 1960s from guerrillas, some of them dissident military officers. Focused on the primarily ladino populations of the eastern departments where the leaders hoped to establish popular support, this resort to arms produced a brutal reaction and set the stage for continuing conflict, including the appearance of paramilitary death squads.⁶ Thereafter, anticommunism, with continuing U.S. support, was used as a means to resist demands for change.

Meanwhile, the persistence of traditional folk Catholicism among the Maya, who made up half of the population, had prompted a campaign by Catholic Action to advance post-Vatican II orthodoxy.⁷ The objective was to correct unacceptable popular practices that were traditionally left in the hands of local indigenous communities, bringing them into line with approved teaching and ecclesiastical authority. At the same time that Catholic renewal was heightening religious sentiments and challenging traditions, however, Protestantism began to acquire visibility in 1957 with the celebration of the movement's seventy-fifth anniversary in Guatemala.⁸

Tensions increased further in the 1970s as progressive priests committed to liberation theology encouraged indigenous support for the Ejército Guatemalteco de los Pobres (Guatemalan Army of the Poor – EGP). Following military defeats in eastern Guatemala, rebel forces moved to the Maya departments of the north. These combined ideological and military efforts elevated the struggle to the status of a crusade, leaving little room for neutrality in the Indian communities where the violence was centered.⁹ The apocalyptic nightmare that followed had taken an estimated 100,000 lives by the mid-1980s.¹⁰

Against this backdrop of increasing government reprisals, a devastating earthquake stunned Guatemala on February 4, 1976, leaving 20,000 dead, 80,000 injured, and one person in eight homeless.¹¹ Recovery efforts brought new conflicts. Considerable foreign aid poured into Guatemala, much of it provided or distributed by North American religious agencies. (Many agencies were described as right-wing.) Previously unacknowledged evangelical Protestants became visible participants in recovery efforts and in civic life. Critics complained vociferously that a U.S.-promoted Protestant offensive in Guatemala was well under way.¹²

The military reign of terror that followed in the Quiché region and the disappearance and assassination of scores of Catholic laypersons and priests made the conflict appear essentially a war of religion. The seizure of power by Gen. José Efraín Ríos Montt, a self-proclaimed evangelical and dictator from March 1982 to August 1983, further seemed to demonstrate that repressive forces and sectarian aspirations were conspiring to frustrate reform in the country.¹³

This profile of the evangelicals in Guatemala has been substantially revised as scholars have demonstrated that the situation was far more complicated than the facile conclusions of some journalists in the early 1980s. Moreover, it has become apparent that the North American religious right, despite its aggressive rhetoric, lacked the ability or the commitment to provide the support ascribed to it and, more important, did not exert significant influence over the grass-roots Guatemalan evangelicals.¹⁴

More important, the interpreters of these events simply ignored the efforts made by Guatemalans themselves to address their own problems. As a result, definitions, organizational models, and a presumption of religious motivation that have little to do with the Guatemalan experience have skewed interpretations of the evangelical churches. The groups that emerged with considerable strength in the 1980s had, in fact, begun to take shape much earlier.

Protestantism Takes Root

The conditions that have facilitated Protestantism's becoming a religious alternative in contemporary Guatemala are rooted in the nineteenth-century policies of Guatemalan president Justo Rufino Barrios (dominant from 1871 to 1885).¹⁵ An advocate of the liberal thinking that prevailed in much of late-nineteenth-century Latin America, Barrios has been likened to Mexico's Porfirio Díaz in his zeal for economic development, maintaining rigid social control, offering inducements to expand new cash crops, attracting immigration, and improving transportation and communications, all the time denigrating the Indian population and treating the Catholic church with contempt. Catholic religious orders were expelled, education and marriage were made civil institutions, members of the hierarchy were exiled, extensive church properties were confiscated, and religious processions and clerical garb were proscribed. The caudillo's anticlerical policies, observed historian Hubert Herring forty years ago, "so crippled the Church in Guatemala that she has never recovered her influence."¹⁶

Although Barrios's policies continued throughout the dictatorships of his successors until 1945, he went beyond the anticlerical liberalism of Porfirio Díaz by introducing a rival form of Christianity. In 1882 Barrios invited the North American Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions to enter the country, which, given the considerable popular resistance to a religious option, amounted to an official imposition of Protestantism.¹⁷ It was the good fortune of Guatemalan evangelicals, however, to have a number of capable representatives, some of whom remained for decades and distinguished themselves by their study of Indian languages and culture. These missionaries influenced a small but strategic group of Guatemalans, founding schools and promoting health services in addition to more conventional evangelistic efforts that resulted in the founding of Protestant churches and the training of national pastors.¹⁸

Whereas much of the Presbyterian work was undertaken in areas of Indian concentration in the western departments, a second evangelical effort, that of the Central American Mission, of similar theological persuasion, further extended Protestant influence after 1899 primarily in the central and south-central departments.¹⁹ By World War I a Nazarene Mission in the north, the Society of Friends in the east, and the Primitive Methodists in the west were also at work, with considerable support for educational and social service programs.²⁰

By 1937, in a comprehensive review made of Protestant efforts, Kenneth G. Grubb reported an evangelical community of 40,000 people, about 1.7 percent of the national population, the product of a half-dozen North American missions.²¹ "The fact that the main reforms introduced by Barrios have never been reversed is of paramount importance to evangelical workers," Grubb concluded, noting that "no less helpful has been the general sympathy with the objects of evangelical missions which influential members of Guatemalan society have not hesitated to show."²² Although the Protestant community remained small, its members played a positive role in the country for a full century before a visible evangelical presence emerged in the early 1980s (Table 8.1).

The primary expression of Protestantism in Guatemala, however, is not one of the historical groups but the popular Pentecostals, often simply grouped together ambiguously with marginally Christian groups as "sects."²³ The failure of scholars to identify and treat the popular Pentecostals in reconstructing the development of Guatemalan Protestantism has distorted the explanations they have given

TABLE 8.1 Reported Communicants of the Guatemalan Historical Protestant Churches, 1937-1993

	1937	1956	1961	1969	1981	1993
Presbyterian	2,805	5,700	8,000	11,750	16,263	23,000
Central American Mission	6,596	6,609	6,397	11,928	38,480	67,700
Nazarene	1,500	1,800	2,123	2,500	11,350	24,014
Primitive Methodist	176	691	570	1,000	7,000	n.a.
Society of Friends	3,015	5,432	7,000	650	4,683	n.a.
Baptist	n.a.	1,703	1,513	2,500	7,178	16,500
Plymouth Brethren	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	3,500	12,500	30,000
Adventist	296	2,835	2,950	6,389	17,207	4,000
Total	14,388	24,885	28,553	33,828	114,661	201,000

Sources: Kenneth G. Grubb, *Religion in Central America* (New York: World Dominion Press, 1937); *World Christian Handbook* (1956); Clyde W. Taylor and Wade T. Coggins, eds., *Protestant Missions in Latin America: A Statistical Survey* (Washington, D.C.: Evangelical Foreign Mission Association, 1961); William R. Read, Victor M. Monterroso, and Harmon A. Johnson, *Latin American Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1969); PROCADES, *Directorio del movimiento protestante en Guatemala* (1982); Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World*, 3d ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1993).

for evangelical growth. Moreover, by disregarding the nature, resources, and aspirations of these groups, studies have also neglected the insights that the growth of evangelicalism among these groups offers about the popular sectors that Pentecostals for the most part represent.

The Rise of the Pentecostals

Although the Pentecostals resemble the Protestant evangelical churches that have been at work in the country since 1882, these popular insurgents were largely ignored by the major missions and nationalized denominations. Only in 1935, when it became apparent that Pentecostals had their own concerns, were proselytistic, and disregarded the informal comity arrangements that had for half a century kept the established missions working cooperatively in their own assigned territories, did the historical groups, apparently in reaction to Pentecostal inroads, formally organize the Evangelical Alliance.²⁴ By 1950 the Pentecostals accounted for a significant proportion of Guatemala's evangelicals, an estimated 12 percent.²⁵

The three largest of these groups, all of which are distributed throughout the national territory – the Iglesia de Dios del Evangelio Completo (Church of God), with churches in Guatemala since 1916, the Asambleas de Dios en Guatemala (Assemblies of God), the formalization in 1937 of efforts begun in the late 1920s, and the Iglesia del Principe de Paz (Church of the Prince of Peace), a 1953 spinoff from the Asambleas de Dios – report a combined membership approximately equal to the number of adherents of all other Guatemalan Protestant groups. If other Pentecostal churches and the various Neo-Pentecostal churches are added, this grouping in the aggregate accounts for two-thirds of all of Guatemalan evangelicals. In absolute numbers, at least 10 percent of Guatemalans, an estimated community in excess of 1 million, are identified as popular Pentecostals (Table 8.2).²⁶

These Pentecostal groups in Guatemala are essentially different from other evangelicals in respect to their origins and their autonomy. Although the denominations that preceded them between 1882 and World War I formed under the direct influence of North American missionaries around the theology, polity (ecclesiastical organization), economic support, and paternalism of foreign-based missions, Guatemalan Pentecostals were left free to adapt, modify, and implement Protestant emphases at will, in large part because of the Pentecostals' emphasis on the spontaneity and diffusion of spiritual authority.

Treatments of these groups, at least until David Stoll called the assumption into question, have overlooked the fact that the foreign investment in personnel and programs could not possibly account for their growth and institutional development.²⁷ Although each of the three main Pentecostal organizations received at least indirect initial stimulus from outside the country, from the beginning their ties with foreign denominations have been tenuous, having developed after the

TABLE 8.2 Guatemalan Popular Pentecostals, 1994 Estimates

<i>Denomination</i>	<i>Number of Churches</i>	<i>Membership</i>
Asambleas de Dios	1,600	136,000
Iglesia de Dios del Evangelio Completo	1,300	125,000
Iglesia del Príncipe de Paz	900	75,000
Espíritu Santo	333	30,000
Iglesia de Dios de la Profecía	200	10,000
Iglesia de Dios Pentecostés	200	10,000
Monte Basán	100	10,000
Manantial de la Vida	50	5,000
Iglesia de Dios "Bethesda"	60	4,000
El Camino Bíblico	45	4,000
Iglesia Cuadrangular	40	3,000
Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús	25	3,000
Iglesia de Dios "Nueva Jerusalén"	25	2,000
Iglesia Mundo Extendido	25	2,000
Iglesia "Biblia Abierta"	15	1,000
Iglesia de Dios Pentecostal	15	1,000
Iglesia "Palestina"	10	1,000
Total	4,943	422,000

Source: Various estimates, including a rather complete profile provided by the Guatemalan Pentecostal executive leader José Everildo Velásquez.

initial Guatemalan congregations had come into existence. They have received little financial underwriting, and one of the three, the Iglesia del Principe de Paz, founded by a charismatic Guatemalan leader, has thrived as a national movement without any foreign patronage.

Moreover, few of the North American Pentecostal personnel, unlike many of their colleagues from other missions, remained long enough to establish themselves in the new culture, to learn an indigenous language, to create a personal following, or to develop forms of financial or administrative dependency.²⁸ The several missionaries who remained for an extended time were apparently esteemed by their Guatemalan colleagues less for their administrative, technical, or theological contribution than for their identification with the common people in the rigors of hard work and a vision of establishing what the Guatemalans often referred to simply as "the work of the Lord" (*la obra*). Although these and other missionaries sometimes secured North American funds for capital projects, especially urban church buildings and schools, with few exceptions they themselves had little to offer besides their visionary example and moral support.

The Guatemalan popular Pentecostals, however, owe the historical Protestants (the Reformation churches and their derivatives) a debt for the introduction and acculturation of evangelical Protestantism. That debt, in addition to a favorable legal-political climate and, often, a positive institutional image, included linguis-

tic and translation work, leadership formation, social (e.g., agricultural) projects, and various forms of education, all of which tended to give Guatemalan pastors and lay leaders (and their children) of humble social origins opportunities for personal and career development far beyond those otherwise available.

In time, however, after the historical Protestants had experienced insurgencies and organizational modifications that made them more acceptable to nationalistic sentiments, the Pentecostals took the process considerably farther – and acquired at least a few experienced leaders from the existing missions – in adapting Protestant beliefs and practices to Guatemalan culture. The results were autonomous organizations independent of foreign direction and underwriting and culturally compatible with the socially marginalized ladinos and Maya. Sharing the traditional culture of the common people whom they evangelized – the folk Catholicism of the rural and urban ladinos and the syncretic *costumbre* of the indigenous populations – even the first Guatemalan Pentecostals worked in a cultural climate with which their beliefs, methods, and objectives though apparently contradictory – were remarkably compatible.²⁹

After modest growth for three decades, Pentecostal increases accelerated during the troubled decades that followed the overthrow of Jacobo Arbenz.³⁰ Whereas there were only token numbers of adherents of these groups among the republic's 25,000 evangelicals in the 1930s, in the 1950s the Pentecostals grew from 12 percent to 33 percent of the total.³¹ By 1982, the centennial of the evangelical presence in Guatemala, Pentecostals made up half of all evangelicals and continued to grow more rapidly than the historical denominations.³² By 1990, with the emergence of the Neo-Pentecostals, the two groupings together accounted for two-thirds of the total evangelical community of more than 2 million, 20 percent of the national population.³³

Despite the humble origins of the vast majority of the Pentecostal converts, they are nevertheless organizationally self-sustaining and administratively independent. According to conservative estimates, in the aggregate the popular Pentecostals contribute at least US\$ 10 million annually in support of their movement and have acquired real estate with a market value probably far in excess of US\$50 million.³⁴

Almost half of the popular Pentecostals are Maya, more than token numbers of whom have advanced to positions of regional or national leadership in one or another of the denominations.³⁵ Their memberships, among whom women hold leadership positions at the local level, have displayed uncommon initiative, discipline, and tenacity – qualities that have obvious implications for the civic life of a suffering, demoralized, and politically paralyzed society.

Neo-Pentecostals Become Prominent

Just as the popular Pentecostals were displacing the established historical denominations as the country's largest evangelical grouping in the late 1970s, a new

variety of evangelical church, the Neo-Pentecostals, had begun to gain acceptance. Still relatively small at that time, by the end of the decade these groups had combined memberships that compared with those of the historical Protestant churches. Although all Neo-Pentecostal groups tend to be similarly contemporary in their styles, each has its own variation on the same themes. All emphasize empowerment in the form of prophetic authority expressed in emphases on miracles, healing, exorcism, and prophecy. These groups are generally centered in a dominant, central, urban church, such as Ríos Montt's Verbo (Church of the Word) congregation in Guatemala City's Zone 4. Some others, notably Elim, the first and largest such group, radiated throughout Guatemala just as had the popular Pentecostal churches.

Several of the Neo-Pentecostal groups, consisting initially of Pentecostalized elements of the historical denominations, began almost a generation before they were generally recognized in the 1980s. The Elim church started under the leadership of a former member of the Central American Mission, while the other large Neo-Pentecostal group, El Calvario, came into being as the Hispanic American Inland Mission in 1947 and turned Neo-Pentecostal in 1963, after which it began to grow rapidly (Table 8.3).³⁶

Some observers believe that the Neo-Pentecostals present a model of a Pentecostal church of the future, at least to the extent that the popular Pentecostals have yet to come to terms with the lifestyles and values of the middle groups while the Neo-Pentecostals already consist largely of persons from these social sectors. The latter have the professionally qualified members and greater material resources, as well as the experience, self-confidence, and connections, to address the issues of the larger society.

From the growth patterns it appears that the types of persons who might earlier have gravitated to the historical groups have become Neo-Pentecostals instead. It also appears that some Catholic charismatics have found their way into these churches. But, increasingly, Pentecostal leaders suspect that considerable numbers of their better-established recent converts and many upwardly mobile young people from Pentecostal families have made the switch, finding in these groups desirable companionship and extended social contacts as well as more relaxed standards of dress and conduct.

The Neo-Pentecostal churches, some of which are not noticeably distinct from the more socially established popular Pentecostal churches, according to some perceptions often consist of persons who are eager to apply the potential of their movement to the larger social and political tasks of the country.³⁷ Although to some observers features of these churches have seemed to be merely garish imitations of North American charismatic styles and right-wing politics, members of these groups, often activists with the means and the desire to engage in public life, have a strong sense of civic responsibility and support schools, social service programs, and, inevitably, political activities.³⁸ If Pentecostals and Neo-Pentecostals are not likely to vote as a bloc, they nevertheless share many concerns about the

TABLE 8.3 Guatemalen Neo-Pentecostals ,1994 Estimates

<i>Church</i>	<i>Number of Congregations</i>	<i>Membership/Attendance</i>
Elim Christian Mission	714	50,000
El Calvario	462	60,000
Verbo	25	15,000
Bethany (Quetzaltenango)	20	15,000
Word in Action	10	12,000
El Shadai	1	10,000
Christian Fraternity	1	10,000
Total	1233	172,000

Source: Johnstone, *Operation World*, and estimates provided by José Everildo Velásquez.

future of their nation and, to some extent, a network of informal communication for contributing to the political process.

Churches That Work

From their beginnings the autonomous Pentecostal groups developed an infrastructure capable of continual expansion. *La obra* – the nurturing of a congregation and the evangelization of a community-became the primary occupation of many adherents, often with considerable vision and sacrifice. The results of their efforts, occurring under adverse circumstances with limited and poorly qualified personnel, developed into a durable ecclesiastical institution with a capacity for growth and increasing complexity. With few compensations other than a sense of mission and a network of appreciative companions, they built their churches as much through effective organization as through unrelenting effort. "The Full Gospel Church of God has grown from a small handful of persecuted Indian believers in the Western highlands of the country," noted an observer, "to one of the largest evangelical bodies on the national scene."³⁹

These movements relied heavily on the local congregation. Almost entirely responsible for its own affairs even in the hierarchically organized Iglesia de Dios, an extended family or several families formed a nucleus in a designated location, a house or other available structure, or even met outdoors. These hosts became the patrons, though not necessarily the pastors, of the new congregation, their leadership and commitment often becoming the main reason for the effort's success. "Since the Iglesia de Dios is 'a church of the poor,'" observes Richard Waldrop, "there is spontaneity in the growth and organization of churches."⁴⁰

Once established, however, the group attracted interested members of the community, some of whom typically attended for a long time without confessing the religious experience requisite to joining the church. As conversions were made, instruction and baptism by immersion were expected of the sincere believers, who were then required to conform to the group's demanding standards

of conduct. Strong peer pressure, including discipline and sanctions, was applied to converts to fulfill the group's ideals. What statistical reports of Pentecostal growth fail to reveal about these popular groups, in addition to the extraordinary effort evangelists invested and the resistance they often encountered, are the demands that conversion made on proselytes. Often described as "legalistic" because of their rigorous codes of conduct, the churches required a convert to assume unusually high personal commitment and detachment from otherwise legitimate activities. An appraisal of the relative costs of conversion, from (sometimes) family ostracism to the requirement to pay a tithe (10 percent of one's income), would indicate that the Pentecostal convert's faith was more than nominal.⁴¹

Many converts do not continue to attend church regularly and drop out of Pentecostal congregations. That many do not remain faithful is borne out in the Pentecostals' annual reports, which, for given years, indicate as many "restored" members (indicating a previous lapse) as conversions.⁴²

A large proportion of the congregations acquire their own church building (*templo*), often beginning with a gift of land from a member of the congregation or a sympathetic nonmember but requiring everyone's contribution of materials and labor for construction. The contrast between the members' usually humble homes and the often better-constructed churches is notable. Although membership demands are onerous, the groups' survival and growth demonstrates that members are generally conscientious in support of their church, in which they have a proprietary interest (in effect, as stockholders with voice and vote) as recognized by the association's official status as a corporation.

When the pastor is supported entirely by his congregation, he receives his salary (or designated offerings) at its pleasure. Support, in rural Guatemala often given in kind, can easily be withheld in the event that the leader loses the confidence of his flock. Many pastors, at least at the beginnings of a new church, moreover, are self-supporting, demonstrating the same commitment to the group's evangelistic objectives as the laypersons from whom they are sometimes distinguishable only by their moral leadership in the congregation.⁴³

Most groups have one or more lay pastors (*obreros locales*) and several deacons and deaconesses (*diáconos* and *diaconeses*), lay men and women to whom is entrusted the oversight of the church. They have a strong voice in making church policies, receive recognition and moral support, and in the event of an extreme disagreement have the option of leaving the congregation to identify with another group of similar if not identical beliefs and practices without suffering disparagement in the larger evangelical community.

The Iglesia de Dios, along with other Pentecostal groups, early adopted a system of dependent missions or satellite churches (*campos blancos*) placed by an established congregation in the care of lay elders who nurtured them until they were self-sustaining. The elder in charge of each then became pastor and eventually completed the formal requirements for receiving ministerial recognition.⁴⁴ Ordination, in effect, was achieved through an apprenticeship based on years of

satisfactory service and evidence of a vocation and often did not occur until completion of eight to ten years of uninterrupted, satisfactory service. As a consequence, sometimes notably effective pastors nonetheless carry on their work without receiving formal recognition.

The Asambleas de Dios, with larger proportions of its churches among the ladino populations in the eastern departments, has functioned similarly to the Iglesia de Dios, which more often took root among indigenous populations of the highlands. If the Iglesia de Dios congregations tended toward the consultative concept of governance traditional in the indigenous communities, ladino congregations among both groups tended to accept the strong-man (caudillo) form of leadership. In whichever format, however, a rough consensus is essential to the groups' survival.

The Guatemalan Asambleas de Dios adopted early a document developed in El Salvador, the *Reglamento local*, a manual of doctrine and practice outlining the group's principal doctrines, prescribed conduct, and responsibilities of the membership.⁴⁵ As a result, an important part of the Pentecostal tradition was accountability, in effect published bylaws enforced by sanctions against members who failed to honor their commitments. But probably more than simply a manual, the *Reglamento* represented a desire on the part of the adherents to regularize their often unstable existence by adopting a guarantee of reliability and reciprocity. The *Reglamento*, like the corresponding zone organization adopted by the Iglesia de Dios, not only maintained uniformity among constituents but created ties between congregations that relieved their isolation and provided a supportive network.

Guatemalan Habits of the Heart: The Appeals of Pentecostalism

Even with the mechanisms that enabled the emerging Pentecostals to extend and conserve their organizations, their membership and national influence remained small until the troubled times following the overthrow of the Arbenz government in 1954 tended to favor crisis conversion.⁴⁶ Against a backdrop of the ongoing deterioration of the rural agricultural sector and the unsettling cold war climate, developments made many sectors of Guatemalan society especially vulnerable to change. Armed insurgency, death squads, intensification of religious concerns, and a major earthquake all created a search for reassurance.⁴⁷

Leaders of the historical Protestant groups, in view of the growth and increasing recognition of their movement, were inclined to attribute their success to the cumulative institutional efforts begun a century earlier. Whereas these churches had initially relied on foreign resources, personnel, and methods, Guatemalans had nationalized the movements early on.⁴⁸ Although the evangelicals had not yet begun to participate directly in political activities, the social impact of their educational efforts could be identified in Guatemalans of prominence who had attended Protestant academies, including presidents Juan José Arévalo and Julio

César Méndez Montenegro.⁴⁹ When, on November 28, 1982, Ríos Montt appeared with the Argentine evangelist Luis Palau before a half-million or more evangelicals at the Protestant centennial celebration in 1982, the occasion produced unrestrained rhetoric from both evangelicals and their detractors, both of whose assessments, as time has demonstrated, considerably inflated and distorted the significance of the event.

Virginia Garrard-Burnett's analysis of this era clarifies the developments that have been made a matter of propaganda by interpreters at both ideological extremes.⁵⁰ With insight into both the nature of the evangelical movement and the conditions surrounding its emergence, she demonstrates that evangelical growth, rather than being primarily a result of the military exploitation of fundamentalist religion in the 1980s, had assumed substantial proportions earlier, following the overthrow of the Arbenz government.

She also corrects earlier misinterpretations of Ríos Montt as a pivotal figure in the rise of the evangelical groups, recognizing that his regime's policies – he was always first and foremost a military officer – were little influenced by his personal religious beliefs and had limited impact on the course of Guatemalan evangelicalism. She calls attention to the nationalistic, constructive impulses that lay behind the formation of the evangelical churches and sees a coincidence of evangelical growth with the deteriorating social conditions and heightened religious sensibilities brought on by crisis. Although Garrard-Burnett is apparently referring more to the Pentecostals than to the historical Protestant denominations, she concludes that in Guatemala "Protestantism is the religion of the disaffected, the helpless and the hopeless. For this reason if for no other, Protestantism continues to flourish."⁵¹

According to this portrayal, however, Guatemalan evangelicalism, rather than the result of either seductive foreign influence or a prolonged effort by some Guatemalans to reshape their country along the lines of Protestant individualism, is largely a by-product of a failed revolution that left the distressed sectors with little recourse. Large numbers of the poor and disaffected, according to this view, were panicked into the new religion rather than recruited, convinced, or converted. If the movement is born of despair and demoralization, however, what sustains and animates its members, who are often, apparently, vigorous, buoyant propagandists energetically proselytizing their relatives and friends and organizing substantial institutions?

The resignation attributed to Pentecostals because of their alleged premillennial doctrines is also too facile an explanation of these popular movements made up of men and women faced with overwhelming personal problems who are obviously investing a great deal in their churches and presumably getting something in return. Although statistics indicate that attendance in all evangelical churches improved after the earthquake of 1976, the Pentecostal groups grew even more rapidly despite their presumably having received no more external financial assistance or other forms of support. Furthermore, the conclusion that Guate-

malans resorted to ideologically neutral evangelical churches to escape military suspicion, however likely, does not account for the conversions that were made outside the military zone and the ongoing institutional development that the Pentecostals achieved during times of relative security. The present analysis has attempted to show how Guatemalan Pentecostals, for themselves, their families, and their religious communities, faced their dismal condition with religiously motivated idealism and on their own initiative constructed an institution appropriate to the needs of the marginal sectors. Only by ignoring the Pentecostals' independence, initiative, and organizational tendencies can these groups be represented as passive and largely irrelevant to social changes occurring in the troubled country.

Although Pentecostal leaders, long unacceptable to the evangelical establishment, were conspicuously absent from leadership roles in the coordinated evangelistic programs and public events of the 1960s and 1970s, their memberships made up an increasing proportion of the country's Protestants.⁵² Whereas the historical groups were growing rapidly, apparently through a trained clergy, well-directed programs, and incremental increases, the Pentecostals were growing even more rapidly by the exponential formation of new, usually small, congregations. The *Asambleas de Dios en Guatemala* reported increases from 32 churches and 1,553 adherents in 1951 to 500 churches and 84,000 adherents in 1972.⁵³ Since similar growth had occurred among the other Pentecostal organizations, the Pentecostal adherents should be factored out of the evangelical statistics to provide a clearer representation of the extent and composition of the evangelical movement (Table 8.4).

Thus, while the events of 1982 brought to world attention the rise of an evangelical movement, inconspicuously the Pentecostals had been becoming a majority of the country's evangelicals. However unintentionally, the efforts and aspirations of the socially marginal people who made up these grass-roots movements (and apparently doubled the attendance at the 1982 centennial celebration) had edged into visibility the more socially prominent historical Protestants.

The question remains why Guatemalans in such large numbers became evangelical and, at that, adherents not of the better-recognized and socially respected Protestant denominations and missions but of their own improvised, grass-roots, morally rigid associations based on Pentecostal emphases. The usual answers about foreign seduction, massive financial investment, panic, and overpowering evangelical programs are precluded by the demonstration that these evangelicals were not foreign operations, that their growth was closely related to the misery and anxieties of the popular groups, and that the evangelical groups growing most rapidly were closest to traditional outlooks and were required in conversion to undergo the least cultural change.

The answer emerging from the profile of these groups is that, despite the Pentecostals' view that at conversion they completely dissociate themselves from their former values, companions, and conduct to begin a new existence, their new

TABLE 8.4 Pentecostals as a Percentage of All Guatemalan Evangelicals, 1937-1993

	1937		1956		1961	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Historical Protestants	30,000	88	28,000	70	32,000	68
Popular Pentecostals	4,000	12	12,000	30	15,000	32
Neo-Pentecostals						
Total Evangelicals	34,000	100	40,000	100	47,000	100

	1969		1982		1993	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Historical Protestants	47,000	65	114,000	35	255,000	32
Popular Pentecostals	22,000	30	140,000	42	420,000	50
Neo-Pentecostals	3,000	5	76,000	23	150,000	18
Total Evangelicals	72,000	100	330,000	100	835,000	100

Sources: Grubb, *Religion in Central America*; *World Christian Handbook*; Taylor and Coggins, *Protestant Missions in Latin America*; Read, Monterroso, and Johnson, *Latin American Church Growth*; PROCADES, *Directorio*; Johnstone, *Operation World*.

beliefs, nevertheless, in many comfortable *ways* resemble the old. The fact that their movements grew much more rapidly throughout the country than did those of the other evangelicals suggests at least that their message and values were not incompatible with the values and aspirations of either ladino or indigenous Guatemalans.

On the contrary, their popular styles, tastes, and approaches were replete with the familiar, whether in the primitive democracy and mutual trust that their associations provided or in the folk music and accepted social conventions, such as standards of hospitality and relationships between the sexes, that they perpetuated. In the vacuum brought about by the absence of a religious consensus, Guatemalans became Pentecostals in substantial numbers not because they had to abandon their outlook on life but because their spiritual lives were rekindled (a common Pentecostal simile) in the context of their new associations. Whatever the other attractions of evangelical conversion, the familiarity of Pentecostal faith, not its foreignness, was a strong attraction for the Guatemalan poor and distressed.⁵⁴

Already dislodged from the institutional structures that had previously oriented their lives, popular Pentecostals made relatively easy transitions to evangelical beliefs and practices, finding that their basic values and social structures were reinforced within the Pentecostal communities. Although mediated in a radically different manner, in an intimate congregational community with few sacraments and little hierarchy, the transcendent worldview that most Guatemalans accepted was restated in the beliefs of the Pentecostals and, moreover, in a cultural idiom that appeared more compatible than other options. Rather than abandoning most traditional values, Pentecostalism provided a means of preserving and implementing them even more consistently and fervently, forcing literal compliance, for example, in areas where often only token acceptance was the norm.

In effect, several hundred thousand marginal Guatemalans found in Pentecostalism something new and exhilarating, an experiential, personal faith that, beyond mere piety, gave them the confidence and motivation to confront their immediate anxieties and the quandaries of an uncertain future while at the same time preserving values and codes of conduct that were familiar and therefore reassuring.

Moreover, the appeals of Pentecostalism tended to compound as the movement grew. Despite the tendency of Pentecostals at times to offend their neighbors with their exclusiveness, their behavior may bring at least grudging respect from the community at large and, for the subject, a sense of personal dignity and value resulting from praiseworthy conduct.⁵⁵ Such personal reinforcement, easily lost in an insecure, increasingly impersonalized society, has become all the more important for large numbers of socially marginal people. Evangelical faith for many persons restored an indispensable sense of value lost in the process of social transition.

These rewards are not sufficient to preclude the lapse of many participants, but it cannot be overlooked that reported growth is presented as a net figure, the numbers of new members less persons who are no longer active, indicating a substantial retention as well as a continuing appeal to prospective converts.⁵⁶ The Pentecostal groups now extend over a second and third generation with remarkable commitment to their beliefs and practices while remaining (literally) young and vigorous, as new converts filter into their churches, often finding positions of leadership within a relatively brief two or three years.

Conclusion: Politics and Civic Culture

Although popular Pentecostalism has become a religious alternative for many socially marginal Guatemalans, the movement is still too small, inexperienced, and divided to display much political importance or independence.⁵⁷ The Pentecostals' contribution may lie primarily in the development of human capital, cultivating civic culture among popular groups. The skills needed to function in a voluntary organization, including effective communication, acceptance of responsibility, planning, discussion of issues and options, and the grooming and accountability of leadership, are immediately apparent among Pentecostals. An observer may enter a church to find an adolescent directing the meeting or attend a business session where a lively debate is taking place on how to spend the group's money. Given the abysmal literacy and educational levels of Guatemala, the development of such skills and experience acquires magnified importance, since, as the careers of the children of evangelical leaders demonstrate, they readily transfer to other areas of life.⁵⁸

The concern, accordingly, is less with determining whether evangelicals as individual citizens will increasingly play a part in the republic's future—their life chances, in fact, are considerably enhanced—than with recognizing the underlying assumptions and the political overtones of their religious orientation. Critics from various quarters have blamed evangelicals for retreating from reality, for obstructionism, and for having lent their support to reactionary forces, although such criticism carries with it the dubious assumption that these groups, made up usually of the least advantaged elements in ephemeral voluntary associations, are somehow expected to play major roles in Guatemala's political process.

Events since the mid-1980s, including the election and subsequent ouster of a second evangelical president, Jorge Serrano, and the reentry of Ríos Montt into Guatemalan politics, demonstrate how little these personalities determined the evangelical course in Guatemala.⁵⁹ Despite the disappointment surrounding the short-lived Serrano presidency, however, these groups apparently are tempted to accept help from an otherwise unacceptable source. Moreover, the Pentecostals are notoriously independent, as in the refusal of the *Asambleas de Dios*, the largest evangelical group in the country, even to participate in Guatemala's

Evangelical Alliance. Political participation, accordingly, is likely to be personal, pragmatic, and tentative.⁶⁰

NOTES

1. Attributing evangelical growth to specific causes is hazardous. Since other Latin American countries have experienced similar movements, "first evangelical presidents" and "largest proportional Protestant movements" are of dubious significance. It must be recognized that Guatemala's social profile includes some of the worst nutritional, health, housing, educational, and labor statistics in the hemisphere, undoubtedly intensified by ethnic discrimination, exploitative labor policies, lopsided economic development, weak civilian institutions, excessive foreign influence in domestic politics, dictatorship, and intransigent resistance to change. These conditions in themselves, however, are not sufficient reason for religious change, since Guatemalans are already a deeply religious people.

2. Reflective treatments of Guatemalan evangelicals include Edward L. Cleary, "Evangelicals and Competition in Guatemala," in Edward L. Cleary and Hannah Stewart-Gambino, eds., *Conflict and Competition: The Latin American Church in a Changing Environment* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1992); Sheldon Annis, *God and Production in a Guatemalan Town* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987); Virginia Garrard-Burnett and David Stoll, eds., *Rethinking Protestantism in Latin America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993); David Stoll, *Between Two Armies in the Ixil of Guatemala* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1993); Timothy J. Steinenga, "Protestantism, the State, and Society in Guatemala," in Daniel R. Miller, ed., *Coming of Age: Protestantism in Latin America* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1994), pp. 143-172.

3. The term "popular Pentecostals" is used in this chapter to distinguish the marginal sector evangelicals who emphasize charismatic beliefs and practices from other Protestants. Pentecostals themselves are not always precise about these definitions, relying on acceptance or rejection of their beliefs, practices, and styles to determine the groups' boundaries. Terms such as "classical" or "primitive" Pentecostals are also used to refer to the same groups and defining tendencies.

4. This is the essential thesis developed in David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

5. Tom Barry, *Inside Guatemala* (Albuquerque, N.M.: Inter-American Education Resource Center, 1992), offers an analysis of the political evolution of Guatemala.

6. Jim Handy, *Revolution in the Countryside: Rural Conflict and Agrarian Reform in Guatemala, 1944-1954* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

7. Bruce J. Calder, *Crecimiento y cambio de la iglesia católica guatemalteca, 1944-1966* (Guatemala: Seminario de Integración Social Guatemalteca, 1970). The term "Christopaganism" is often applied to these popular practices by outsiders. The Indian term is *costumbre*, the body of tradition that governs relationships and practices in the indigenous communities. Regarding these reforms, Jean-Marie Simon was told, "It was easier to be a Catholic before than it is now." *Guatemala: Eternal Spring, Eternal Tyranny* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987), p. 40.

8. Virgilio Zapata Arceyuz, *Historia de la iglesia evangélica en Guatemala* (Guatemala: Génesis Publicidad, 1981), p. 110.

9. David Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant? The Politics of Evangelical Growth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 196. See also Stoll, "Evangelicals, Guerrillas, and the Army: The Ixil Triangle Under Ríos Montt," in Robert M. Carmack, *Harvest of Violence: The Maya Indians and the Guatemalan Crisis* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), pp. 90-116.

10. Amnesty International reports placed the number of victims at 100,000, with the likelihood of there being 100,000 surviving widows and orphans. A detailed account is *La práctica de la desaparición forzada de personas en Guatemala* (San José, Costa Rica: Asociación Centroamericana de Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos, 1988).

11. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), reporting these casualties, set the homeless rate at one-sixth of the national population of 6 million.

12. Barry, *Inside Guatemala*, p. 197. USAID reported that 100 public and private agencies were involved in relief and reconstruction projects. Total U.S. public aid was reported as US\$25 million, much of it in kind sold at reduced prices.

13. Lee Penyak, "Ríos Montt and Guatemala's Military: The Politics of Puppetry," *Revista de la Historia de América* 108 (July-December 1989), pp. 131-147. In Penyak's opinion, Ríos Montt was a pawn of the higher-ranking officers (not the junior officers who led the March 1982 coup) as well as a tool of the United States and a representative of the evangelical sectors in the years following his rise to power. His association with the North American Gospel Outreach, moreover, made him a kind of evangelical ayatollah. Developments since his overthrow in August 1983 have shown that the speculative treatment of Ríos Montt was misleading. The issue here is not whether the general was unjustly accused but whether he was functioning in large part as a representative or tool of the Guatemalan evangelical movement, of the North American religious right, or of reactionary U.S. foreign policy. All of these points have been modified or called in question.

14. Scholars who took at face value the statements of North American evangelicals as evidence of foreign designs may have simply played into their hands by giving them unwarranted credibility. Jean-Marie Simon reports that the US\$1 billion promised to (or by) Ríos Montt never materialized, and small donations had fallen off prior to his ouster. Perhaps US\$20 million, mostly in equipment and services, were actually received from all sources. Guatemala: Eternal Spring, Eternal Tyranny, p. 121. According to David Stoll, the agency created to channel funds to Ríos Montt's resettlement program (Foundation for Aid to the Indian People; Fundación de Ayuda al Pueblo Indígena – FUNDAPI) reported having received only US\$200,000 before it wound down in 1984. Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant?* p. 201. In 1984 Ríos Montt was brought as a right-wing political trophy to the United States, where, according to some accounts, his statements were on at least one occasion mistranslated and misrepresented. He consistently referred to himself as a "Christian" rather than as a Protestant or an evangelical and maintained his independence, never allowing himself to become beholden to North American religious groups. The evangelical fortnightly *Christianity Today*, having run supportive articles about Ríos Montt previously, published an article with the title "Oh No! Anything but Central America" (*Christianity Today*, November 23, 1984, pp. 52, 53) in which readers were chided for their lack of comprehension of or interest in the Central American situation. Ironically, many of the groups that purportedly advanced Guatemalan Protestantism were able to carry on their work only through the existing nationally directed and sustained evangelical infrastructure.

15. After a quarter-century under Barrios's predecessor, Rafael Carrera (1838-1865), when the newly formed republic was dedicated to the Roman Catholic faith, the president was decorated by the pope for his service to the church, the clergy was restored many of the privileges taken from it at Independence and given control of education, and a concordat (1852) was concluded with the Holy See. Barrios's policies represented an abrupt break with the past.

16. Hubert Herring, *A History of Latin America* (New York: Knopf, 1955), p. 473.

17. Mary P. Holleran, *Church and State in Guatemala* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949).

18. The principal source on the Presbyterian church in Guatemala is José Carrera and David Scotchtmer, *Apuntes para la historia* (Guatemala: Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, 1982). The statistics include all members of this tradition, including those that have remained independent from the main body.

19. The official Central American Mission history is Mildred W. Spain, *And in Samaria* (Dallas, Tex.: Central American Mission, 1954), pp. 154-213. See also Zapata Arceyuz, *Historia*.

20. Zapata, *Historia*.

21. Kenneth G. Grubb, *Religion in Central America* (New York: World Dominion Press, 1937).

22. Grubb, *Religion in Central America*, p. 67. Grubb considered this effort a "relative success" in comparison with similar efforts in other Latin American countries and attributed its effectiveness to the political climate provided by Barrios.

23. Although the term is technically applicable, it is resented by popular Pentecostals, who consider it pejorative both in denying their groups' inclusion in the historical Christian tradition and in identifying them with the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and others whom *they* consider to be only marginally Christian.

24. According to the standard evangelical account, the organization of a coordinating synod was a "defensive act to hold back the incursions of the pentecostal missions." Zapata, *Historia*, p. 10. Zapata gives an extended discussion of the cooperation between the early evangelical missions that provided the backdrop for the rise of the popular Pentecostals and demonstrated the evangelicals' nationalistic posture. See also Barry, *Inside Guatemala*, p. 196; Dennis A. Smith, "Coming of Age: A Reflection on Pentecostals, Politics, and Popular Religion in Guatemala," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 13, 2 (1991), pp. 133-139. Richard Waldrop ("A Historical and Critical Review of the Full Gospel Church of God of Guatemala," Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif., 1993, p. 20) indicates that at the time of the arrival of Charles T. Furman and Thomas A. Pullin in 1916 (Furman and Pullin were the first practicing Pentecostals in Guatemala), the western areas had not yet been occupied by another mission. See also Carrera and Scotchtmer, *Apuntes para la historia*, pp. 96-98.

25. Estimates of total evangelical growth for this period are based on Zapata, *Historia*. Pentecostal reports for the Iglesia de Dios del Evangelio Completo (Church of God) are found in Waldrop, "Historical and Critical Review," p. 56. Those of the Asambleas de Dios (Assemblies of God) are reported in *Origen y desarrollo de las Asambleas de Dios en Guatemala* (Guatemala: Asambleas de Dios, 1987).

26. The most current published statistics are those available in Patrick Johnstone, ed., *Operation World*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1993), p. 252. According to

this source, the "affiliated" or adherents (as opposed to full members) of the Asambleas de Dios, the Iglesia de Dios, and Iglesia del Principe de Paz were, respectively, 224,000, 187,000, and 169,000, although other estimates, such as those given in the text, are somewhat less. The total Pentecostal inclusive community in 1993, according to Johnstone, was 1,457,000. Johnstone's Guatemalan evangelical profile of 23.3 percent of the population can be compared with a research sampling report by Timothy E. Evans, "Percentage of Non-Catholics in a Representative Sample of the Guatemalan Population," paper presented at the Latin American Studies Association, Washington, D.C., 1991. Evans's study placed the evangelical population at 30 percent of the national population.

27. David Stoll, "A Protestant Reformation in Latin America?" *Christian Century* 107, 2 (January 17, 1990), pp. 44-48. Stoll concludes that the US\$20 million that the largest North American Pentecostal group is investing annually in Latin America fails to account for the denomination's reported 10 million members—that is, an investment of US\$2.00 per member per year is not sufficient to account for a dynamic church. In fact, the missionary expenditure is largely in support of North American personnel, not all of whom are stationed overseas. Virtually none goes directly to Latin American salaries and operations, and the direct assistance for capital projects and, increasingly, for schools accounts for only a small fraction of the total amounts given for construction and school operations, most of which come from Latin American Pentecostal members themselves.

28. *Origen y desarrollo*, pp. 17, 18. Of twenty married couples or unmarried missionaries identified by a publication of the Asamblea de Dios in a review of its first half-century of work in the country, a half-dozen completed or returned after their initial four-year term of service, during which, usually, they were in effect probationers engaged in language learning. The Iglesia de Dios appears to have had even fewer foreign personnel. By comparison, Presbyterian personnel, many of them specialists rather than general missionaries, numbered almost two hundred over the period of a century. Carrera and Scotchtmer, *Apuntes para la historia*.

29. In the current terminology of missionary work, their efforts were "contextualized." The eulogy given at the funeral of a pioneering Pentecostal missionary described him as not having had "much formal education" but as having been "a child of the King, and therefore ... equally at ease talking to beggars or generals.... ever so gentle.... ever so faithful." Waldrop, "Historical and Critical Review," p. 44.

30. See Handy, *Revolution in the Countryside*.

31. The 1961 membership for the Iglesia de Dios is taken from Waldrop, "Historical and Critical Review," p. 57. Asambleas de Dios 1961 membership was taken from Robert Braswell, "Assemblies of God Growth Rates in Central America, 1951-1992," manuscript, Division of Foreign Missions of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Mo.

32. Zapata, *Historia*, pp. 192-194, citing the *Directorio de iglesias, organizaciones y ministerios del movimiento protestante: Guatemala* (Guatemala: Instituto Internacional de Evangelización a Fondo [IINDEF], PROCADES, and Servicio Evangelizador para América Latina [SEPAL], 1981).

33. Johnstone, *Operation World*, p. 252. These statistics, however accurate in terms of individuals who may have some relationship with evangelicals, are inflated with respect to the numbers of active members (in the sense used by the members themselves of assuming congregational responsibility). On the basis of the impressionistic estimates of Guatemalan Pentecostal leaders the figures should be lower, perhaps 2 million. Lower es-

timates than those current at the time were given in Everett A. Wilson, "Central American Evangelicals: From Protest to Pragmatism," *International Review of Mission* 77 (January 1988), pp. 94-106.

34. This estimate is based on the expectation that there are reasonably 200,000 family units or single adults in a reported active membership of 400,000 whose contributions are 5 quetzales (approximately US\$1.00) per week, although the average contribution could be five times that amount. Considerably higher estimates of assets and income based on typical church budgets were provided by Douglas Petersen, director of the Assemblies of God missionaries in Central America. Responses to requests for similar information by several Guatemalan denominational leaders were in keeping with his higher estimates. Rodolfo Sáenz, a Central American Pentecostal executive leader, provided a tiered system of rural and urban real estate values (*catastro*) adjusted to church size as a basis for the appraisal of real estate holdings.

35. Information about ethnic composition and other aspects of Pentecostal church organization was obtained by interviews with church administrators and pastors and by observation of congregations in all regions of Guatemala since 1987.

36. Zapata, *Historia*, pp. 160, 161. The Elim church began when a medical doctor, Otoniel Ríos Paredes, formerly a member of the leading congregation of the Central American Mission, conducted religious services in his home. With significant growth in 1973, the doctor left his practice and devoted his efforts to the churches, which have become perhaps the largest of this genre in Guatemala. *Ibid.*, pp. 151, 152. Another example of the "Pentecostalization" of a historical group is the Misión Evangélica "Betania," which began among Presbyterians in 1972.

37. Rodolfo Sáenz, president of the Consejo Ejecutivo Latinoamericano de la Asambleas de Dios (CELAD), personal communication, December 5, 1994.

38. An acknowledgment of these tendencies with a less favorable interpretation is found in Gordon Spykman, ed., *Let My People Live: Faith and Struggle in Latin America* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1988), pp. 216 ff. Contributors to this volume were Guillermo Cook, Michael Dodson, Lance Grahn, Sidney Rooy, and John Stam.

39. Waldrop, "Historical and Critical Review," pp. 16, 76.

40. Waldrop, "Historical and Critical Review," p. 76. Although the meetings in time became structured, initially they were occasions for prayer and discussion, even if no one with the ability to give a sermon was in attendance. The meetings' religious purpose never prevented them from being social events.

41. The sometimes intense emotionalism of Pentecostals, besides being an opportunity for unrestrained expression, may reflect believers' subjective struggle to reconcile the objective conditions of their existence with their own passions, aspirations, and fears before returning to face a hostile world. The language of Pentecostalism, after all, is replete with references to power, and the preaching is intensely motivational, intended to incite the congregants to moralistic action.

42. For instance, the "Informe estadístico correspondiente a 1984, Las Asambleas de Dios en Guatemala, February 16, 1985," lists 53,436 proprietary members, 14,567 converts, and 14,801 reconciled (restored) members. Another category, *catechumens*, approximately equal to the number of converts, indicates the ongoing process of believer formation in the churches. Given the costs of membership for these converts, a commitment had to be demonstrated over time. The fact that demands were at least as high in the early years,

when there were few evangelicals and their efforts sometimes met strong resistance, suggests that the first-generation Pentecostals were assertive individuals whose efforts to reconstruct the world as they knew it were viewed with considerable seriousness.

43. Waldrop, "Historical and Critical Review," pp. 74, 100.

44. The proportion of 5 percent is the estimate of women with credentials submitted by the Guatemalan denominational leaders at a meeting of the Consejo Ejecutivo Latinoamericano de las Asambleas de Dios at the group's triennial meeting in Panama in November 1992. Although Waldrop mentions the roles played by women in the Iglesia de Dios, in that group, as apparently in Pentecostal groups generally, women are given considerable authority in local congregations, but relatively few become pastors and virtually none advance to executive positions in national organizations.

45. On the origins of the *Reglamento local*, see Everett A. Wilson, "Sanguine Saints: Pentecostalism in El Salvador," *Church History* 52 (June 1983), pp. 186-198, and "Identity, Community and Status: The Legacy of the Central American Pentecostal Pioneers," in Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Shenk, eds., *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1980* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1989).

46. Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions; The United States in Central America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1983), pp. 256-261.

47. Calder, *Crecimiento y cambio*; José Luis Chea, *Guatemala: La cruz fragmentada* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Departamento Ecueménico de Investigaciones, 1988). 48. Barry *Inside Guatemala*, p. 199.

49. The close association of Guatemalan evangelicals with the political establishment is apparent in the centennial publication prepared by Virgilio Zapata (*see Historia*). References to forms of recognition and attendance at evangelical functions occur in respect to Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes, Kjell Eugenio Laugerud García, Fernando Romeo Lucas García, and José Efraín Ríos Montt, in addition to Arévalo and Méndez.

50. Virginia Garrard-Burnett, "Onward Christian Soldiers: The Rise of Protestantism in Guatemala, 1954-1984," *Southeastern Conference on Latin American Studies Annals* 21 (March 1988), p. 101.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

52. Zapata (*Historia*, p. 177) remarks that Pentecostal participation in the 1971 united evangelical crusade was reduced because Pentecostal leaders had not been included among the organizers.

53. Braswell, "Assemblies of God Growth Rates, 1951-1992."

54. For insight into respondents' reasons for evangelical conversion, see Luis Corral Prieto, *Las iglesias evangélicas de Guatemala* (Guatemala: Universidad Francisco Marroquín, 1980). Although large differences between evangelicals and Roman Catholics may be inferred from this study, the same comments support the thesis that evangelicals, whether previously Roman Catholic, Protestant, or uncommitted, believed themselves to be sufficiently informed on religious issues (presumably because of their religious instruction) to adopt an alternative position.

55. For North Americans who find some Latin American behavioral patterns difficult to understand, the key has often been simply recognition of the importance of *dignidad* more than "dignity," a sense of the individual's inherent worth, the right to respect. Its relationship to Pentecostals is treated by Frank E. Manning, "Pentecostalism, Christianity, and Reputation," in Stephen D. Glazier, ed., *Perspectives on Pentecostalism: Case Studies*

from *the Caribbean and Latin America* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1980), pp. 177-187.

56. The issue of the "revolving door" of evangelical conversion is treated in John Maust, "Keeping the Faithful;" *Christianity Today*, April 6, 1992, p. 38. See also Clayton L. "Mike" Berg and Paul E. Pretiz, *The Gospel People of Latin America* (Monrovia, Calif.: Missions Advance Research Center, World Vision International, and Miami, Fla.: Latin America Mission, 1992), pp. 129, 130.

57. The political assessment of the popular Pentecostals, who are just beginning to gain some recognition, should be distinguished from the personalities associated with the NeoPentecostals, especially former presidents José Efraín Ríos Montt and Jorge Serrano. Neither of these figures has the same relationship with his church that he once had. Internal divisions in Verbo have resulted in Ríos Montt's having much less visibility in that group's activities than before, and Jorge Serrano, who was associated with several groups before identifying with his most recent congregation, was disciplined by the El Shadai church prior to his going into exile in Panama.

58. Research on the Pentecostal school systems in Latin America provides insight into the social focus of these groups. Everett A. Wilson, "Latin American Pentecostalism: Challenging the Stereotypes of Pentecostal Passivity," *Transformation 11, 1* (January/March 1994), pp. 19-24.

59. In Guatemala, as elsewhere in Latin America, the Pentecostals' apolitical stance has been widely recognized, producing surprise (or disappointment) when they have taken sides on some political issue. Which, one might ask, is the real Pentecostal posture, avoidance or activism? In fact, both stances are typical. Pentecostals tend to stay aloof, their independence ensuring their freedom of action until, with little risk of compromise, *they* can assert their influence. They may be expected to be cautious and tentative, hedging their bets (figuratively; gambling is prohibited), avoiding direct confrontation, and taking advantage of opportunities. Although popular Pentecostals are dedicated to specific objectives, notably religious conversions and the strengthening of their church institutions, and thus remain aloof from political involvement, in the interests of advancing their cause they may be tempted to accept help from an otherwise unacceptable source. The justification that Pentecostals give for this mixing in temporal affairs is that the state-and by extension politics-for these groups has always been legitimate, as indicated by Romans 13, the proof text frequently thrown up to Guatemalan evangelicals as evidence of their supposed unquestioning submission to the military. The state, moreover, is indispensable, as it is for all Protestants, because rather than being the servant of the church as in Roman Catholic theology, in Protestant dogma the state is the temporal guarantor of the church. Civil disobedience, however, is equally as legitimate, as is evidenced by a passage (Acts 4:19) that Pentecostals have frequently invoked during years of social rejection.

60. Despite the considerable early attention to President Ríos Montt and the Verbo Church as a representative-if not the cause-of the evangelical surge, this group has never enjoyed the importance in Guatemala assigned to it by some observers. Rumors of dissension surround the church, and Ríos Montt's role is ambiguous. Clearly his political base is not in the evangelical movement, which he apparently does not need, and, in turn, the evangelicals are not dependent on him for support. Although undoubtedly evangelicals play a part in Guatemalan politics, they are extremely divided and have limited influence as a grouping at the higher levels. Evangelicals, for example, were not given credit for

the election of the evangelical president Jorge Serrano. Serrano's comment was, "If I talk to the general public with the language I use with Christians, they might stone me, but if I use political language with the brethren, they question my Christianity." "An Evangelical's Bid for the Presidency Falls Short," *Christianity Today*, December 13, 1985, p. 69. Ríos Montt's election as president of the National Congress in December 1994, moreover, demonstrates his durability and popularity not as an evangelical icon but as a civilian political figure. David Stoll's interpretation, especially, along with Montt's subsequent activities, leaves the reader with the suspicion that the general was at least using the evangelicals as much as he was being used by them. David Stoll, "Why They Like Ríos Montt," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 24 (December/January 1990/1991), pp. 94-97. The standard sympathetic biography, Joseph Anuso and David Sczepanski, *Efraín Ríos Montt: Siervo o dictator* (Guatemala City: Gospel Outreach, 1983), despite its favorable assessments, cannot conceal the fact that an astute, well-connected, and experienced Ríos Montt could hardly be manipulated by novice politicians or be placed in positions contrary to his own career interests.