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Moved by the Spirit: Protestant Diffusion and Church Location in Central America, With a Case Study From Southwestern Honduras.

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MOVED BY THE SPIRIT:
PROTESTANT DIFFUSION AND CHURCH LOCATION IN
CENTRAL AMERICA, WITH A CASE STUDY FROM
SOUTHWESTERN HONDURAS

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
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in

The Department of Geography and Anthropology

by
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation traces the evolution of Protestant missions in Central America from the colonial period to the present, focusing on the agents, direction, and methods of Protestant diffusion as well as the changing criteria for site selection. Chapters are arranged chronologically and progress from the macro-scale, Central America, to the micro-scale, six towns in southwestern Honduras (La Esperanza, Intibucá, Yamaranguila, San Juan, Erandique and Gracias). The chapters dealing with Central America outline when and where different mission boards have worked, as well as the geographical, economic, political and theological considerations driving site selection. The focus then narrows to patterns of church density and denominational distribution in Honduras to illustrate the cumulative effect of successive waves of Protestant activity. Finally, an examination of southwestern Honduras explores the role of physical geography, property values, population density, ethnicity, and transportation networks in church location within towns and diffusion between towns. An underlying theme throughout the paper is competition between Protestants and Catholics, as manifested in both the physical and cultural landscapes.

The primary changes in Protestant site selection and diffusion can be summarized in four points. In Central America, mission stations expanded from the European and African enclaves of the Caribbean Rimland during the colonial period, to the Indian and ladino populated interior in the last century. This territorial shift was accompanied by a change in the primary agents of diffusion. Since the sixteenth century, Protestantism has evolved from the incidentally-introduced religion of...
foreigners (merchants, pirates, and immigrants), to a large-scale mission endeavor, and finally to an indigenous, self-supporting institution. Globally, the transition from foreign to indigenous leadership reflects a shift in the center of mission-sending activity: from Europe, to the United States, and currently to the Third World. The formation of strong indigenous churches is tied to the rise of pentecostal Protestantism over mainline and fundamentalist denominations.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A billboard on a busy street corner in downtown San Pedro Sula, Honduras, depicts Jesus, his arm out-stretched, and the words, "Santa Mision, 'Vengan a mí'."

With the proliferation of Protestant denominations in recent decades, such signs have become common in Central America. What is distinctive about this particular billboard is that "Iglesia Católica" is printed across the bottom, and the sign is located directly in front of the Catholic Church on the central plaza. This encapsulates the competition between Protestants and Catholics as manifested in the physical and spiritual landscape.

After centuries of spiritual hegemony in the region, the Catholic Church is appropriating evangelical Protestant methods. Likewise, Protestant churches are being altered by Latin American culture, especially now that national converts are assuming positions of leadership.

While Latin American Protestant growth has been examined from sociological, anthropological and historical perspectives, little attention has been given to the "why of where"--a geographical perusal--of this phenomenon. The purpose of this dissertation is to trace the evolution of Protestantism in Central America from its incidental introduction by secular forces, to an organized large-scale mission endeavor, and finally to an indigenous, self-supporting institution. The most relevant issues for geographers are the criteria involved in selecting mission and church sites, and diffusion, which encompasses the agents, methods and mechanics of Protestant expansion.
Chapters are arranged chronologically and progress from the macro-scale, Central America, to the micro-scale, six towns in southwestern Honduras. The dates for the major time periods are loosely based on Lopez' chronology for the growth of Protestantism in Honduras (1993:16).

I. 1502 - 1821: Colonialism and Catholicism
II. 1502 - 1821: Colonialism and Protestantism
III. 1821 - 1896: Independence and Mainline Missions
IV. 1896 - 1945: Fundamentalist Evangelicals and Faith Missions
V. 1945 - 1980: Post-War Period and Pentecostals
VI. 1980 - present: Indigenous Leadership

The chapters dealing with Central America outline when and where different mission boards have worked, as well as the economic, political and theological considerations driving site selection. The focus then narrows to patterns of church density and denominational distribution in Honduras to illustrate the cumulative effect of successive waves of Protestant activity. Finally, church location within towns and diffusion between towns in southwestern Honduras are discussed in relation to such factors as physical geography, property values, population density, ethnicity and the transportation network. The sociological elements of conversion will be discussed only briefly because they have been explored in depth by scholars in various fields.

The micro-scale portion of this study is a triangular region in western Honduras (between 14°13'N and 14°36'N, 88°10'W and 88°35'W), 35 kilometers north of El Salvador from the southernmost point, and 25 km east of the Guatemalan border. The primary towns are La Esperanza, Intibuca, Yamaranguila, San Juan, Erandique and Gracias (Figure 1.1). This area is appropriate for a detailed study of Protestant
Figure 1.1 Map of Study Area in Southwestern Honduras
expansion for several reasons. Because of its mountainous terrain and poor integration with the rest of the country, missionaries and pastors arrived relatively late. In many cases, the initial work occurred recently enough to be remembered by current congregation members, who can provide a significant source of information in the absence of written church records. Limited access to the region makes it easier to distinguish the directions of Protestant diffusion. The integration problem also presents an opportunity to examine improvements in transportation and communication as factors in diffusion. Despite its small size, the area is denominationally diverse, with 10 Catholic churches and 28 Protestant churches representing 14 denominations. Thus the area provides a cross section of denominational traditions, goals and evangelistic methods. Finally, the study area is located within the traditional territory of the Lenca Indians, allowing an opportunity to study ethnicity as a factor in conversion.

Methodology

Information about the motivations for, and direction of, Protestant growth is derived from a combination of field work (four months in Honduras and one month in Mexico); correspondence with mission organizations and missionaries; and literature in the fields of geography, anthropology, sociology, economics, religion, history, and architecture. Interviews with Hondurans provide the most important source of information about the establishment of churches within the study area. A survey of religious affiliation, occupation, family characteristics and house-types was designed to find some correlation between economic status and conversion. Although the sample
size is presently too small to provide conclusive evidence, some possible connections can be identified.

To observe differences in doctrine, worship format and congregational demographics, I attended services in 14 of the 28 Protestant churches and masses in four of the eight currently used Catholic churches. Most pastors and priests were willing to entertain questions, although the priests in La Esperanza and Erandique would not share historical documents. Many of these documents were supposedly removed during the 1969 conflict with El Salvador and have not been recovered. All but one of the Protestant churches within the study area are now under Honduran leadership. One North American missionary couple is still working in the area, and three others live nearby. They provided another perspective on religious change and valuable information about denominational work in western Honduras.

Land titles in the Archivo Nacional de Honduras for each municipio (San Juan, 1741; Erandique, 1843; Intibucá and Jicaramani, 1848) provide limited historical information about the settlements. This information was supplemented by works on Honduran geography, socio-economics and culture in the library of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras. Most library research was conducted at Louisiana State University, Tulane University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Duke University, and the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. Additional information about mission goals, methods and history of the larger denominations was obtained directly from national mission boards.
As for quantitative data, they are used when available to show the size of the Protestant population and the number of missionaries for each country in Central America. Such estimates should be approached cautiously, given the difficulty of estimating the number and size of congregations, and variability in definitions of membership and data reporting among churches and mission bodies. However, these numbers are useful for determining the relative size of the Protestant population and changes through time. The sections pertaining to the Honduran study area rely more on ethnographic data because of a lack of reliable statistical information and the limited usefulness of such data in analyzing why churches are found where they are.

**Expected Significance**


In ancient and modern times alike, theology and geography have often been closely related studies because they meet at crucial points of human curiosity. If we seek after the nature of God, we must consider the nature of man and the earth, and if we look at the earth, questions of divine purpose in its creation and of the role of mankind on it inevitably arise. (1967:35)

Zelinsky wrote, "... among the phenomena forming or reflecting the areal differences in cultures . . . few are as potent and sensitive as religion" (1961:139). Stump gave three significant ways in which religion and geography are intertwined. First, religion is part of social identity and "religious patterns are thus important in identifying and understanding the diffusion, distribution and character of groups defined by their social,
ethnic or regional identity." Religious beliefs also motivate human behavior, which impacts the physical environment. Finally, religion shapes or informs perceptions of space and its use (1986:2). Despite the significance of religion for cultural geography, little has appeared in the literature, with the exception of David Clawson's work in Mexico over the past two decades.

This dissertation will hopefully expand the geographical and cultural knowledge of a little-studied region of Honduras, as well as provoke interest among geographers in the current “protestantization” of Latin America. Because Protestants are not uniformly distributed in Central America, general regions of Protestant activity will be outlined to provide a context for a specific case study in southwestern Honduras. Other than decades-old mission atlases, "a comprehensive mapping of the extent and intensity of Christian missionary activity does not exist" (Sopher 1967:70). This work represents an effort to resume and update that tradition.

**Literature Review**

**Mission history**

The modern religious situation in Latin America is best understood in light of historical Christian mission efforts. As for general overviews of mission history, Latourette's seven volume *A History of the Expansion of Christianity* provides a comprehensive look at both Catholic and Protestant global expansion from the time of Christ to the post-World War II period. Additional mission histories with at least a chapter on Latin American missions include Aberly's *Outline of Missions* (1945),

Several recent publications deal specifically with the history of missions in Honduras. A 1995 book by Nancy Johnson Black examines the work of the Mercedarian Order among the Lenca in western Honduras. Although she dealt with a region outside of the study area, her information about mission organization and evangelistic methods among Indians is useful. Carías' *La iglesia católica en Honduras (1492-1975)* included a more general history of Catholic works in the country (1991). *Historia y misión del protestantismo Hondureño* focuses on Baptist missions but includes the work of other major denominations (Lopez 1993).

Protestant missionary accounts, such as those of Edith Melick (1927), A.E. Bishop (1896-1899) and J.G. Cassel (1899-1902) in Honduras and Frederick Crowe in Guatemala (1850) provided glimpses into the motivations of missionaries and their struggles in reaching Latin Americans. Although he worked on a different continent, David Livingstone's work in Africa (1858) vividly demonstrates the connection between
economic and evangelistic interests in the earliest phases of Protestant missions that would have influenced Latin American missions as well. Mission society journals, like *The Missionary Herald* of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the Protestant Episcopal *Spirit of Missions* are an invaluable source of information. They contain letters from missionaries, reports from conferences and general updates on the status of missions around the world. They also outline comity agreements, which were arrangements for the division of territory between different mission societies. Such agreements were also mentioned, but with few specific details for Central America, by Latourette (1943), Aberly (1945), Nelson (1984), and Neill (1986).

Mission society journals sometimes include maps showing the location of their works in annual reports, but the most detailed maps were published in mission atlases in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The atlases usually focused on one specific denomination or on a handful of the largest mission societies. The most detailed atlases are those of Harlan Beach, Fellow of the American Geographical Society and Secretary of the Student Volunteer [Mission] Movement. His *A Geography and Atlas of Protestant Missions* was published in two volumes. The first (1901) gives general information about the geographic and ethnographic characteristics of various countries. The second volume (1903) contains maps for each region of the globe and statistics for 400 independent and auxiliary societies, including the number of stations and outstations, and nationality and number of missionaries. The resource was designed to teach student mission volunteers the "main elements in the missionary's environment"
and regions of mission growth and weakness (1901:v). The 1925 edition provides more detailed information about Central America, giving separate data for each country rather than combining them into a regional total.

Useful texts for an overview of the contemporary religious situation in Latin America are those of Read, Monterroso and Johnson (1969); Nelson (1984); Stoll (1990) and Martin (1990). Stoll leaned toward a political approach while Martin was more interested in the sociology of conversion. Nelson provided excellent historical details, including places and dates that allow one to map the spread of churches throughout Central America, although he did not attempt to do so. He also provided information about specific denominations and their successes and failures. Read, Monterroso, and Johnson (1969) gave detailed data about the size and growth rates of major denominations as well as limited information about the demographic characteristics of converts for each country.

Pertaining specifically to Honduras, the World Vision development organization published a listing of each church at the municipio level based on responses to a mail-in questionnaire (1986). This survey overlooks many independent churches, possibly because they have no national headquarters through which they can be contacted, as well as denominations that are seen as "non-Christian" by the authors, including Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses. Despite these shortcomings, the book provides sufficient information to reveal general patterns in denominational distribution and density.
Honduran geography

An overview of the physical characteristics of Honduras is useful for placing religious change in a geographical context. For a general physical and cultural overview of the region, West and Augelli’s *Middle America: Its Lands and Peoples* (1989) has a section devoted to each of the Central American countries. Andrade’s *Las modalidades de la lluvia en Honduras* (1990) attempts to explain the precipitation patterns of the country, concentrating on the differences between the wet and dry seasons. General information about the natural resources, flora and fauna, and municipal histories for each department have been published by the Secretary of Public Education (1987). As for western Honduras, brief mention of topography and climate is given in the textbooks of Piñel (*Geografía de Honduras*, 1964), Mejía (*Así es Honduras*, 1973), and Portillo (*Geografía de Honduras*, 1976). The travel accounts of Scherzer (1857), Squier (1870) and Franck (1916) provide an historical dimension by incorporating topographic details and descriptions of road conditions and settlements within the study area.

As for the socio-economic characteristics of the population in the study area, both *ladino* and Indian, a 1988 census provides information at the *municipio* level. The towns within the study area have received the attention of students at the National University of Honduras. A thesis from the School of Social Services compares literacy, occupation, and religion statistics of Íntibucá, Yamaranguila, and La Esperanza (Castañeda, et al. 1971). Blaise and Zuñiga (no date) provide data concerning major
resources and industries for the area bordering El Salvador, including Erandique. William Durham's *Scarcity and Survival in Central America* (1979) addresses the issues leading to the Soccer War between El Salvador and Honduras, which has had a continuing social and economic impact on the study area.

**Lenca Indians**

As mentioned in the introduction, the study area is within the traditional settlement area of the Lenca Indians. Their inclusion in the dissertation is relevant for two reasons: they are an essential element of the cultural geography of the region, and they provide an opportunity to study ethnicity as a factor in conversion. Much of the scholarship about the Lenca pertains to their language. Squier (1858) and Lehmann (1920) were interested in their linguistic origins and territorial distribution. Although the language has been lost through assimilation, Campbell (1976, 1978), Carías (1989), and Herranz (1990) sought out contemporary linguistic remnants. The archaeological studies of Stone (1941) and Sheehy (1983) provided a window to pre-Columbian Lenca culture.

The most comprehensive works are those of Anne Chapman, *Los lencas de Honduras en el siglo XVI* (1978) and *Los hijos de copal y candela* (1985, 1986). In addition to her own fieldwork, Chapman gleaned details from historical documents about colonial, and even pre-Conquest settlement patterns, religious practices, and social and political organization. Johnson Black's study (1995) of Mercedarian missions among the Lenca of western Honduras and Newson's work (1986) with
colonial demographics also rely on historical documents. A collection of folklore from Yamaranguila, considered to be the modern Lenca cultural center (Carías, et al. 1988), is useful for understanding the Catholic and pre-Catholic underpinnings of Lenca faith. Other publications with general references to Lenca culture include Adams (1957), West (1957), Olson (1991), and a publication by Consejo Asesor Hondureño para el Desarrollo de las Etnias Autóctonas (CAHDEA) (no year).

Geography of religion

Büttner (1974) and Kong (1990) each outlined the changing relationship between faith and scholarship, to illustrate how geographers have shifted their emphasis from a theological perspective to a secular one. During the "ecclesiastical geography" stage in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, theologians mapped the global diffusion of Christianity. By the mid-1600s, other religions were mapped as well, but only to show which regions of the world were still "lost." In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, scholarship was dominated by the teleological perspective, exemplified by Carl Ritter, in which the world was viewed as the ordered creation of an omniscient creator; geography was "the science of the visible side of the Divine revelation" (Park 1994:9).

The nineteenth century marks a shift from religious geography, in which religion is the focus and the land is "made to conform to it," to a geography of religion in which landscape is seen more as agent than object (Isaac 1965:622). This transition is most evident in environmental determinism, an obsession with the effects of the physical
world on culture. Its leading proponents were Ellen Churchill Semple and Ellsworth Huntington. In reaction to environmental determinism, a sort of cultural determinism developed, with sociologist Max Weber's work on the influence of religion on socio-economic status as the preeminent example. In recent decades, geographers have stressed the reciprocal relationship between religion and environment, rather than the one-directional approaches of the past. Büttna referred to this approach as a "synthetic geography of religion," because "the formative influence which religion exerts . . . on the settlement or even on the landscape in return influences religion (1974:169).

The most comprehensive reviews of contemporary religious geography are Sopher's Geography of Religions (1967) and Chris Park's Sacred Worlds: An Introduction to Geography and Religion (1994). Zelinsky's "An Approach to the Religious Geography of the United States" (1961) is the seminal work in English examining religious regions at the national scale. Zelinsky relied on denominational statistics to provide a "first approximation of the nation's religious regions" (1961:139). His goal was an understanding of "the shape and meaning of areal variations in American religious characteristics" to illuminate "our still quite shadowy delineation of the general cultural regions of Anglo America" (1961:139). He also hoped to "stimulate some thought" about "ways in which religious data might be used in other kinds of geographic work" (1961:139). In recent decades, studies that deal with a particular region, like the American South, or a single denomination or sect have been the most popular among geographers. The best example is Meinig's work on the Mormon region.
in the western United States (1965). Micro-scale studies, like Clawson's research in a single Mexican town, are the least common (1978, 1989).

The great debate of twentieth century geographical scholarship is between a positivistic approach, emphasizing the physical manifestations of religion and religious change, and "Religionswissenschaft," which considers the significance of religious meaning, beliefs, and symbols (Sopher 1981:513). The institutional, concrete approach is supported more often than the abstract, individual approach.

Geography cannot deal with the personal religious experience, which is to some the core of religion... Geography can study organized religious systems and culturally molded and institutionalized religious behavior.

(Sopher 1967:1)

For Büttner, the geographer "begins with the landscape... Only after he has empirically understood the landscape, does he raise questions about the underlying spiritual forces" (1974:169). This dissertation strives to balance the visible aspects of Protestantism with the abstract spiritual underpinnings of diffusion and site selection.

Conclusion

In a 1989 article, Clawson lamented that "geographers have yet to assess either the spatial patterns of... religious change or the effects of those changes on the cultural and economic landscapes" of Latin America (1989b:61). My research attempts to address both the physical and cultural aspects of Protestant missions by identifying specific mission locations as well as providing the economic, theological and political context shaping site selection and diffusion. For Central America, the emphasis is on when and where different denominations and mission boards worked, and the evolving
criteria for establishing new missions from the colonial period to the present. Patterns of church density and denominational distribution in Honduras are outlined to show the cumulative effect of successive waves of Protestant influence, from secular agents to missionaries, and ultimately to national converts. Finally, patterns of church location within towns and diffusion between towns in southwestern Honduras are discussed in relation to physical geography, property values, population density, ethnicity and transportation networks. Much of this study is a synthesis of existing work on Central American missions, but it is unique in its interweaving of political, economic and theological elements to explain the geographical reality of religious change. The physical manifestations of diffusion are balanced with the immaterial aspects of religious change, and the roles of individuals, both foreign missionaries and national converts, are balanced with global trends in Protestant evangelism.

Endnotes

1. For the sake of simplicity, countries will be referred to by their modern names and modern territorial boundaries.


3. Denominations represented in the study area include: Baptist, Santidad or World Gospel Mission, Friends, Cuadrangular or Foursquare Gospel, Mennonite, Church of God, Church of God Prophecy, Jehovah's Witness, Pentecostal, Alpha y Omega, Peña de Horeb, Elim, Abundant Life, and Assembly of God.

4. Beach (1901:vi) cited several other mission atlases: The Church Missionary Atlas, 1896; Dean Vahl's Missionsatlas med Förklaring, 1883-86; Grundemann's Kleine
Missions-Geographie und Statistik, 1901; Dennis' Centennial Survey of Foreign Missions, 1901; Grundemann's Neuer Missionsatlas, 1896.
CHAPTER 2
"PROTESTANT" AND "CATHOLIC" CLARIFIED

Because of their variable meanings in the literature, the specific terms applied to Protestants and Catholics need to be clarified. This is particularly relevant when discussing the historical shifts in the principal denominations working in Central America. Indigenous beliefs will be discussed briefly because of their relevance to understanding the Indian response to Christianity.

Catholicism

Although Catholicism is not fragmented to the same degree as Protestantism, it is by no means an homogenous faith. Latin American Catholicism can be divided into at least four broad categories: formal, folk (syncretic), liberation, and nominal. These distinctions are relevant because of differences in the response to Protestantism. The Bible, Apostles', Athanasian and Nicene Creeds, and the 1564 Council of Trent form the doctrinal basis of the Catholic faith (Mead 1965:196). While Christ is the heavenly head of the Church, the Pope, the spiritual descendant of the Apostle Peter, is considered to be the Earthly head. This is known as the doctrine of "Petrine Supremacy." Catholic ritual revolves around the seven holy sacraments of baptism, marriage, extreme unction, confirmation, penance, holy orders, and the Eucharist. The veneration of the Virgin Mary and the saints varies among regions and ethnic groups.

This overview outlines the formal aspects of Catholicism, but things are seldom so neat in practice, particularly in Latin America. A shortage of clergy combined with
Catholicism and indigenous religions. The conquistadors and later Protestant missionaries did not encounter a spiritual vacuum upon their arrival in the New World. Religious beliefs among Central American Indians ranged from the highly ritualized theocracy of Mesoamericans to the animism of the "low culture" regions. Regardless of complexity, the Indian religions were united in their focus on manipulating the natural world, what Sopher refers to as "a ritualization of ecology" (1967:17). The newly introduced Catholic saints often assumed the attributes of Indian gods and received the same prayers and offerings to ensure harmony with nature. The best example is the alleged association of the Virgin of Guadalupe with Tonantzín, the mother of the Aztec Indian gods. According to tradition, the Virgin appeared to an Indian peasant in 1531 on the same hill where Tonantzín was worshipped (Clawson 1984:41). In the Yucatán, a church was built on top of a Mayan pyramid in Izamal, another pre-conquest pilgrimage site, in veneration of the Virgin of Izamal (Thompson 1954:13).

Fray Diego de Landa launched an investigation of reported idolatry in the Yucatán in 1562 and found numerous instances of animal sacrifice and the veneration of idols, some blatantly displayed on the altars of Catholic churches (Thompson 1954:11). The most extreme example of syncretism was the occasional human sacrifice in imitation of Christ's crucifixion. Syncretism was not limited to the colonial period. Father Kielty, who worked in Bolivia in the late 1960s, voiced his frustration with continuing practices.

It's really a terrible experience to come down to Bolivia and find that you are . . . little more than a glorified witch doctor blessing all their campos and
It's really a terrible experience to come down to Bolivia and find that you are . . . little more than a glorified witch doctor blessing all their campos and things . . . . But certainly we are continuing the thing that has been done for the past 400 years, which resulted in what we see today. (Costello 1979:14)

A number of syncretic practices continued among the Lenca Indians until the Catholic Church actively began discouraging them in the 1970s.

Not all Latin American deviations from formally sanctioned Catholicism are the product of syncretism. Some are residual traits of fifteenth century European folk religion. Pilgrimages to Compostela, Jerusalem and other sacred sites were popular, cults of the Virgin flourished, and sacred visions were common throughout Europe (Brooke 1984:22, 31-32). However, such practices were more typical among southern European Catholics than their northern counterparts. Generally, German and Irish Catholics emphasized the person of Jesus, while Mediterraneans focused on the Virgin Mary as mediator between the people and God (Clawson 1989:42, Brooke 1984:31). Pilgrimages and Virgin cults still thrive in Latin America. The Black Christ of Esquipulas, Guatemala, to the west of the study area, draws thousands of pilgrims each year.

A recent permutation of Latin American Catholicism is liberation theology, which grew out of the 1955 Rio de Janeiro meeting of the Catholic hierarchy and the Medellín meeting in 1968 (Costello 1979:146). These conferences, and others in the 1970s, called for more independence from the Vatican and emphasized the "preferential option for the poor," social action to ameliorate the problems of the lower classes. The liberation movement grew increasingly radical during the 1960s with proponents calling
for the complete restructuring of society and redistribution of wealth. Liberation theology combines Christian theology with Marxism, advocating the peasant right to revolt against the landed classes because "the oppressed" are to inherit the Kingdom of God. Sin is viewed not as a personal problem, but rather as a social ill stemming from inequality that must be remedied through revolutionary violence. Ironically, liberation theology has been most attractive to the intellectual elite, not to the poor (Stoll 1990:311).

Despite its problems, the liberation movement has prompted changes in the Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Council, 1962-1965, and the Pope himself on a visit to Latin America in 1968, acknowledged the need to remedy worldwide "economic, social, political and moral disequilibrium" (Costello 1979:146). As a result, the Latin American Church began encouraging Indian education programs, introducing credit unions and cooperatives into rural areas, and calling for land redistribution. Such activism has earned the distrust of many landowners and politicians because of the association of Communism with liberation theology, creating a conflict which has erupted into violence on several occasions.

In addition to socio-economic issues, the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) recognized a need for greater participation by laypeople. In areas where priests are scarce, parishioners have become involved in leadership through CEBs, Comunidades Eclesiais de Base. These are small groups of 20 to 30 Catholics who gather weekly for Bible study under lay leadership (Levine 1980:227). Another aspect of the move
toward greater participation is the charismatic movement within the Church. Instead of radical social ideas, adherents retain the doctrinal views of formal Catholicism in the context of more emotional and participatory masses. Women play a prominent role in services through scripture readings and exhortation. All laymen are encouraged to study the Bible as a basis for their faith.

Finally, there are nominal Catholics, people who identify themselves as Catholic but do not attend mass or participate in religious activities. David Clawson characterized them as "baptized, believing, but not practicing" (1984:43). In my interviews with Hondurans, particularly men, some claim to have been in a Catholic church only twice, for their own baptisms and weddings. Other Latin Americans might be considered as "cultural Catholics" who view their religion as a way of life, a part of their culture, rather than a matter of personal faith. Unlike nominal members, they actively participate in festivals and rituals in the community. They might be characterized as practicing, but not believing. According to Clawson, Protestantism has been most successful in areas dominated by nominal Catholics, and weakest in areas dominated by formal and folk Catholicism (1984:44, 47).

Protestantism

Although some dissidents split from the Catholic Church before Martin Luther posted his theses in 1517, this event marks the birth of Protestantism. The initial goal was reform within the Church to address internal corruption and apathy, as well as the evolving political and social situation in Europe. Rising nationalism conflicted with
papal authority, and the materialism of the Church conflicted with its ideals of humility and piety. Finally, the growing interest in mysticism and individualism lessened feelings of dependence on the clergy as mediators between laypeople and God. Rather than reforming the Catholic Church, the movement resulted in a new branch of Christianity.

According to an historical definition, Protestant groups are those that split from the Roman Catholic Church at the Reformation, or later split from an original Protestant denomination. The historical definition is useful for tracing denominational lineages but does not adequately explain the baffling proliferation of denominations and sects in the last century. Systems of classification have been based on everything from doctrinal to psychological differences among adherents. Some religious groups, like Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, are not Protestants according to the "historical" definition because they were not formed directly through separation from the Catholic Church or another Protestant group (Clawson 1989b:75). Instead, they started independently and would be considered indigenous American churches.

Beyond distinguishing Protestants by time of origin, Troeltsch categorized them by their method of organization into churches and sects (Alves 1960:331-42). Sects and denominations are not always easily differentiated and the terms are sometimes used interchangeably. Sects are born out of schisms from a larger body, usually as a reform movement. Their adherents claim to be establishing an "authentic, purged, refurbished version of the faith from which they split" (Stark and Bainbridge 1979:125). Sect
membership is strictly voluntary and is reserved for those who are "religiously and morally qualified" (Weber 1991:305-6). Johnson believed that denominations can become sects, and likewise, sects may become denominations as membership and doctrinal standards relax over time (1971:128).

Alves preferred categories established on the basis of "collective consciousness," or the "founding emotions . . . the emotional matrix out of which the group organizes its time" (1985:4). He distinguished between three "ideal types" of Protestantism that differ in their demands for conformity among members. These types extend across denominational lines and churches may manifest elements of each. Montgomery (1990) based his classification on socio-political ideas rather than Alves' collective conscience. The first type is the evangelical Christian who is "on social strike" and has withdrawn from political involvement. On the other end of the spectrum is the "revolutionary" evangelical who adheres to a Protestant version of liberation theology. Evangelization is not enough; what is needed is a "Social Gospel" to bring about change.

To define the major periods of Central American missions for this paper, historical and doctrinal characteristics have been distilled into two broad categories, "mainline" and "evangelical." Mainline churches are the oldest denominations, generally starting before the mid-nineteenth century. Some examples are Methodists, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Moravians and Mennonites. They were dominant in Latin American missions from the 1700s until the mid-twentieth century. In addition to evangelism, they have been instrumental in establishing schools, hospitals and
economic development projects. There are three basic forms of organizational structure among mainline churches: congregational, presbyterian, and episcopal. Congregational denominations are "locally autonomous communities" (Sopher 1967:61). Presbyterian and episcopal denominations both have territorial hierarchies with varying degrees of power at each level. Doctrinally, many mainline Protestants believe the miracles and "spiritual gifts" mentioned in the Bible were needed to establish the credibility of the Christian church in its first centuries, but are no longer necessary or active. This is an important detail for distinguishing mainline believers from evangelicals.

In recent years, the percentage of mainline believers has declined in relation to evangelicals. Stoll attributed the dissatisfaction with the historical churches to a shift in focus from spiritual to social issues: "The mainline clergy had replaced Bible study with pop psychology, evangelism with social services, religious faith with political causes, God with man" (1990:45). This assessment ignores the fact that social and economic "improvement" has always been a part of the mainline agenda. However, it is true that these denominations have intensified their involvement in social issues while becoming less rigorous in their moral and ethical expectations of converts. Modern mainline denominations are usually associated with the National Council of Churches and World Council of Churches, viewed as liberal organizations by evangelicals.

Since the 1960s, the most dramatic growth in the number of converts and new churches has been among evangelical denominations. While Latin American writers use "evangelical" as a generic term for any non-Catholic Christian, it is used more
specifically in North American and European literature. Two broad evangelical
sub-categories are "fundamentalist" and "pentecostal." Coleman defined
fundamentalism as:

an innovating and aggressive form of traditionalism based on a literal and
hermeneutically privileged focus on authority: a book, a set of customs, an
interpreting institution such as the papacy or the Twelve Apostles in
Mormonism. (1992:75)

Fundamentalist Protestants are doctrinally conservative, and, like mainline
denominations, tend to discourage emotionalism. They believe in the inerrancy or
infallibility of the Bible, salvation through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and
a commitment to evangelism. Fundamentalists split from mainline churches over
differences on Biblical interpretation and social issues beginning in the nineteenth
century. According to the historical definition, Baptists would be considered mainline.
However, they are usually categorized as fundamentalists because of their doctrinal
views (Siewert and Kenyon 1993:253). The representative fundamentalist groups in
Central America are usually non-denominational and inter-denominational churches as
well as independent mission agencies like Central America Mission (CAM), Wycliffe
Bible Translators, and New Tribes Mission. Fundamentalists became active in Latin
American missions in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Pentecostal evangelicals combine the convictions of the fundamentalists with an
emphasis on the modern manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking
in tongues (*glossolalia*) and faith healing. The name "Pentecost" is taken from an
account in the Book of Acts when the Holy Spirit, in the form of flames, descended on a

group of Christian disciples and they began speaking in tongues. Worship is highly
participatory and laymen are expected to contribute time and money to the cause of

evangelism. Both pentecostals and fundamentalists believe in the imminent return of

Christ, imparting a sense of urgency to their evangelistic work. Their numbers have

exploded since the 1960s; Stoll calculated that two thirds of all Latin American

Protestants are pentecostals (1990:101). Some representative denominations are the

Assemblies of God, Church of God, Foursquare Gospel (Cuadrangular), Prince of

Peace (Principe de Paz), and Mision Elim. Of the Protestant population in Honduras,

2.2% belong to mainline denominations. Of the remainder, 45.7% are fundamentalists

and 38.9% are pentecostals (World Vision 1986:14).

**Endnote**

5. Based on historical documents, Stafford Poole has challenged the association of the
Virgin with Tonantzin (1995). Taylor found that the veneration of the Virgin of
Guadalupe was initially more common among non-Indians than Indians (1987).
CHAPTER 3
CATHOLICISM IN THE COLONIAL PERIOD

Columbus’ "discovery" of the New World preceded the posting of Luther’s Theses by twenty-five years, ushering in several centuries of Catholic domination. Revisionists point to the absence of religious representatives on Columbus’ first voyage to the New World as proof of the insincerity of Spain’s religious aspirations for the conquest. It is true that, of the occupations listed for crew members on four primary rosters, none were clergymen (Gould 1984:58-61). In the cynical view of one writer:

The spiritual Don Quixote and the materialistic Sancho Panza both embarked for the Indies. This, however, must be said: the relatives and progeny of the latter who found their way to the New World were infinitely more numerous than those of the former. (Mackay 1932:29)

According to a letter to the King of Spain, when a clergyman suggested to Francisco Pizarro that their emphasis should be on Christianizing the Indians rather than exploiting them, Pizarro responded, "I have not come for any such reasons. I have come to take away from them their gold" (Hanke 1949:6-7). While gold and glory did, at times, take precedence over God, the spiritual dimension of the Conquest should not be underestimated; and the dissemination of Catholicism throughout Latin America, even if superficial in areas, was a monumental accomplishment.

Encountering the Indians of the New World provoked a theological crisis for Europeans who questioned whether or not Indians were truly rational, or even human. What was the responsibility of the Church in tending to their spiritual well-being, assuming they had souls? According to Gutiérrez, a priest and scholar in Peru, there

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were three prevailing perceptions of Indians: they were slaves, free men, or infidels (1994). The medieval perception of men born as slaves or free by nature is often attributed to Aristotle, who distinguished between men based on differences in their elemental natures. "For the element that can use its intelligence to look ahead is by nature ruler and by nature master, while that which has the bodily strength to do the actual work is by nature a slave, one of those who are ruled" (*The Politics* 1992:57).

Bartolomé de Las Casas was the best-known advocate of Indians as free men. The humanity of Indians and their need for Christianity was finally affirmed by a papal bull in 1537, *Sublimis Deus*.

The sublime God so loved the human race that He not only created men in such wise that he might participate in the good that other creatures enjoy, but also endowed him with capacity to attain to the inaccessible and invisible Supreme Good and ... all are capable of receiving the doctrines of the faith. We ... consider, however, that the Indians are truly men and that they are not only capable of understanding the Catholic faith but, ... they desire exceedingly to receive it. (Hanke 1949:72-73)

With this assurance of Indian humanity, Spaniards intensified their evangelism efforts in the New World.

**Methods of Evangelism**

To Christianize two entire continents required evangelism on a colossal scale; sometimes hundreds of Indians were baptized at a time. An early effort to disseminate Christianity and Spanish political authority was "The Requirement." This document outlined the history of the world since its creation and proclaimed the authority of Spain and the Church in the New World. The desired response from the Indians upon hearing
this was two-fold: they were to acknowledge "the Church as the Ruler and Superior of the whole world and the high priest called the Pope . . . and the king," and accept Catholic doctrine and practice (Hanke 1949:33). The first known presentation of the Requirement occurred in June of 1514 (Hanke 1949:33). In 1529, a decree dictated that all official expedition leaders carry a copy of the document and bring along "at least two ecclesiastics approved by the Council of the Indies" to teach the Indians the faith (Hanke 1949:111). In Hanke's opinion, the document was seen as a farce, evidenced by accounts that it was read to trees, deserted villages, on ships before making land-fall, and at night before invading sleeping settlements.

Failure to concede to the terms of the Requirement, however delivered, justified military action. Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, opponent of Las Casas in the famous Valladolid debate in 1550, summarized the justification of such actions in four points. The Indians were guilty of idolatry and "sins against nature"; their apparent lack of civility signified their inferiority to the Spaniards; civilization and religious instruction of the Indians would best be accomplished after their subjugation; and finally, the weakness of the natives necessitated their protection by the Spaniards (Hanke 1949:120). In contrast, Francisco de Vitoria, a well-known Dominican in the early 1500s, challenged Spain's "Right of Discovery" (res nullius), by pointing out that the Indians were "Lords of the New World" prior to the Spaniards' arrival (Greenleaf 1971:34). He also questioned Pope Alexander VI's bull of 1493, *Inter caetera*, claiming possession of the New World. How could the Pope have authority over a non-Catholic
population? Despite these grievances, Vitoria advocated the dissemination of the Catholic faith and the right of Spaniards to travel and live in the Americas as long as they did not harm the native inhabitants. In his six "titles," force against the Indians was justified in several cases: if necessary to share the Faith, to prevent cannibalism and human sacrifice, and to prevent the relapse of Christian converts to "paganism" (Greenleaf 1971:35).

Las Casas rejected all coercive methods of evangelism. In a chapter titled "How All Nations May Be Brought to a Good Way of Life" in *Apologetic History*, he wrote:

No nation exists, no matter how rude, uncultivated, barbarous, gross, or almost brutal, its people may be, which may not be persuaded and brought to a good order and way of life and made domestic, mild, and tractable, provided the method that is proper and natural to men is used; that is, love, gentleness and kindness. (Hanke 1949:126)

The basic tenants of Las Casas' *The Only Method of Attracting All People to the True Faith* were that God desires all people to hear about the Christian faith, "infidels" will convert with time, not pressure, and love is more persuasive and rational than war (Hanke 1949:72-76). Las Casas and his Dominican brothers were granted permission to test his ideas in the Vera Paz region of Guatemala. The experiment lasted from 1537 until 1550 when Las Casas resigned as bishop of Vera Paz because of conflicts with colonists, many of whom he had excommunicated. The deathblow to the reform effort was an Indian rebellion in 1556 in which several friars were killed (Hanke 1949:81).

After the initial surge of conquistadors, mission efforts shifted away from mass conversions to an emphasis on doctrinal education at the individual level. The monastic
clergy established facilities to educate children, specifically boys. Children were in turn expected to teach their parents Christian doctrine and act as interpreters for the priests. Las Casas and his fellow friars incorporated the Christian message into songs in Indian languages which condemned the use of idols and extolled the virtues of Christ. These songs were then taught to Indian merchants to spread as they traveled from village to village. Priests also used paintings and drawings to communicate the new faith.

**Agents of Diffusion**

Between 1493 and 1821, Spain sent more than fifteen thousand missionaries to the New World (Van Oss 1986:181). Clergymen were forbidden to return to Spain for ten years, the amount of time the Crown thought necessary for the conversion of the Indians in each mission location. Returning before completion of the term required the permission of the Viceroy, *Audencia* or Governor (Black 1995:43). Colonial religious agents fell into two categories, the secular and regular (monastic) clergy, each with "delimit[ed] spheres of activity" established by papal decrees (Tibesar 1971:55). The secular clergy in Europe were accustomed to carrying out pastoral duties, including the administration of parishes. However, the Crown preferred to send members of monastic orders as missionaries because of their greater independence. This resulted in a breakdown of traditional hierarchal boundaries in the New World. Regular orders were granted authority and resources usually reserved for bishops. When bishops did arrive in the Americas to organize dioceses, orders preferred to remain outside of their jurisdiction in independent units referred to as *doctrinas* (Ennis 1971:65).
From the beginning, there was a conflict of interest between the "missionary Church" that focused on Indians, and the "colonial Church" that revolved around colonists. Regular and secular clergy each favored working in different geographical settings. Both avoided the Caribbean coast because of the low population density coupled with abundant insects and disease. The secular clergy preferred lowland areas inhabited predominantly by Spaniards and ladinos who "could support the Church," and avoided Indians, who were exempt from tithing (Van Oss 1986:30). They made little effort to learn indigenous languages, while the monastic orders ventured into the remote mountain interiors, where they established missions in existing settlements or created new ones.

In time, monastic orders accumulated such vast tracts of land that their expansion had to be curtailed by the Spanish government. A 1559 decree specified that monasteries built outside cities had to be at least six leagues apart, and Pope Paul V issued a bull in 1611 requiring monasteries to have a minimum of eight occupants (Haring 1963:175). Both measures were intended to reduce the number of new missions established and reduce pressure on the native population (Haring 1963:175). However, these regulations were seldom enforced, and the overexpansion of missions persisted throughout the 1700s. To reduce the number of men joining monasteries, the Crown gained Rome's approval to ban anyone from joining a religious order in New Spain for ten years. In 1754, regular clergy members were forbidden to intervene in the drafting of wills in order to reduce their influence in acquiring land from parishioners.
Despite these measures, Humboldt observed that in nineteenth century New Spain, eighty percent of the land in some provinces was "held in mortmain," meaning the property had been permanently transferred to Church ownership (1811:96).

**Colonial Honduras**

Eastern Honduras, sometimes referred to as Taguzgalpa, land of "pirates, filibusters, and Indians," proved to be economically and spiritually difficult to conquer (Chapman 1978:6). Other than placer mining for gold along the Caribbean, Spaniards found few mineral resources on the North Coast. The indigenous population had been devastated by disease and famine until it was too small to carry out large-scale economic endeavors. Even where the Spaniards did establish a foothold, British contraband activities made it difficult and expensive to acquire supplies. Colonists and clergy shifted their emphasis to the central and western portions of the country where they were confronted with a different set of problems. The rough terrain made travel difficult and provided a refuge for fleeing Indians. After the discovery of silver in the 1570s, settlement was concentrated in the central part of the country, around Tegucigalpa and Comayagua. The inadequate indigenous population was supplemented by Black slave labor in silver and gold mines.

Within the study area, Gracias was the most important settlement during the colonial period. Gabriel de Rojas founded the town in 1530, but it was not a permanent settlement until 1541 (Scherzer 1857:66; Chapman 1986:30). Between 1544 and 1548,
Gracias served as the seat of the *Audencia de Los Confines de Guatemala*, the provincial headquarters for the territory between Chiapas and Panama (Chapman 1986:42). Comayagua was the favored location for the *Audencia* because of the nearby mines and access to both the Caribbean and Pacific on the transisthmian *camino real* (Brady 1996). However, Gracias was chosen because it was closer to Guatemala, had a large Indian population and, like Comayagua, was a relatively important mining center.

After only four years, the site was abandoned, and the *Audencia* was transferred to Santiago de Guatemala in 1548 (Newson 1986:99). While most scholars attribute the move to Gracias' inaccessibility, Newson claimed that the most compelling reason was political. She cited the bishop of Honduras: "It is in the style of governors to undo that which others have done and to refound cities and towns" (1986:97-99).

While Gracias was poorly situated for an administrative center, the available water and pasture in the surrounding plain made it an ideal place for ranching when cattle were introduced in the sixteenth century (West 1957a:2). Erandique, to the southeast, was also a major ranching center. In annual drives, animals were herded from the basins of central Honduras, through the Comayagua and Otoro valleys, the study area, and eventually into Guatemala. There they joined herds raised in the Lake Itza area and were driven along rivers into British territory where they were sold to mahogany cutters (Crowe 1850:239). These drives continued in Honduras until the construction of the highway between the Gulf of Fonseca and the Caribbean in 1963 (Chapman 1986:50).
Erandique was first mentioned by Pedro de Alvarado in 1536 as "egaronqui" (Chapman 1986:40). He also encountered Intibucá (Intipuca) and Yamaranguila. Castañeda claimed that the name "Intipuca" means "place of the capucas," an edible palm-type plant common to the area (1971:1). According to the same source, Eramaní was the original name of the town and was later changed to Concepción de La Esperanza (1971:2). A land title from 1848 in the National Archives reads, "Jicaramani," a possible variation of Eramaní (record #50). The municipio of Yamaranguila was created in 1764 as a pueblo de indios. Lenca variations of the name were "Yambalaquira" and "Ambalangura" (Chapman 1986:33).

Southwestern Honduras was inhabited by Lenca Indians, who were divided into four territorial entities in the 1530s: the Lenca, Care, Cerquín and Potón, all of which probably spoke variations of the same language. The Cerquín inhabited what is now southern Intibucá and Lempira; the Care settled in Intibucá, La Paz, northern Lempira and southern Santa Barbara; and the Lenca were in Comayagua, eastern La Paz, and southern Francisco Morazán (Chapman 1978:19). Some migrated as far east as Olancho and El Paraíso to escape the Spaniards. The Potón lived in eastern El Salvador, possibly culturally separated from the Pipil to the west by the Lempa River (Tamayo and West 1964:107). Archaeological excavations near La Esperanza have unearthed a variety of lithic tools, including worked obsidian, and pottery fragments demonstrating the long history of settlement in the area. In the vicinity of San Juan, along the Río Chiquita, ceramic artifacts date back to 400 B.C., and resemble those found in El Salvador.
(Sheehy 1983:11, 18). Because the San Juan River is a tributary of the Rio Lempa, archaeologists suspect there was a "fluvial connection" between the two regions.

Because the Lenca inhabited the transitional or "contact zone" between the Mesoamerican cultures to the north and the circumcaribbean tribes to the south, their status has been debated. Some scholars, like Alfonso Caso and the authors of the *Handbook of South American Indians* (1948), believed they more closely resembled their southern neighbors. Others, like Chapman and Kirchhoff, linked them with the "high" culture area. Supporting the Mesoamerican position is historical evidence of a stratified social organization, ceramic manufacturing, and the ability to produce multiple bean and corn crops annually. The Lenca were also part of the trade network between the Pipil in El Salvador and Maya in the Ulua Valley, through which they traded birds, feathers, skins, and *achiote* for *cacao* and other goods (Chapman 1985:77). According to Kirchhoff, their only circumcaribbean trait is poisoned weapons (Chapman 1985:84).

The Lenca language seems to have disappeared, so it is difficult to trace their cultural heritage based on linguistic evidence. In historical documents, there is some confusion as to when the term "Lenca" referred to a unique culture group rather than a generic term for Honduran Indians. Squier cited an account by missionaries working with the Jicaque and Paya in Comayagua with "Lenca" translators. "This leads us to conjecture that the Xicaques may possibly have been of the same stock with the Lencas, speaking dialects of the same language" (1858:246). Herranz provided a review of the literature outlining the linguistic origin debate, beginning with Thomas and Swanton
(1911), who considered Lenca to be a Mesoamerican language. Lehmann (1920) grouped it with the Paya in Honduras, the Jicaque in eastern Honduras and Nicaragua, and Xinca of Guatemala. Schuller (1928) combined these theories by claiming that Lenca, Paya, Jicaque and Maya-Quiché all had the same parent language, possibly Carib or Arawak (Herranz 1990:10). Sapir (1929) and Mason (1948) traced Lenca back to North American origins (Penutian). Finally, Swadesh and Andrews connected Lenca with Quiché but differed in estimates of the time of separation (Chapman 1978:20). Others consider it to be an independent language family.

Colonial Honduran missions

Monastic orders focused on the central and western portions of Honduras, including areas inhabited by the Lenca, while independent missionaries ventured into the eastern region. The Mercedarian Order, the first to work in Honduras, had established convents in Comayagua, Gracias a Dios, and Tencoa by 1550 (Chapman 1986:29). By the mid-seventeenth century, they had expanded to Las Minas (Tegucigalpa) and Cururu (Black 1995:70). Franciscans arrived in Honduras a quarter of a century after the Mercedarians and established another mission in Comayagua and then headed for the unsettled eastern parts of the country. They established a mission in Trujillo in 1583 but abandoned it just three years later due to the lack of clergy (Bacigalupo 1980:17). The clerical shortage was a common problem in Honduras, which was not a colonial priority because of the lack of mineral wealth and Indians.
Other Franciscan works were founded in San Antonio, Agalteca, Tegucigalpa, San Andres de Nacaome (1590) and Amapala (1592) (Otero 1963:147).

Chapman defined two periods of mission activity in the east: the work of Esteban Verdalete and Juan de Monteagudo between 1608 and 1612, followed by Captain Bartolomé de Escoto, Father Espino and Father Ovalle y Guevara from 1668 to 1690 (Chapman 1978:6). The original accounts are found in Vasquez' Crónica de la Provincia del Santísimo Nombre de Jesús de Guatemala and Ibarra's Relación verdadera de la reducción de los indios infieles de la Provincia de Taguzgalpa.

Verdalete and Monteagudo were killed by Lenca and Taguacas (Sumu) in 1612. In retaliation, Captain Daza, who had served as the priests' escort, nailed a Taguaca to a tree. The Indians, feigning repentance, ambushed and murdered the captain and other priests. In 1623, V. Martir, Fray Cristóbal Martinez and two companions were killed by Indians near Cabo Gracias a Dios, ending missionary endeavors in the area until 1667 (Chapman 1978:8).

The next evangelistic effort was inspired by a desire to subdue the Indians who repeatedly attacked and robbed Spanish settlements. Between 1667 and 1690, Catholic colonists migrated along the Río Tinto and founded reducciones of Lenca, Paya, Jicaque and Taguacas (Chapman 1979:9). Fathers Espino and Ovalle y Guevara administered the sacraments to Spaniards, mulattos, and Indians in settlements along the Guayape and Guayambre rivers (Carías 1991:21). Between 1856 and 1864, Catholic missionary Manuel Subirana built schools and taught the Indians how to cultivate tobacco (Carías...

Endnote

6. From an undated letter to the King from Bernadino de Minaya in the *Archivo General de Simancas*. 

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CHAPTER 4
CATHOLIC MISSIONS AND TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION

The Catholic Church organizes territory into a hierarchy of ecclesiastical units, with the parish being the smallest. Parishes, each under the authority of a priest, are grouped into dioceses presided over by bishops. Several dioceses constitute an ecclesiastical province supervised by an archbishop. Every unit is under the authority of the Pope who resides in Rome, the Holy See (Sopher 1967:65). Before such an organization could be imposed on Latin America, the indigenous population had to be consolidated and indoctrinated. This was to be carried out under the mission system. Missions are aptly described as a "provisional form of territorial organization," because they predated the establishment of parishes and states in Latin America (Sopher 1967:69). Under this provisional hierarchy, a partido was a "mission area" made up of a central cabecera as a headquarters surrounded by visitas, or satellite missions. Visitas, also called pueblos de indios, had no resident priests, but were served by itinerant clergy who traveled from doctrinas, missions with resident priests (Black 1995:56).

The first step in Christianizing the Indians was to relocate them into encomiendas and missions. The "Laws of Burgos" (1512) permitted Indian relocation and the destruction of former villages to prevent their resettlement (Van Oss 1986:15). The encomienda system granted colonists the right to extract labor and tribute from Indians in exchange for protection and Christian instruction. To meet the spiritual needs of the Indians, encomenderos were required to support a resident priest and build the
necessary religious structures. Those *encomiendas* located near a monastery were exempt from the resident priest requirement. For those *encomenderos* living away from monasteries, it was more difficult to fulfill their obligations because the settlement often lacked a sufficient population to provide a stable income for secular priests (McAndrew 1965:23).

A second form of population consolidation was the *reducción* or *congregación*, in which Indians were resettled in missions under the authority of the regular clergy. In a 1555 letter to King Charles V, Dominican brothers Cardeña and Torres outlined the justification for *congregaciones* in the Guatemalan Cuchumantanes highlands:

> This very year... we found idols in abundance... What is certain is that they [the Indians] would never have tried to do this had it not been for their confidence in the ruggedness of the terrain, thinking that no-one could reach there who might disturb or destroy their evil living. Now that they are housed together they will have less opportunity to practise idolatry and, ourselves, more opportunity to watch over them... They [Franciscans and colonists who opposed resettlement] may say that it was carried out against the will of the Indians, in answer to which we say that there is no sick person who does not find the taste of medicine unpleasant, that one prefers, ordinarily, the taste of that which harms us. (Lovell 1990:281-282)

Humboldt provided an unfavorable analysis of the mission system in his *Personal Narrative*:

Institutions, thus useful in stopping the effusion of blood, and in laying the first basis of society, have become in their result hostile to it's [sic] progress. The effects of this insulated system have been such, that the Indians have remained in a state little different from that in which they existed, when their scattered dwellings were not yet collected round the habitation of a missionary. Their number has considerably augmented, but the sphere of their ideas is not enlarged. They have progressively lost that vigour of character, and that natural vivacity, which in every state of society are the noble fruits of independence. By subjecting to invariable rules even the
slightest actions of their domestic life, they have been rendered stupid, by the
effort to render them obedient. (1818:4-5)

Because the cédula real of 1607 called for a ten year exemption from tithing for
new converts, the Crown provided a certain amount of money, "fifty thousand
maravedis per four hundred tributary households" annually, to support the regular
clergy (Black 1995:56). At the end of ten years, control of the mission was to be turned
over to the secular clergy. In reality, the conversion process took longer than expected
and missions became more permanent institutions than originally intended. As Crown
support declined, it became necessary to collect tribute from the Indians.

Mission Site Selection

In choosing mission locations, orders were concerned with meeting basic
subsistence needs, establishing self-sufficiency, perhaps supplying surplus produce and
goods for profit, and evangelizing Indians. According to the Crown's guidelines, an
ideal mission site should have enough land for crops to sustain its residents, an adequate
water supply, a nearby Indian population, and access to the ocean for trade. A study of
the California mission chain demonstrates that "valleys, alluvial fans, and coastal
plains" were the favored locations (Gentilcore 1961:49). Radding's study (1978) of
missions in the Pimeria Alta demonstrates the necessity of selecting sites adjacent to
rivers in arid regions.

Spaniards preferred elevated terrain for missions. This gave them a strategic
vantage point from which to observe the Indian population and created a physically
commanding presence. Indians also favored raised terrain for their sacred sites. The
axis mundi, or center of the earth connecting the spiritual and physical realms, was often associated with a mountain. In the absence of natural raised topography, it was artificially constructed in Mesoamerican. Likewise, the Spaniards artificially elevated their churches where necessary. According to ordinances for the establishment of new towns in 1573, the church

is not to be right on the plaza, but at a distance where it can stand free, separated from other buildings so that it can be seen from all around; thus it will be more beautiful and authoritative. It should be raised somewhat above the ground so that people will have to go up a flight of steps to reach its entrance . . . . (McAndrew 1965:96)

In Europe, existing "pagan" religious structures were frequently appropriated by Christians. This practice was rare in Latin America, maybe because of a justifiable fear of Indians reverting to their old religious practices. "Perhaps the Moslems . . . were beaten badly enough not to be in any position to take back their old religion, whereas in Mexico there were too many Indians who had not been beaten" (McAndrew 1965:183). Catholic churches were not built on top of intact Indian pyramids for both practical and ethical reasons. First, the temple top was too small to support a church structure. Secondly, such a location was considered profane. More commonly, the platform of ruined or "cut-down pyramids" served as a foundation (McAndrew 1965:186). The cathedral in Mexico City was built on the ruins of an Aztec temple complex destroyed by Cortez, and the temple stones were incorporated into the church's foundation and lower walls (Kelemen 1971:244-45).
Mission Features

Once a site had been selected, construction of the necessary facilities began. The basic components of the mission compound included the church, convent (dormitory), and grounds. Large gatherings of Indians for masses and baptisms were frequently held in ramadas, areas covered with branches, or in atrios, open-air walled enclosures. Some atrios had small chapels or posas at each corner that served as stopping points in processions during religious festivals (Perry 1988:51). Such open-air meeting places were also found in Europe (Park 1994:202).

Architecture

The first church building in the Americas was constructed on the Isthmus of Panama in 1510 (Latourette 1939:133). Churches erected during the sixteenth century were seldom the monolithic structures associated with Latin American Catholicism today. More typically, they were thatch-roofed, wooden "barnlike" buildings like one built by the Mercedarians near Comayagua, Honduras, in the mid-1500s (Carías 1991:18). Religious structures became more permanent by the end of the century, a reflection of growing political stability. They also served as symbols of the local bishop's "eminence, an acclamation of his own renown..." (Kelemen 1971:238).

Plans for churches and other significant buildings were sometimes sent from Spain but, more commonly, they were designed in the New World. Theoretically, these were to be approved by the Crown before construction. Churches were sometimes destroyed or appropriated for secular uses because they were built without royal
permission (Black 1995:30). A sixteenth century royal edict called for "plain strong buildings of moderate size and without any novelty" (Perry 1988:51). Basic church components included at least one consecrated altar, a choir, baptiral font, and some outside space. The architecture followed the medieval European plan: a large building with a single nave and adjacent two-story convento or residence for monks. In the Yucatán, the convento was located on the north side of the building where it would be cooler (Perry 1988:51). Monastery churches required a larger choir for the monks and an entrance into the monastery building (McAndrew 1965:133). The front of the building typically had three doors with three corresponding interior aisles (Kelemen 71:240). Earlier churches had one tower, while later ones often had two that served as belfries, supports for the facade and anchors for the side walls. The espadaña, literally meaning "to spread the tail feathers," was an "ornamental extension of the facade above the roof line" (Kelemen 1971:249). These derived from Flemish and Italian architecture incorporating baroque and Moorish ornamentation styles (Perry 1988:54).

The Franciscans built the first churches in the New World, providing a model for later Augustinians and Dominicans. Differences between the orders, especially in ornamentation, evolved over time because of theological differences and disparities in wealth. Dominicans, unlike Franciscans who took a vow of poverty, were allowed to keep most of the tithes they collected. As a result, their churches were more elaborate. The Augustinians were "often ostentatious" and justified their extravagance as a way to make the Indians forget the splendor of their former pagan shrines (McAndrew
1965:177-78). As a rule, the secular clergy preferred more elaborate buildings than monastic orders and usually had more resources for such endeavors. They built according to a "cruciform plan" with large windows, elaborate facades, and camarines, rooms for elaborately dressed sacred statues (Perry 1988:55). Indians provided the necessary labor for construction and were trained by traveling artisans to do carpentry, painting, sculpting and masonry. Their efforts were coordinated by ensambladores or foremen (Kelemen 1971:239).

The oldest and most elaborate churches in the study area were those built by the Mercedarians in Gracias after their arrival in 1550. San Marcos on the central plaza and Merced to the south have ornate facades with niches, statues and baroque-style columns. The Intibuca Church, actually located in La Esperanza, was built in 1757 (Chapman 1986:30). Otherwise, the churches in the area were built in the independence period after royal funds and indigenous labor were no longer available. That might explain the relative simplicity of the buildings in San Juan, Yamaranguila and Erandique. The church in Barrio Centro in Erandique is unique because of its free-standing bell towers. The most recently built church is San Sebastián in Gracias. A man who lives across the street claims to remember its construction in 1910. This building is smaller than the other Catholic churches and is built in a cross pattern with no external ornamentation.
Orientation

Another significant aspect of colonial architecture is the orientation of churches. To orient literally means "to arrange with reference to the east" (Guralnik 1982:528), and the Hebrew word qādîm means "front" or east (Strong 1988:102). The roots of Christian orientation are found in ancient Jewish customs. The Jewish tabernacle, or tent of meeting, predated a permanent temple and was set up with its door to the east (Gordon 1971:212). After the construction of the temple in Jerusalem, Jews were required to present their sacrifices and offerings there. Those who lived too far away would pray in the direction of Jerusalem. Landsberger claimed that early Christians followed the Jews in praying toward the temple until its destruction in 70 A.D. when they adopted east, the symbol of Christ's resurrection, as the favored direction (1957:194). The Apostolical Constitution reads,

let all rise up with one consent, and looking towards the east . . . pray to God eastward, who ascending up to the heaven of heavens to the east; remembering also the ancient situation of paradise in the east. (Gordon 1971:213-214)

The early Christians continued to meet in Jewish synagogues or, during times of persecution, in private homes. The first separate Christian churches were built after the Emperor Constantine granted religious freedom in the Edict of Milan in 313 A.D. The "Apostolic Constitution," written at the end of the third century, specified that churches be "long with its head [the altar] to the east" (Gordon 1971:216). However, most Italian churches were oriented with the altar to the west before 420 A.D. After that date, the pattern was reversed and the door faced west (Landsberger 1957:201). Pope Leo I
(440-460 A.D.) might have been influential in the change. He discouraged any resemblance to pagan forms of worship, in which adherents faced toward the east. The Council of Trent (1563) prohibited the construction of churches in which congregations faced north unless the site forced such an orientation (Gordon 1971:226). A Puritan architect, Sir Water Mildmay, built a north-south oriented church in Cambridge in 1585 in protest (Gordon 1971:226).

Catholic churches in Latin America are frequently oriented with the main entrance to the west and the altar, the most sacred element, to the east. Gordon contends that only sixteenth century Franciscans followed this pattern (1971:216). However, within the study area, under the influence of the Mercedarians, seventy percent of the churches are oriented with their doors to the west (Figure 4.1). The exceptions are the oldest churches, Merced in Gracias and La Esperanza, which face south, and the newest, San Sebastián in Gracias, which faces east.

Direction is significant for the interior of the church as well as the exterior. The inside of a cathedral represents the four cardinal directions, a microcosm of the universe. The east symbolizes Paradise, and the west is the "realm of darkness, of grief, of death, the realm of the eternal mansions of the dead, who await the resurrection of the flesh and the Last Judgment" (Eliade 1959:61). Gordon wrote that the "west has persistently symbolized satanic darkness, grief, and death for the Christian, Christ on the cross faced west. The expression 'to go west,' meaning to die, still occurs in popular usage" (1971:214).
Orientation of Catholic Churches in Study Area

San Juan

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Yamaranguila

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La Esperanza / Intibuca

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Erandique

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Gracias

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Figure 4.1 Catholic Church Orientation
Burials in Latin America are also oriented with heads to the west and feet to the east. A French cleric noted in 1703 that this practice had continued for "more than fifteen centuries and that changes in this procedure were an innovation begun no more than a century earlier; that is . . . during the Reformation" (Gordon 1971:217). If the modern Lenca cemetery in Erandique is any indication, Indian graves in southwestern Honduras were not oriented to a particular direction in pre-Hispanic times. The irregular orientation of the mounds is not due to topography because the Erandique site is relatively level.

Endnote

CHAPTER 5
PROTESTANTISM IN THE COLONIAL PERIOD

During the colonial period, Spain's attitude toward non-Catholic immigrants fluctuated according to political and economic relations with Protestant nations. King Charles V allowed some German and Belgian subjects to enter Spanish territory until a cédula in 1535 prohibited Germans from entering the Indies without a license, presumably to protect Indians from the "threat" of Lutheranism (Bastian 1990:48). The papal bull, Altitude Divini Consilie, issued by Pope Paul III in 1537, not only prohibited non-Catholics from entering the Indies, it also called for the expulsion of all "heretics" from the region (Lopez 1993:23). The Spanish government issued a similar decree in 1538 that was strictly enforced after Philip II became king in 1556 (Bastian 1990:69).

The Inquisition, one of 15 departments within the Catholic Church (Tedeschi 1979:238), stands out as the most forceful attempt by the Church to maintain spiritual unity in both the Old and New Worlds. King Philip II set up tribunals in Lima (1568) and Mexico City (1571), and another in Cartagena in 1610 (Bastian 1990:52). Smaller branches, called comisarias, were established in cities throughout Latin America, including Gracias a Dios, Olancho, and Tegucigalpa in Honduras (Nelson 1984:5). The jurisdiction of the Holy Office of the Inquisition covered a multitude of transgressions: heresy, apostasy, blasphemy, bigamy, the practice of superstition, sorcery and demonology, propositions subversive of the faith, denial of ecclesiastical authority, lack of respect for ecclesiastical persons, institutions, and censures, solicitation in the confessional, evil sounding words . . . . (Scholes 1971:28)
More succinctly, heresy fell into two broad categories: *herejía material*, unintentional error, and *herejía formal*, intentional violations of the faith (Bastian 1990:69). Everyone, including Spanish colonists, Black slaves, clergy and laymen, was held accountable. Indians were the only exception (Scholes 1971:28).

Contrary to popular belief, most of the heresy cases in Latin America were against professing Catholics and not Protestants (Bastian 1990:70). The first case tried by a tribunal in the New World was in Granada, Nicaragua, in 1556. The second case involved a Frenchman in Comayagua, Honduras, accused of Lutheranism. Another Frenchman in Trujillo faced the same charge in 1560 but both were "reconciled," meaning they renounced their anti-Catholic ideas (Nelson 1984:7). While dozens of people were arrested for various forms of heresy, only 27 were actually executed in Latin America. Of those killed, two-thirds died in the sixteenth century, and the remainder died in the early seventeenth century (Bastian 1990:53). Of 26 total accusations in Central America, only one Protestant was killed (Nelson 1984:8). The Inquisition weakened during the reign of Carlos III who embraced some aspects of Enlightenment thought and encouraged international trade with Latin America. However, this openness was short-lived. Economic problems forced Spain to renew its anti-foreigner stance in the 1760s (Bastian 1990:85). Despite efforts to maintain doctrinal conformity, Protestantism entered Spanish and Portuguese possessions through various secular agents, namely merchants, pirates and immigrants.
Protestant Agents and Methods

Pirates and merchants

Beginning in the 1540s, Protestant nations began infiltrating the Caribbean as pirates and corsairs, with the first attack in Honduras at Trujillo in 1558 (Lopez 1993:20, 22). The non-Iberian European presence intensified between 1550 and the 1830s as the British and Dutch became major sea powers. Activity in the Caribbean was boosted by increased interest in cash crops, particularly sugar cane, and the lucrative slave trade. After the Spanish Crown outlawed the use of Indian slaves and strictly regulated the importation of Africans, it was cheaper to buy contraband slaves from the British. They sold as many as two-thirds of their human cargo to Spanish and Portuguese colonists at a greater profit than they made from their fellow countrymen (Williams 1944:34). Another boost to the British presence in the Caribbean was a treaty between Britain and Spain in 1783 under which

"... it is expressly agreed, that his Britannic Majesty's subjects shall have the right of cutting, loading, and carrying away logwood, in the district lying between the rivers Wallie to Belize, and the Rio Hondo, taking the course of the said two rivers for unalterable boundaries." (Crowe 1850:191-2)

The boundaries were expanded in 1786.

Evangelism was obviously not a priority among slave traders or pirates; however, they sometimes justified their attacks on the Spanish as a form of religious warfare. In the words of an Anglican priest,

They [the pirates] looked upon the plundering of the Spanish as almost a Holy War against the greed of the conquistadors and the cruelty of the Inquisition . . . . Every ship had its Bible on which the Oath of Brotherhood was sworn. (Nelson 1984:4)
Immigrants

Whether intended or not, colonization was "one of the principle means, by which the blessings of pure religion are to become universal" (Parvin 1825:321). As British and continental European nations claimed more possessions in the Caribbean, Protestant enclaves were established in the British and Dutch West Indies and the Bay Islands of Honduras. From their island posts, the British expanded to the coast of the Central American mainland between Belize and Greytown on the San Juan River. In 1633, they established trading relations with the Miskito Indians at Cabo Gracias a Dios and Bluefields in present-day Nicaragua (Bastian 1990:58). Some colonization was accidental; a shipwreck in Belize led to the establishment of a British settlement that grew to 700 inhabitants by 1670 (Nelson 1984:3).

In addition to those seeking economic prospects, immigrants came for religious refuge. French Huguenots sent expeditions to Brazil in 1555 and 1558 to explore the possibility of establishing a colony, and William of Orange declared religious tolerance in northeastern Brazil in 1568 (Bastian 1990:54). In 1666, Denmark claimed the Virgin Islands as a refuge for Huguenots, and French Huguenots settled on St. Kitts in 1672 (Bastian 1990:59, 68). The Edict of Nantes, which had guaranteed religious freedom, was revoked in 1685, resulting in the exodus of Huguenots from Europe to Latin America. Over a thousand Presbyterian Scots, another group facing persecution, attempted to establish a colony in Panama between 1698 and 1700.
Immigrants were less concerned with evangelism than with establishing independent enclaves in which they could freely practice their religion, and, in the case of German Lutherans in South America, preserve their culture (Gates 1972:16). They built their own churches, employed their own pastors, and worshipped in their native languages with little attempt to influence the world around them. Even if Protestant immigrants had been more active in proselytization, Latin American governments discouraged such behavior. The Huguenots were expelled from Río de Janeiro in the late 1550s for proselytizing (Gates 1972:16). In a treaty between Great Britain and Brazil in the early 1800s, the British were allowed to construct churches on condition that the building facades be unrecognizable as churches (Mackay 1932:233).

**Foreign missionaries**

Yale mission historian K.S. Latourette attributed the early prominence of Catholics in Latin America to the politically precarious position of European Protestants (1939:25). Protestant churches were frequently under state control and at the mercy of secular governments unwilling to engage in missionary activity, while Spain and Portugal fully supported the promotion of Catholicism abroad. Spain's victory over the Moors inspired a religious fervor lacking among Protestants in northern and western Europe who had little contact with non-Christians during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (1939:25-26). Protestants also lacked a body of adherents like the secular and religious orders who could be sent out as missionaries. There was even doubt among
early reformers that world evangelism was necessary. Some, like Martin Luther, felt that the imminent return of Christ left no time for further expansion of the faith.

Germans were the first to feel a "rising concern for the propagation of the faith outside of Europe" (Latourette 1939:46). The British Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge was founded in 1699, followed by the Prussian Society for Philosophical Knowledge in 1700. The original focus was the distribution of religious literature to settlers in foreign colonies. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (1701) had a broader focus, and included American Indians and Black slaves (Latourette 1939:48-49). British societies sent out the greatest number of missionaries and established the most stations worldwide. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, there were eighteen British and six multinational societies, compared to four in the United States (1903).

Although limited and risky, instances of Protestant missionary activity did occur in Latin America during the colonial period, but such efforts usually focused on European immigrants rather than the native population. Before 1800, only eleven mission societies had established works in the region. Americans, preoccupied with their newly gained independence and expanding frontiers, played only a peripheral role in the colonial period. Individual states formed mission societies in the late eighteenth century, but there was no national organization until the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, ABCFM, was established in 1812. Because of limited financial resources, the ABCFM hoped to work jointly with the British
Missionary Society. The British, however, preferred to sponsor Americans as their own workers, an unappealing prospect to the newly independent nation. Once the ABCFM had sufficient funds, it established the first stations in places "not so much within the proper province of the British Missionary Society" (Phillips 1969:33).

Settlers and Indians on the western frontier were the primary focus of U.S. mission boards. In the words of a speaker for the United Foreign Mission Society in 1817, "As soon as the southern forests yield to the hand of civilization, our limits will extend to Mexico" (Phillips 1969:76). The ABCFM considered establishing a mission in Brazil in 1813 but nothing came out of the proposal (Phillips 1969:76). A Lancastrian school was established in Buenos Aires by James Thompson in 1818. A few years later, John Brigham was sent by the ABCFM as a "traveling agent" to ascertain the need for missions in Latin America. His final analysis, after traveling through most of South America and Mexico, was that the region was not yet ready for a full-scale mission effort due to the lack of religious and political freedom for Protestants.

We must wait patiently . . . till the Ruler of nations, who has wrought such wonders in those countries the last ten years, shall open still wider the way, and bid us go forward. (1826:341)

He pointed out that the most likely area of success would be among foreigners. An unnamed missionary estimated that Buenos Aires had a population of 3,000 English speakers, British and North Americans, among whom "... it is certainly devoutly to be wished, that there were here a protestant place of worship, as there is in Río Janeiro"
Brigham established a religious society for English and Scottish immigrants while he was in Buenos Aires, and conducted religious services on board foreign ships anchored at the port.

The most successful works during the colonial period were in the Caribbean, where mission societies focused on European immigrants and African slaves. Missionaries encouraged slaves to convert to Christianity rather than practice their African and syncretic religions. "In 1791 the African practices of Obeah were made punishable with death, chiefly, as it would appear, because it sometimes occasioned the loss of slaves, or, in some indirect way facilitated their escape" (Crowe 1850:195). The first Moravian foreign mission resulted from a conversation between an African servant in Europe and Count Zinzendorf, considered to be the father of modern Moravian missions. After hearing about the deplorable physical and moral conditions on Caribbean plantations, two workers were sent to St. Thomas in 1732 (Thompson 1882:80). When Count von Pless bought six plantations on the island of St. Croix, he requested that Moravians be sent to oversee his land and "labor for the religious welfare of the negroes" (Thompson 1882:89). An English Wesleyan missionary on the island of Antigua was congratulated by a plantation manager for his work among the servants,

\textit{A very great change has taken place in their [the slaves] conduct since they began to think for themselves, and act from religious principles. We scarcely ever use the whip now, not once in a quarter. (Missionary Herald 1822:359)}

Not all planters responded positively to missionaries. Some argued that Christian
teachings "would make the slaves less governable, would interfere with Sunday labour, and might lead to insurrection" (Latourette 1939:233).\footnote{9}

Missionaries also labored among newly freed Africans. After the slave rebellion in Surinam (1765), the Dutch government requested the help of missionaries in giving the emancipated Blacks moral instruction. When Blacks divided themselves into four kingdoms, each along a different river, the Moravians established four separate stations (Hutton 1922:256). The emancipation of slaves in the wake of Haitian independence in 1804 left plantation owners in dire need of laborers. To fill this need, the Haitian government paid to relocate at least 6,000 Blacks from large cities in the United States—New York City, Baltimore and Philadelphia (Missionary Herald 1829:333). The United Foreign Mission Society recognized that the Haitian emigrants "formed an extensive and important field for missionary labor," and sent a "colored" pastor and a West Indian resident of New York to the newly settled population (Missionary Herald 1825:20-21).

The emigrations to Hayti in the month past have been considerable. It is stated that eighteen vessels, capable of conveying 2,000 individuals, have sailed, or are about to sail, for this island, from the port of Philadelphia only. The United Foreign Missionary Society in New York have appointed two missionaries from the Presbyterian church . . . to go out with these emigrants. (The Christian Advocate 1824:575)

In Central America, the Church Missionary Society of England sent a chaplain, two teachers and a printer to an English settlement in Honduras "in consequence of an urgent request of the Rev. John Armstrong, Chaplain" in 1819 (Chapin 1825:159). The first Protestant mission efforts among Central American Indians started during the colonial period. Although British colonists were the primary focus of the Church
Missionary Society, missionaries were instructed to work with the Miskito as well.

"The principle desire of this reinforcement was to promote more extensively the good of the settlement, and also to diffuse the blessings of Christianity among the Musquito Indians" (Chapin 1825:159). The Anglicans were later joined in their work among the Miskito by Moravians.

**Site Selection**

As interest in evangelism grew, mission stations were established in ports and economically significant inland settlements, often with money from companies with an interest in the area. Bastian referred to the period between 1492 and 1655 as the economic phase of Protestantism in Latin America (1990:62).

The majority of the societies' missionaries had been organized by the patrons of commercial corporations operating in a given country or in its extension colonies to translate into gains in manufacturing, sales, finances . . . . (Bastian 1990:62)

In an era when societies lacked the resources to fund their workers, such support from commercial sources was necessary. Ship captains occasionally supplied free transportation for missionaries and their cargo. When Arms and Coan, ABCFM missionaries in Patagonia, decided to return to the United States, they "received a gratuitous passage in the Antarctic to the Falkland Islands; and by a similar act of kindness . . . they were brought to Groton, Connecticut" (Missionary Herald 1835:41). Moravian missionaries arrived in Jamaica in 1754, at the invitation of plantation owners, and the Dutch Trading Company requested that Moravian colonists come to Surinam in 1730 to work with the Arawak Indians (Thompson 1882:96, 132). In other
cases, rather than directly finance evangelistic work, planters employed missionaries as craftsmen and overseers. One writer blamed the slow progress of missions during the 1700s on the fact that missionaries had to support themselves. "Sometimes they were far worse off than the slaves . . . they could never give all their time to religious work" (Hutton 1922:56).

David Livingstone's work clearly demonstrates the intermingling of evangelical and economic objectives. While working in Africa as a medical missionary, sponsored by the London Missionary Society (1840-1856), he traveled to the interior of the continent looking for routes along which raw materials could be carried to the coast and exported to Europe. He envisioned a series of mission stations "admitting of easy and speedy intercourse" that "would be in a favorable position for carrying out" desirable goods (1858:720). The reciprocal trade of raw materials from Africa, specifically cotton, for European finished goods would not only expand European markets, but would hasten an end to the slave trade and other signs of "barbarism."

I have a twofold object in view, and believe that, by guiding our missionary labors so as to benefit our own country, we shall thereby more effectually and permanently benefit the heathen . . . . We ought to encourage the Africans to cultivate for our markets, as the most effectual means next to the Gospel, of their elevation. (1858:720)

While initial mission efforts targeted areas of strategic or economic value, missionaries later diffused into economic hinterlands (1967). This was the case in Central America where mission stations gradually expanded from Caribbean islands to the mainland, and finally into the interior.
In Central America, islands and mainland ports were the favored locations. Islands provided strategic locations for Protestant missions because they were accessible and relatively free from Spanish control in the colonial period. The Moravians had 67 stations in the Caribbean by the end of the eighteenth century. The Bay Islands served as the initial focus of Protestant missions in Honduras. From their headquarters on the islands, missionaries established a few stations along the coast of Central America, particularly in dyewood areas and ports inhabited by immigrants. Nathan Price, under the direction of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, had established several Anglican churches along the Caribbean coast by the mid-1700s. Moravians were in Cabo Gracias a Dios by 1752 (Lopez 1993:31), and Anglicans worked among the British in Belize. Organizations like the Seamen's Friend Society, first established in South America in 1848, were organized for the specific purpose of ministering to sailors and merchants (Beach 1903:21).

While coastal sites offered accessibility and economic opportunities, missionaries and settlers had to contend with climatic disadvantages. Crowe's report on the port of Belize, the location of the first Baptist station in Central America, demonstrates the health risks.

It is constantly insalubrious. Intermittent fevers and agues being the prevailing disorders, the first more especially during the height of dry weather, and the latter during the rainy season . . . . Such a locality would never have been selected for the habitations of men--much less for such a settlement, but for the facilities for trade offered by the harbour, and the fact that the banks of the river at whose mouth it is situated were, and still are, uncommonly prolific in the valuable woods. (Crowe 1850:30)
The little evangelistic work that was done inland was carried out by traveling evangelists and colporteurs (Bible salesmen) sponsored by the British and Foreign Bible Society (1804) and the American Bible Society (1816) (Nelson 1984:25). Most likely, they would have traveled along natural transisthmian corridors leading inland from the Caribbean coast. The major route across Honduras followed the Humuya River inland to the Comayagua Valley, and then followed the Goascoran River Valley to the Gulf of Fonseca (Squier 1870:20). In Guatemala, the Motagua Valley provided access to the densely populated volcanic axis. Colporteurs left no permanent missions but did introduce Protestantism to the Central American interior.

**Diffusion**

In summary, Protestantism during the colonial period was carried from Europe to the Central American "Rimland" which encompassed the West Indies and the Caribbean coast of the mainland. This region was more accessible and economically attractive than the mountainous interior. Merchants, pirates, and immigrants were the primary carriers of Protestantism, but missionaries played only a minor role. Sporadic mission efforts targeted the European and African English-speaking population, but neglected indigenous and Spanish-speaking people. Exceptions include the work of Anglicans and Moravians among the Miskito in Nicaragua, and limited contact between ladinos and colporteurs in the interior. Permanent works at the end of this period were concentrated in the West Indies and on the Caribbean coast between Belize and Nicaragua.
Endnotes

8. According to Nelson (1984:5) and Scholes (1971:28), the tribunals in Mexico City and Lima were established in 1569.

9. Not only were slaves the object of evangelistic efforts, they also served as agents of diffusion. When Moravian slaves from St. Thomas were sold to planters on St. Croix, they introduced their new faith to the island (Thompson 1882:90).
The nineteenth century, referred to as "The Great Century" by mission historians, ushered in a period of unprecedented global Christian expansion. "Never before had Christianity or any other religion had so many individuals giving full time to the propagation of their faith" (Latourette 1944:443). According to Beach's survey (1903), the number of mission societies working around the world grew from eleven in the late 1700s to over four hundred by the end of the nineteenth century.

As the number of missionaries and stations increased, global patterns emerged in the distribution of sites. By 1900, stations were concentrated in India, the eastern coast of South Africa, and eastern China near the coast between Hong Kong and Beijing. Missions were sparse above 45°N latitude with the exception of the Saskatchewan River Valley, Pacific Coast of British Columbia, Canada, and parts of western Europe. Stations were concentrated on continental peripheries and were sparsely distributed in the interior, particularly in Saharan Africa, the Amazon Basin, Asia and Australia. Of the inland works, most were concentrated around large lakes (Africa) or along major rivers and rail lines (Canada, Europe and the United States) (Beach 1903).

Relative to other regions, Protestant work advanced slowly in Latin America:

In proportion to the population the 19th century saw in Latin America less expansion of Christianity than in any other area of comparable size and population except possibly Europe (already overwhelmingly Christian in name) and parts of interior Asia. (Latourette 1939:128)

The only mention of Central America in the Presbyterian journal, *The Christian*
*Advocate*, in the 1820s and 30s related to political situations, with no word about missionary endeavors. Central America did not appear in *The Missionary Herald*, an ABCFM publication, until 1828 when a missionary proposed starting a school in Guatemala (1828:39). Latin America was viewed as "not so primarily attractive and interesting a field, perhaps, as Africa or India" (Johnston 1889:341).

In part, the unattractiveness of Latin America stemmed from its ambivalent status as a mission field. The region presented a dilemma for mission boards that vehemently disagreed with Catholic doctrine but acknowledged that Latin America was not truly "unreached" by the Christian message. An unnamed correspondent for *The Christian Advocate* sent the following appeal for missionaries and financial support:

Permit me . . . to call your attention . . . to the fact, that there is no society existing among those denominations of Christians in our country, . . . which can send Missionaries to South America,—at least to the Spanish part of the population. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, is the only society which we have that has the means to do it; and that society is limited by its charter to Missions among the *heathen*;—an epithet which cannot be applied *legally* to the Spanish and some of the aboriginal inhabitants of South America and Mexico. (1827:39)

The Protestant view of Catholicism was typified by a session at the 1988 London mission conference, "Missionary Methods: Dealing with forms of religious belief," in which Catholicism was classified as "unreformed," along with ancestral religions, "Mohammedanism," Brahmanism, Buddhism and "Fetish worship" (Johnston 1889). Rev. Dahle from the Norwegian Mission Society asserted that, when dealing with Roman Catholics, particularly the Jesuits, "you have only two courses to choose between, to leave them alone or to fight them" (Johnston 1889:459). European and
North American mission societies initially opted to leave Catholic nations alone and occupy themselves with other parts of the world perceived as more needy, or even more exotic. Those societies that did work in Latin America justified their efforts as a "spiritual task . . . for which Roman Catholicism in these countries did not possess the necessary moral prestige, or religious vitality" (Mackay 1935:141). As the nineteenth century progressed, Latin America gained prominence as a mission field because of global political and economic dynamics.

**Political Context**

After Central America gained its independence from Spain in 1821, Liberal leaders who came to power in 1829 actively sought Protestant immigrants from North America and Europe. They were seen as harbingers of capitalism and progress. However, as Costa Rican president Juan Rafael Mora (1849-59) admitted, certain constraints hindered the desired immigration:

> The first conditions for immigration are: freedom to work, freedom of industry, civil liberty, freedom of worship . . . . But European emigration does not turn to the Spanish American Republics because it does not find in them any of these advantages for its moral and material life which the Northland [USA] offers.

> We need immigration at all costs and if we really wish to get out of the state of semi-barbarism, if we wish to get out of the rut and enter fully into the way of progress, if we wish to get rid of our problems and ignorance, we must hurry and share with North America the guarantees granted to the foreigner. (Nelson 1984:13)

Legislative reforms ensuring a degree of religious freedom were promptly drafted. Francisco Morazán, Honduran-born leader of Central America, abolished slavery, granted trial by jury and religious freedom, and established Lancastrian schools,
an educational system introduced by Protestant missionaries (Melick 1927:32, Scherzer 1857:312). Melick, a Honduran missionary in the 1920s, gave examples of constitutional freedoms pertaining to religion that were affirmed by the 1821 Central American Constitution:

Article 42: No person shall be harassed or persecuted for his opinions. Private actions which do not subvert the moral or public order or which give no injury to another are not the subject for judicial cognizance.

Article 54: Free exercise of religious belief within the order of public morals is guaranteed.

Article 55: The civil status of any person shall not be subjected to the canons of any established religious beliefs. (Melick 1927)

"Treaties of friendship and commerce" between Central America and foreign nations included clauses granting religious freedom. Costa Rica had such treaties with Germany (1848), Great Britain (1849), and the United States (1851) (Nelson 1984:13).

The guarantee of religious freedom for citizens was tenuous and fluctuated with each new draft of the Central American constitution, and subsequent constitutions of independent nations. According to the Federal constitution of 1833, the public exercise of other religions was to be tolerated. However, Liberal laws were annulled during the Conservative era under of Carrera (1839-1865), when Catholicism was restored to the status of official religion to the exclusion of others. Greater religious liberty was not guaranteed until 1873 under Justo Rufino Barrios.

At the same time Central American leaders were attempting to draw foreign immigrants, they set about crippling foreign-born clergy. In a flurry of anti-clerical
legislation, Morazán abolished monastic orders, seized their property, and released nuns from their vows (Melick 1927:32). The monastic tradition was seen as anti-republican, and monasteries as financial drains on villages. In 1829, Morazán marched all Guatemalan clergy accused of conspiring against him to the port of Omoa to be shipped to Havana (Scherzer 1857:312). Under Dr. Marco Aurelio Soto, champion of the separation of Church and State, mandatory tithes to the Catholic Church ended, both priests and Protestant clergy were forbidden to hold political office, cemeteries were secularized, and civil marriages were permitted (Lopez 1993:46). In Honduras, Padre Juan Francisco Marquez, in an effort to restore power to native priests, banned foreign clergymen from the country (Otero 1963:150).

Surprisingly, anti-clericalism did not translate into anti-Catholicism. In 1824, the Central American Constituent Assembly affirmed Catholicism as the "prevalent religion of its people" (Nelson 1984:11). Of forty-two votes cast, 40 delegates favored Catholicism as the official religion, with 36 of 42 voting that other religions be excluded from public practice (Carías 1991:36). Honduras' constitution, as a member of the Federal Republic after 1825, also affirmed Catholicism as the official and only acceptable religious choice. Zelaya and Lindo wanted to strengthen further the position of Catholicism in the Central American constitution by including a declaration of faith and pledge of obedience, according to the Council of Trent (Carías 1991:36).
Agents of Diffusion

Immigrants

Despite legislative reforms during the early independence period, few immigrants came to Central America. Scherzer, who traveled through Honduras in 1854, described the Protestant population as "so small, and they are so scattered that they do not possess schools, or assemble for the purpose of public worship" (1857:25). Following the U.S. Civil War, waves of defeated Confederate soldiers and embittered Southern farmers emigrated to Latin America. Led by Colonel J.O. Shelby, a band of 500 men who refused to surrender at the close of the war entered Mexico. Most of the civilians chose to stay in Monterrey, while the soldiers continued on to Mexico City and offered their support to Emperor Maximilian. In return, Maximilian granted them land near Vera Cruz, which they named after the Empress Carlota. The settlement was short-lived due to the fall of the Emperor and the French departure from Mexico (Foote 1974:1023). Other Confederate soldiers and their families ventured farther south into British Honduras, Honduras, Nicaragua and even to Brazil.

In addition to religious and political refuge, Protestant immigrants came to Central America as laborers for the transisthmian railway and canal projects. To reach the Pacific Coast of North America from New England required either a tortuous overland trip or travel by sea around the tip of South America. When gold was discovered in California in the 1840s, prospectors urgently sought to establish a route across Central America. Railroads across Panama (1855) and Costa Rica (1873-1890),
along with the Panama Canal (1879-1888), drew workers from North America, the West Indies, China and India. The American Bible Society cooperated with the British and Foreign Bible Society to establish missions among North American laborers in Panama. The Episcopalian church began working along the railroad in 1853, and the Methodist Episcopal church worked among laborers on the canal (Nelson 1984:20).

Along with transportation projects, laborers and entrepreneurs were drawn to Central America by the budding agricultural enterprises. Guatemalan coffee production tripled between 1870 and 1880, with two-thirds of the crop destined for U.S. markets. As a result, the U.S.-based Pacific Mail had a monopoly on shipping out of Guatemala (Black 1988:8). In the Liberal era of President Soto, foreigners increased their control of the Honduran mining and banana industries. The banana trade began modestly in the 1860s and 70s when small quantities of fruit were sold on the Bay Islands to ships headed for New Orleans and the East Coast (Morris 1984:4). As plantations developed on the mainland, laborers came from Jamaica, the Cayman Islands and the Lesser Antilles to build railroads, transport produce, and work in the ports. These immigrants were frequently Black, English-speaking Protestants who maintained ties with mainline denominations after leaving the islands (Read, et al. 1969).

**Foreign missionaries**

In addition to refugees and laborers, missionaries assumed a greater role in Protestant diffusion. The nineteenth century marked a shift in the geographical center of mission operations from Europe to the United States that paralleled the young
nation's economic and political rise. Initially, the change was unnoticeable. The number of British societies working around the globe expanded from a pre-1800 figure of seven to 31 by 1875, while America grew from zero to 38 societies in the same period. The most dramatic growth occurred between the third and fourth quarters of the century when the number of American mission societies expanded from 38 to 139, compared to British expansion from 31 to 47. Continental European missions represented a sixth of all societies by the end of the century, and the international societies, only a tenth (Beach 1903).11 While the British still dominated the world in the number of missionaries and stations by a narrow margin in 1900 (5,381 British missionaries versus 5,330 American), the United States was fast approaching (Table 6.1).

Table 6.1  Origin of Missionaries and Number of Stations Worldwide in 1900

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>American</th>
<th>British</th>
<th>Continental</th>
<th>International</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Missionaries</td>
<td>5,330</td>
<td>5,381</td>
<td>1,902</td>
<td>1,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stations*</td>
<td>1,255</td>
<td>1,648</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outposts*</td>
<td>5,402</td>
<td>6,101</td>
<td>2,619</td>
<td>4,029</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Stations have resident missionaries while outposts do not.
(Beach 1903)

The mid- to late nineteenth century was a period of increasing U.S. military strength, prosperity and territorial expansion. In the first half of the century, America acquired Florida, the Louisiana Territory and Texas. Alaska was purchased in 1869. This quest for more territory was legitimized "Manifest Destiny," a mandate for the spread of Anglo-Saxon culture and industrial goods throughout the world—a search for
markets and souls. The term was coined by John O'Sullivan in an 1845 editorial letter, "Our manifest destiny is to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions" (Wall 1981:2). Territory and markets were to be expanded by accepting "qualified" (self-governing and democratic) neighboring countries into the Union.

In addition to territorial expansion, Manifest Destiny had a spiritual component that hastened the diffusion of Protestantism in Latin America. After the annexation of Texas in 1845, Congressman John Wentworth declared that America was not to be "the only abode of liberty on earth," but rather "the great center from which civilization, religion, and liberty should radiate until the whole continent shall bask in their blessing" (Merk 1970:28). The U.S. missionary had the joint task of carrying the Good News and American culture, a view expressed by a representative at the 1855 General Meeting in Bombay: "The missionary is also a representative of America. He should not remain too long removed from his homeland, or he will cease to be a true representative" (Phillips 1969:54).

British and North American mission societies were both accused by continental Europeans of being imperialistic because of their intermingling of political and spiritual objectives. A German critic, Heinrich Frick, blamed the British and Americans for a perceived "shift from 'mission' to 'propaganda'," and held up as an example the illustration for the London Missionary Society's centennial anniversary celebration. It
featured a Union Jack, a Star-Spangled Banner and a cross with the caption "The Spiritual Expansion of the Empire" (Hutchison 1979:353).

Despite accusations of spiritual imperialism, missionaries did struggle to reconcile cultural issues with Christian morality. One session of the London Mission Conference, titled "Dealing with Social Customs," considered caste systems, slavery, polygamy and marriage (Johnston 1889). The Rev. John Ross, member of the United Presbyterian Mission working in Manchuria, summed up the opinion of most of the speakers present at the session:

Are we going into heathen lands in order to root up everything that differs from our opinions and practice, even to our very clothing? Are we not rather to go into heathen lands to plant Christian principles and give higher principles of life than they have ever had before? not to wrench up all old customs, but gradually to raise them and allow those principles to grow . . . and to become gradually assimilated by the people . . . ? (Johnston 1889:62)

During the independence period, harbingers of these "higher principles of life" were mainline missionaries from the United States, Great Britain and continental Europe, who represented mainline denominations. The most active were the Moravians, Anglicans, Wesleyan Methodists, and Presbyterians. Most missionaries sent from the United States came from New England, the heart of North American mission activity. Before 1840, 106 missionaries for the ABCFM were New Englanders, 25 came from New York and Ohio, and 30 from the Middle States and the South (Phillips 1969:29). The qualifications for missionaries listed by the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1891 are typical of nineteenth century requirements. Missionaries were expected to have
several years of training for service in their home churches, and an "aptitude for the acquisition of languages is an especially desirable qualification." Doctors had to have a medical degree and fulfill the obligations for practice in the U.S.

When missionaries accepted the call into the mission field, they were expected to serve for the rest of their lives. As outlined by the Presbyterian Board in 1881, missionaries were "willing to accept a life of steady unnoticed labor, expecting to continue therein until death, and looking for rest in the world to come" (Roy 1979:199).

The manual of the Presbyterian Women's General Missionary Society stated that women were called to serve "for life." "Unless the providence of God orders it otherwise, they cannot honorably or in justice retire from the work whilst it continues" (Roy 1979:199). Because this was considered a life-long commitment, health was important: "It is incumbent upon the Board to guard as carefully as possible against the contingency of failure through physical or mental causes" (Annual Report, MEC 1891:10).

National workers

In addition to foreign missionaries, indigenous converts, referred to as "nationals" in mission literature, played a larger role in Protestant diffusion as their numbers increased. By the end of the independence period, Beach estimated that there were 11,423 baptized and non-baptized Central American "communicants" (1903:20). An ABCFM survey of Latin American missions showed that nationals already outnumbered missionaries in 1870, by 981 to 357 (Missionary Herald 1870:17). Thirty

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years later, national workers in Central America outnumbered foreigners, 293 to 102 (Beach 1903:20). In the late 1700s and early 1800s, the ABCFM began training North American Indians in New England institutions for pastoral work among their own people. The practice was expanded to include converts from other nations who were brought to the United States for training. However, the Board decided it would be better to educate converts in their own countries rather than expose them to the "temptations of civilization" in the U.S. (Phillips 1969:100). In addition to possible negative influences, travel, living and education expenses were higher in the United States than in their native countries.

Women

Women assumed a prominent role in evangelism in the latter half of the nineteenth century. At the 1876 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, it was agreed that women's participation in missions did not conflict with traditional female roles. They could serve "without stepping beyond the sphere of a refined Christian womanhood." Mission service provided "an acceptable religious alternative to the suffrage movement" (Bendroth 1987:51). "[W]omen are no longer to be content to . . . vegetate," but should devote themselves to Christian service at home and abroad. Those who did not feel called to serve directly as missionaries raised funds at home through organizations like the Ladies Board of Missions and Women's General Missionary Society. Single women usually accompanied married missionary couples, but did occasionally venture to foreign lands alone or in pairs to work in schools and hospitals.
A report from the ABCFM Annual Meeting in *The Missionary Herald* acknowledged the special role of female missionaries in reaching women who were inaccessible to men, in this case, upper-class Muslim and Hindu women in India:

> The Committee would call special attention to the employment of women in this field, as the only agency by which, under the peculiar constitution of society, the gospel can be introduced into families, especially those of the higher ranks. (1868:354)

Half of the 102 missionaries working in Central America at the end of the nineteenth century were women. Of those, 38 were married and 13 were single (Beach 1903:20). Four of the five Presbyterian missionaries serving in Mexico in 1901 were women (*Annual Report* 1901:2).

**Methods of Evangelism**

The goal of mainline denominations was the establishment of self-supporting national churches: "The Mission was but a temporary scaffolding around the building up of free native congregations . . ." (Roy 1979:195). The "Nevius principles," named for John Nevius, missionary to China in the 1850s, advocated a "three-self" policy for national churches: self-propagation, self-government and self-support. This policy proved to be more effective than the previously employed method in which a missionary entered a country and hired nationals to evangelize their fellow countrymen. Such practices led to the propagation of "rice Christians," people who converted for social or economic gain.

The three primary means of evangelism during the independence period in Central America were Bible distribution, education and medicine. Colporteurs provided
an attractive evangelism option for mission societies that were hesitant about supporting permanent stations in the region. They were largely self-supported by the sale of religious literature. Because they did not plant churches, they were less vulnerable to Catholic resistance. It is impossible to map the extent of their influence, but they were in Honduras by the end of the colonial period, and entered Guatemala in 1827, Costa Rica in 1846, and Nicaragua in 1856. Even after permanent works had been established, mission societies continued to employ colporteurs because of their mobility. Frederick Crowe, a British colporteur, set up booths to distribute literature during periodic markets in Esquipulas, Guatemala, and San Miguel, El Salvador, where he encountered the maximum number of people from the greatest distance.

In 1845, new laws in Central America granted "liberty of the press against the censorship of the clergy. In theory, no book was thereafter legally prohibited till a jury of ten citizens, chosen by lot, should decide against it by a majority of two-thirds" (Crowe 1850:552). In reality, the clergy continued to restrict access to any literature perceived as a threat to Catholicism. Such restrictions date back to the colonial era when edicts prohibited unauthorized versions of the Bible and books containing ideas "contrary to the Catholic religion" from entering countries under Spanish control (Bastian 1990:78). King Philip V banned "heretical Bibles" and those in the "common language" in 1707 because, "As experience has taught... what follows (due to fear, ignorance or the malice of men) is more harm than benefit" (Crowe 1850). Prohibited books were imported from Manila to Veracruz and Acapulco (Bastian 1990:87).
In the late 1840s when Crowe requested permission from the Guatemalan government to distribute Bibles, "no part of the Sacred Scriptures were . . . included" because of various edicts "prohibiting the reading or even the possession of Bibles, said to be deficient, interpolated and falsified" (1850:540). Only priests had the authority to read the Bible. The letter also demanded that:

All who have any of the Scriptures or other books introduced from England to give them up to their priests upon pain of excommunication, and attached the same penalty, extending to the sixth remove, to any one indulging in conversation on religious topics with the Protestant heretic who had circulated them. (1850:540-1)

Bible societies were condemned by Pope Gregory XV in 1844 (Inter Praecipuas) and by Pious IX in his 1869 Syllabus Errorum. The Catholic clergy circulated the following letter in Puerto Rico after the arrival of missionaries there in 1898.

Separate yourselves entirely from the Protestants and leave them in peace. By no means attend their meetings. Avoid all religious conversation. If they come to your homes speaking of salvation or religion, throw them out in the act. By no means receive their Bibles and other literature . . . . Porto Ricans, be firm in the faith of your fathers! Live and die in the Catholic religion. (Beach 1901:97-98)

To counter any literature distributed by Protestants, the Church announced that "a series of leaflets of great interest to Catholics . . . will be distributed in the church free every Sunday" (Beach 1901:98). That religious pamphlets were such a popular tool for evangelism and "counter-evangelism" during the independence period is surprising, given the high illiteracy rate.
Education

Beginning in the mid-1850s, the focus of home and foreign missions started to shift from strictly evangelistic methods, the distribution of tracts and preaching, to more practical aid in the form of medical care, literacy programs, and job training. In addition to the humanitarian benefits of these approaches, they provided a foothold in nations where Christians, especially missionaries, were unwelcome. "Hands-on" evangelism techniques also gave missionaries time to learn the language and establish native contacts, "preparatory work" for later mission activity (Beach 1901:248).

In keeping with the progressive spirit under Liberal leadership, combating illiteracy through education proved to be an amenable form of evangelization. Educational missions provided a needed service and assuaged the fears of the Catholic elite about the Protestant newcomers. Methodist workers recognized that "no other work approaches it in effectiveness for stopping the mouths of enemies, breaking down prejudices, gaining popular sympathy, and tightening the grip on the public mind" (Goslen 1948:161). Frederick Crowe attempted to start a school in Guatemala City in the 1840s, but lacked the political connections to withstand religious opposition. At other times, the political situation benefited missionaries. For example, the first Protestant missionary to establish a permanent station in Guatemala came at the invitation of Pres. Rufino Barrios. A U.S. citizen living in Guatemala City, Mrs. Cleaves, became friends with Barrios' wife and suggested that the country needed alternate forms of Christianity. She recommended her own denomination, the
Presbyterians. At Barrios' request, the Board sent John Hill. He established a school in the capital in 1882, and his successor set up another school in Quetzaltenango soon after.

By 1900, there were at least 50 Protestant "day-schools" educating 2,617 students in Central America. Another 148 schools had been established in Mexico, 200 in South America, and 494 in the West Indies (Beach 1903:20). Mission schools followed the Lancastrian model, an educational method developed by Englishman Joseph Lancaster. The method was introduced into Buenos Aires in 1820 through a joint effort by the Foreign School Society and Foreign Bible Society, "at the publick expense" (The Christian Advocate 1824:521). From Argentina, the schools spread throughout Latin America. The Bible served as the principle text and older children tutored younger students (Glover 1960:359). In some cases, teachers were not Protestants, but were Latin Americans overseen by missionary administrators (The Christian Advocate 1824). Education included the classical subjects, Greek, Latin, mathematics, and geography, as well as vocational skills like agriculture and carpentry. Girls were taught to read, write, cook and sew.

The emphasis on educating ladino children in urban areas demonstrated a growing interest in expanding mission efforts beyond European immigrants. Pupils in these school usually represented upper class families, the children of military officers, lawyers, and politicians. Crowe stands out for his efforts to educate Quiché Mayan boys in an era when Central America "aborigines" were "being only incidentally
considered" (Beach 1901:126).

The acknowledged character of the Indian . . . together with his docility and desire for knowledge, gives great promise of his future intellectual and moral elevation when education and religious principles shall be supplied. (Crowe 1850:233)

Crowe had hoped to learn Quiché and translate the Bible, but was forced to leave the country (by Guatemalan soldiers) before doing so. An account by missionaries in Patagonia in 1835 gives some insight into the methods employed in educating Indians.

We inquired whether they would like to have good men come among them, and bring timber and build a large house at Gregory’s Bay: and whether they would give up their children to such men, who would teach them to read and write and cultivate the ground; to make clothing and other useful things. They said it was very good, and that the Indians would leave their children with missionaries to be instructed while they traveled the country for pasture and game. (Arms and Coan 1835:39)

Site Selection and Diffusion

In South America, stations were concentrated in large cities like Buenos Aires, Río de Janiero, between Georgetown and Paramaribo on the Atlantic coast, and between Valparaíso and Valdivia on the Pacific side. The few inland works were in urban centers like Paraná, Asunción, and Bogotá. Except for a station at Manaus, there were no missions in the Amazon. Likewise, the southern tip of the continent had only one work (Beach 1903, plate #1). Great Britain and the United States worked jointly on the continent, mainly through the American Bible Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society.

Mission societies continued to focus on the West Indies during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Of the societies surveyed by Beach, five had established
works there by 1825, compared to zero in Mexico, one in Central America, and two in South America (Beach 1903:20). By the middle of the century, missionaries intensified their efforts on the coast of the Central American mainland. From the Bay Islands, Methodists began working along the North Coast of Honduras; and by 1887, they had stations in Puerto Cortés and San Pedro Sula (Winn 1973:2). In the same manner, Anglicans spread from the Bay Islands to the North Coast and Mosquitia. By the 1870s, they had established churches in La Ceiba, Tela, and Puerto Cortés (Lopez 1993:33). The Moravians expanded from Rama Key to Bluefields, Nicaragua, in 1849. The Baptist Missionary Society established a mission on the Belize River in 1822, among "disbanded African soldiers" after an initial failure among the Indians (Chapin 1825:159).

Accessibility

Of the forty-three stations shown on Beach's 1903 map of Central America, more than half (26) were located directly on the Caribbean coast, primarily in Mosquitia and modern Belize (1903, plate #4). Another eight were connected to the Caribbean by rivers. Of the remaining inland sites, six were located along the transisthmian railroads in Panama Costa Rica. Only four stations had been established on the western side of Central America, all in major urban centers along the volcanic axis: Quetzaltenango, Guatemala City, San Salvador and Managua (Figure 6.1).

Beach advocated establishing mission stations on the west coast, "If salubrity of climate is desired, it may be more surely found on the comparatively cool and dry
Figure 6.1 Protestant Missions in the Independence Period

Central American Protestant Missions

The Independence Period:
1821-1896

Guatemala City
San Pedro Sula
Honduras

Tegucigalpa
San Salvador
El Salvador

Managua
Nicaragua

San Jose
Costa Rica

Panama City

Figure 6.1 Protestant Missions in the Independence Period
Pacific slope than on the Atlantic side" (Beach 1901:68). However, the only station located directly on the Pacific coast was at the terminus of the Panama Railroad in the hot, wet lowlands. Because most North American societies were headquartered along the Atlantic Seaboard, the Caribbean coast was more accessible. Trade in bananas and coffee integrated New Orleans, Baltimore and New York with ports along the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean, including Puerto Cortés in Honduras.

During the independence period, societies began establishing permanent interior works along the developing transportation networks, particularly railroads, in Mexico and Central America. Missionaries followed railroads inland and established strings of stations in the same manner that they had along rivers.

These thoroughfares of travel and trade are fast opening Mexico to the gospel. The Protestant Churches in the field are striving to plant their missions at all the leading railroad stations, but the celerity of railroad enterprise is leaving us far behind. (Spirit of Missions 1891:21)

Railroads not only provided accessibility, rail companies sometimes financially supported Protestant evangelism efforts. The Episcopal "Christ Church by the Sea" was built by the Railroad Company in the Panama Canal Zone in 1864. A passenger agent for the Chihuahua and Pacific Railroad gave delegates throughout Mexico half-price tickets to a missionary convention in Guerrero in 1901 (Eaton 1901:17).

Rail travel did little to open up the interior of Honduras. Because tracks were laid by fruit companies, they went only as far inland as necessary to carry produce from the fields of the coastal plain to the ports. There were great hopes for a proposed transcontinental railroad, for which the government received four loans from Great

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Britain between 1867 and 1870. Unfortunately, contractors were paid per mile of railroad completed, resulting in convoluted tracks that barely left the coast when the money ran out. The line extended from Puerto Cortés to Potrerillos. The fiasco left Honduras deeply in debt, $125 million by 1916 (Volk 1987:3). It also gave the British control over large tracts of land because of an agreement that gave British speculators ten square miles of land per mile of rail (Melick 1927:35).

**Economic factors**

Missionaries continued to focus on commercially attractive locations because of the established transportation networks, concomitant immigrant communities, and the financial support for evangelism from commercial sources. In addition to working in areas of economic value to foreigners, missionaries targeted commercial centers important to Central Americans, like periodic markets. Financial contributions from commercial sources were vital as mission-sending agencies confronted the "fragmenting of the mission dollar" (Baker 1979:416). During the eighteenth century, mission societies in both Europe and the United States were financially supported by European churches. After gaining independence, American missionaries had to rely on their own boards for money. By the 1840s, the number of new independent churches had exploded, intensifying competition with mainline denominations for the support of the American people. "Expansion of the frontier has developed so fast and far that it has tended to outrun its own governmental and ecclesiastical supply lines. Independence and individualism have become supreme values . . ." (Baker 1979:408).
The shortage of resources limited the ability of missionaries to travel and establish new works in Latin America. According to one report submitted to the mission board of the Presbyterian Church, "There is so little to report this year that it seems almost unnecessary to speak of it. This was due, in part, to circumstances, and in part to lack of funds" (Thompson 1901:20). According to an ABCFM annual report in 1859, the budget showed a deficit of $66,374 (1859:326). This was not unusual; expenses exceeded income thirty times between 1810 and 1859, as receipts increased at a slower rate than expenditures.

To justify starting and maintaining new Latin American stations, missionaries included in their annual reports brief summaries of the commercial and geographical characteristics of their sites to stress their strategic location. Missionaries also portrayed their sites in Eden-like terms to appeal to contributors:

Such is the nature of the soil, that the exuberance of that wealth which rots upon its surface in the less populous parts of Central America, would amply clothe and satisfy with bread thousands of the sons of want who fill our streets and unions, dispelling that squalid wretchedness which penury and destitution have produced . . . . The European missionary, or pious immigrant . . . might indeed sicken on its shores, but he would also find upon its temperate plains a climate more genial and salubrious than that he has left, and the reward of honest industry . . . might be more easily procured, without excessive toil or heart-corroding care. (Crowe 1850:9, 12)

On one hand, missionaries painted a picture of Paradise to appeal to contributors. On the other, they emphasized the depravity of Eden's inhabitants to stress their need for Christianity. Reports carefully balanced accounts of violence and blasphemy with
compelling images, particularly of "lost" children. The following example is taken from a Presbyterian missionary's report in *The Missionary Herald*.

In a rude neighborhood [in Buenos Aires], about thirty miles from Brotas, Rev. Mr. Pires, . . . was set upon by a mob, excited by a woman who told them he was 'the man who was catching the people to make them Protestants' They ran after him, crying 'Let us kill the devil;' but he was rescued by the bold interposition of a friendly woman. (1868:94)

**Climate**

In addition to economic factors, climate was important in site selection. Seasonal variations in precipitation presented missionaries with fluctuating transportation conditions. Foot trails were reduced to muddy, slippery ruts by rains, and rivers slowed to a trickle in dry weather. Crowe lamented the difficulty of traveling through Guatemala during the rainy season.

The means of transit by land are very imperfect. The roads being for the most part mere bridle paths or mountain tracks . . . and they are cut up during the wet season by the copious rains which form impetuous torrents and by the hoofs of the large droves of mules that traverse them continually. (1850:54)

Even when traveling to outlying settlements was possible, people were busy cultivating their fields in the rainy season and had little leisure time for listening to missionaries.

The dry season brought another set of problems. While rain made rivers difficult to cross, the dry season left some impossible to navigate for any useful distance. The drought period also meant less food and water for both people and animals. One missionary in Brazil claimed that he traveled as long as forty hours before finding water for his horse (Thompsen 1901:23). Scherzer complained of scarce provisions on his journey through western Honduras in April, when the typical
shortages of the dry season were compounded by locust attacks on corn and sugarcane (1857:53). Another deterrent to missions among the Honduran Lenca during the dry season would have been their transhumance pattern. While the wet season was a time for cultivation, during the dry season, they would have been in the highlands with their herds.

The threat of serious illness also fluctuated with the annual wet and dry seasons, endangering missionaries and converts alike. "Near the beginning and end of the wet season the situation is rather precarious for health and life, especially for foreigners, because of miasma, malaria, etc." (Womeldorf 1898:21). One missionary complained that at the port of Belize "the land-wind frequently comes down during the night charged with miasma from the marshes" causing a variety of health ailments, "intermittent fevers and agues being the prevailing disorders, the first more especially during the height of dry weather, and the latter during the rainy season" (Crowe 1850:30). A Presbyterian station at Campinas, Brazil, had to be moved after a series of yellow fever epidemics between 1889 and 1892 killed at least two missionaries, Geo. Thompson and Edward Lane, and a number of Brazilian seminary students. After careful consideration, the station was transferred to Lavras, which was farther inland and at a higher elevation. To escape the perils of the hot, wet season, many missionaries returned home on furlough or left their stations for healthier regions. Needless to say, being absent a large portion of the year hampered evangelism.
Population

The need to maximize resources meant that societies had to take into consideration the density and settlement characteristics of the target population. When ABCFM missionaries William Arms and Titus Coan entered Patagonia in December of 1834, they had to weigh the spiritual needs of the Indians with the impracticality of working among them: "[T]he sight of those restless savages, roaming on to eternity, without the knowledge of a Sabbath or a Savior, is painfully affecting" (1834:430), yet "as the population of the accessible country amounted to but a few hundreds, they thought it expedient to return to the United States" (*Missionary Herald* 1835:20-21). There was no clearly defined minimum population size; such decisions were left to the discretion of missionaries. The few mission sites in the interior of Central America during the independence period were located in urban centers, usually national capitals.

In addition to population size, ethnicity and language were considerations in selecting new mission locations. Most Protestant work during the independence period focused on European and West Indian immigrants, with only sporadic contact with Indian and ladino communities. All three Protestant organizations working in Honduras before 1896, the British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, Wesleyans and Methodists, worked solely with English-speaking populations on the North Coast and in the Bay Islands. In Belize, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, Baptists, and Wesleyan Methodists all began their work among English speakers (Beach 1901:79). Along the canal and railroads, societies also worked with Chinese and Indian laborers.
Anglicans were the earliest denomination to work with Central American Indians, but the Moravians are best known for their work in Mosquitia.

The Miskito "King" Robert Charles Frederick gave 108 square miles of his kingdom, a protectorate of Great Britain, to British officers to encourage immigration in 1841 (Nelson 1984:2; Hutton 1922:322). The British, in turn, tried to sell the land to the Germans, who sent Moravians as scouts and missionaries in 1847 (Hutton 1922:324). They first established a station on Rama Key, and then in Bluefields on the mainland in 1848. Moravians initially focused on the English-speaking Black community in Nicaragua. Because of tension between Blacks and Indians, the denomination had little appeal to Indians until missionaries began working their way north along the coast to reach the Miskitos and Sumus (Moravian Foreign Mission Society 1932:81). They established stations in Pearl Lagoon, Ephrata, Bethany, Kukulaya, Magdala and Karata. Outposts sprung up in Layasiksa, Tapunlaya, Bawa, Baer, Wounta and Walpasiksa (Hutton 1922:329-330). A five-year spiritual revival started in Magdala in 1881, and could explain the rapid diffusion of Moravian stations along the coast. The ecstatic response was so extreme among converts in Yula that missionaries actively suppressed the movement. Other denominations (Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, the Jehovah's Witnesses) later established stations in Bluefields, but only the Church of God worked with Indians (Helms 1971:185). In Honduras, the Wesleyan Methodist worked with the Garifuna near Puerto Cortés after 1887 (Melick 1927:57). In the mountainous interior, Presbyterians worked with the
Quiché in Guatemala in the 1880s, and Central America Mission (CAM) started its work among Indians and ladinos in Costa Rica in 1891.

Comity agreements

Finally, locational decisions were influenced by comity agreements among mission societies. These were non-binding territorial divisions. Central America was roughly divided between the dominant mission-sending nations, with the British concentrated in the ports and dyewood areas of Belize and Guatemala; Americans in the urban centers along the Pacific volcanic axis; international bodies, specifically German Moravians, in the Mosquitia region of Nicaragua; and Anglicans (1870s) and Methodists (1840s) on the Caribbean Coast of Honduras and the Bay Islands. Interdenominational organizations like the British and Foreign Bible Society and American Bible Society supported Bible colporteurs throughout Central America.

Southwestern Honduras

Colporteurs probably worked in southwestern Honduras during the independence period, but they left no permanent stations. Carl Scherzer, a German traveler, documented his 1854 trip from Tegucigalpa through the area. His account is relevant because it attests to the absence of Protestants in the southwest, gives a sense of the size and character of the settlements, and outlines the route and conditions of travel that a missionary would have encountered. The trip from Tegucigalpa to Comayagua took fourteen hours and passed through only one town, San Antonio. Once in Comayagua, it was a two day trip to "Intibucat" by way of Las Piedras, Jucasapa (an
"Indian" town), and Quebiada de Mavilla just past Sabana Grande (1857:44-55).

According to Scherzer's description, Intibucá was "a pretty clean Indian village or town, with neat houses, indicative of a certain degree of opulence, and a cabildo and church that may be called handsome buildings." He estimated the population to be 4,000 "mostly pure Indians" (1857:56).

Once in the study area, Scherzer traveled from La Esperanza to Gracias by mule, reaching San José the first night. On the second day, he "had to cross some enormous grassy plains . . . and the whole day we saw only one poor little hamlet, the inhabitants of which were pure Indian, but spoke nothing but Spanish" (1857:63). Unfortunately, Scherzer does not name the settlement, but the grassy plain would have been the San Juan Valley. His observation that the Indians spoke only Spanish attests to the early loss of the Lenca language. On the third day, he reached Gracias by way of Belén (1857:66). Scherzer was disappointed by what he saw: "It must . . . have looked a much more inviting place than it does now [to have the name Gracias], when the greater part of the town is abandoned and in ruins; for no place in Honduras suffered so much in the war with Guatemala, in the spring of 1853" (1857:66). He estimated that the town, which relied on tobacco cultivation, had 500 inhabitants (1857:70).

**Architecture**

In keeping with the idea of missions as a transitional phase in the introduction of Protestant Christianity, Presbyterian Board guidelines in 1896 suggested that missionaries avoid purchasing property and instead rent buildings for worship,
education, and living quarters. If there were no suitable buildings available or if no one would rent to them, missionaries constructed their own buildings. Whenever possible, sites were selected along main roads and at major intersections in town, the most accessible and visible locations. A 1901 report about Protestant churches in Mexico demonstrates the importance of location. The church in Guadalajara, Mexico, "stands in the center of the city, facing the plaza and close by the cathedral," and the Parral church "occupies a prominent corner diagonally across from the chief plaza of the city." The church in Chihuahua "occupies one of the most attractive sites in the rapidly growing and prosperous city. From almost every part of the city its tower is a conspicuous object. It has already been recognized by the Catholic press as one of the prominent buildings in the city" (1901:12-13). These locations near the administrative and commercial center of town were not only accessible, they asserted the spiritual authority of Protestants in a Catholic-dominated society and landscape.

Ideally, churches were to be locationally prominent and architecturally simple. Guidelines recommended "simple" buildings that were appropriate for their cultural setting, "eliminating elaborate styles and foreign elements" (Roy 1979:203). The building was to be a sort of object lesson, as suggested by this description of a church in Mexico. "Simple in its style of architecture, it is a constant reminder to multitudes in that large city of the simplicity of the gospel which is there taught" (Barton 1901:12). Illustrations from Barton's article on Mexican churches show that the buildings might have been simple by European standards, but were larger and more elaborate than
modern Latin American Protestant structures. Whenever possible, national converts contributed to the construction costs of their own churches. Appeals were also made to churches in the U.S. and Europe for financial help.

[These people are few and poor, and it is doubtful whether they can do more this year than erect the adobe walls and wait another year before putting on the roof. A few dollars to aid them would be very helpful. (Barton 1901:142)

Endnotes

10. The Honduran constitution was rewritten seventeen times between 1821 and 1982 (Keller, et al. 1992:238).

11. International societies are jointly staffed and financially supported by multiple countries.
CHAPTER 7
PROTESTANT MISSION ORGANIZATION:
CONFERENCES AND COMITY

As the number of missionaries working around the world increased, mission boards began organizing regional conferences to coordinate their efforts. The London Mission Conference of 1888 brought "into existence . . . the first permanent instrument of international Christian co-operation outside the Roman Catholic Church" (Neill 1964:402). In addition to allowing missionaries to discuss their efforts and establish guidelines for working together, conferences provided a forum for dealing with difficult political and ethical issues. They were organized according to geographical region, beginning with India in 1835, followed by Japan (1872), China (1877), and Latin America (1910) (Neill 1964:400).

Latin American Conferences

Because of the previously mentioned conflict over the legitimacy of Latin America as a mission field, missionaries from the region were excluded from the agenda of early conferences. Following the Edinburgh Conference in 1910, a list of representatives for a Continuation Committee to plan future meetings included ten members from North America, ten from Europe, and one each from Australia, China, Japan, India, and Africa, but none from Latin America (Spirit of Missions 1910). Latin American workers had to organize independent gatherings. The first was in Mexico in 1910, followed by another in New York in 1913 where the "Committee of Cooperation for Latin America" (CCLA) was established (Bastian 1986:112-113). The most
important conference pertaining to the region was held in Panama in 1916: "This . . .
proved to be a watershed for the Evangelical Movement in Latin America," because
"never before had a conference dealt with so extensive a field in so intensive a manner"

In Panama, missionaries hoped to establish the legitimacy of Latin America as a
mission field and to address some of the barriers to the acceptance of Protestantism by
the Catholic population. To accomplish these aims, they resolved to: 1) end
denunciations of other churches; 2) send competent, well-trained workers into the
mission field; 3) strive for "cooperation and mutual assistance" under well-defined
policies, including the division of territory between the different mission societies; and
4) publicize the spiritual needs of Latin America (Spirit of Missions 1916:252). More
regional conferences followed--Montevideo (1924), Jerusalem (1927), Havana (1929),
and Buenos Aires (1949). It was not until the Jerusalem conference that Latin American
missionaries were finally admitted to the International Missionary Council Committee.

A major weakness of the regional conferences was their domination by foreign
missionaries rather than national pastors and workers. Of the 235 delegates in Panama
in 1916, only 27 Latin American members were present (Bastian 1986:113-114). At
the Montevideo Conference in 1924, national workers were better represented, although
they were not fully accepted as delegates until 1927 (Mackay 1932:246-7). While the
Panama Conference had been conducted in English, Spanish was the official language at
Montevideo, and nationals were responsible for organizing and leading the conference.
A second weakness was the absence of Catholic representatives, an oversight that heightened animosity between Protestant missionaries and Latin Americans. However, meeting organizers occasionally attempted to address Catholic concerns. At the Panama Conference in 1916, the Catholic Secretary of State gave the welcoming address. For the benefit of those in the Church hierarchy, he emphasized that the Congress "had no intention of assailing the Roman Church" (*Spirit of Missions* 1916:252).

**Comity**

In addition to doctrinal, political and cultural concerns, a major issue in the early mission conferences was the division of "heathen" territory between the different denominations to reduce conflicts and more efficiently cover the field. David Livingstone lamented that in "every village of any extent in the colony [Cape Colony], we have a number of other sects . . . all piously laboring at the same work," while ignoring "the millions of untaught heathen in the regions beyond" (1858:130). To solve the problem of overlap, mission boards devised international guidelines for dividing territory known as comity agreements. These "early efforts to assign territorial responsibility formally, emphasized the positive element of occupying the whole field rather than the negative aspect of avoiding competition" (Read, et al. 1969:342).

This idea was not unique to nineteenth century Protestant missionaries. Catholics made similar agreements in areas occupied by more than one order. When the Augustinians, Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits and Augustinian Recollects established missions in the Philippines, a royal decree in 1594 dictated that only one order could
work in each province (Latourette 1939:310). Similarly, competition between Franciscans, Dominicans and Mercedarians in colonial Guatemala necessitated territorial divisions to abate constant feuding. The Franciscans concentrated their efforts west of the capital of Antigua in Sololá, Atitlán, Quetzal and Tecpán, while Dominicans ventured north into Quiché territory and tried to link up with their brothers already established in Chiapas and Oaxaca, Mexico. The Dominicans found themselves spread too thin and later ceded their territory in the Cuchumatanes to the Mercedarians (Van Oss 1986:34).

Among Protestant missionaries, agreements ranged from general sentiments about the need for cooperation to the formal assignment of specific areas to denominations. These were only recommendations and were not legally binding. Rev. L. Dahle remarked, "I wish a Conference like this would sit down and map out the world . . . and divide it between the Societies, so that each Society should have its share, and each nation have its share" (Johnston 1889:459). Unfortunately, maps of divisions were seldom drafted. Most agreements were verbally outlined in mission journals and conference proceedings.

The fundamental understanding between denominations when choosing new missions sites was "first come, first served." As stated by London Conference chairman A.C. Thompson, a mission's claim to an area was "analogous to claims of discovery, exploration, and military or colonial occupation . . . Any evangelistic agency has the undisputed right to enter any part of unevangelized heathendom" (Johnston 1889:439).
Matheson, another conference delegate, added, "The missionaries on the field have an honourable understanding as to the division of the land among them; one goes in this direction, and another in that" (1889:430). Any area abandoned by a mission for one year or longer could rightfully be occupied by another group with or without an invitation.

Divisions generally followed natural and political boundaries so that "Geography, not conviction, became the basis for denominational allegiance" (Neill 1964:401). A 1910 plan for the division of Japan proposed that mission areas be "as large and exclusive as possible" (Christian Movement 1910:192). In 1893, Korea was partitioned along existing political divisions and natural boundaries such as the Naktong and Han rivers (Paik 1980:198). In the lake region of eastern Africa, known as the "Apostles Street," boards divided themselves between the major bodies of water, with the Free Church of Scotland working around Lake Nyassa, the London Mission with Bantu tribes around Tanganyika, and the Church Missionary Society around Victoria Nyanza (Beach 1901:434).

While any society had a right to work in unclaimed territory, there were certain conditions under which other denominations might enter the area. Major ports were to be accessible to all mission organizations because of their importance in communication and the acquisition of supplies. Likewise, strategically located interior cities, like Seoul and Guatemala City, were common bases. In the Pacific Islands, missionaries would jointly occupy central islands and travel by boat to peripheral sites. Places with a high
population density also justified multiple works. The specific population warranting joint occupation was decided upon by the societies involved. In 1893, Northern Presbyterians and Northern Methodist in Korea agreed to cooperate in towns and ports with more than 5,000 inhabitants (Paik 1980:201). The agreement was nullified by Methodist bishop R.S. Foster, but was adhered to anyway for practical reasons. Latin American workers held an independent assembly in Mexico City between January 31 and February 3, 1888, where they specified that a population over 15,000 was large enough to justify more than one mission. Fewer than 15,000 could be handled by a single society, except in cases of private agreements between mission organizations (Johnston 1889:445). This plan was not officially adopted until the Cincinnati Conference in 1914.

Multiple missions were acceptable in areas inhabited by more than one linguistic group. As a result, societies became associated with particular ethnic groups. Differing attitudes toward the use of indigenous languages further differentiated mission territories. In Africa, for example, missionaries from France and Portugal favored teaching in their own languages, while Belgians and Germans used both European and African languages. The British relied most heavily on the African tongues (Binder Johnson 1957:182). During the colonial period in Latin America, regular and secular Catholic orders gravitated toward different linguistic groups. Secular orders preferred to work with Spanish-speakers and regular clergy worked with indigenous groups in
their own languages. British and American Protestant missionaries preferred working with English-speakers in Central America.

Comity agreements applied to more than territorial divisions. Guidelines were suggested to prevent competition among employees of the various stations. Missions were to pay native workers equal wages and avoid hiring former employees of other stations. Intermarriage between members of different missions was also discouraged to prevent people from moving from one mission to another, leading to a loss of converts and a "waste" of resources (Johnston 1889:439). Japanese societies agreed that whenever members moved into the territory of another mission, they would transfer their membership to the new mission (Christian Movement 1910:192). An agreement between Presbyterians and Methodists in Korea specified that members could not transfer from one mission to another without a letter of recommendation (Paik 1980:201).

Mission societies, despite the emphasis on separation, cooperated on joint education programs, language schools for new missionaries, and publications. Such joint works presented a more unified image to potential converts and enabled mission boards to use their resources more efficiently. In Brazil, Presbyterians and Methodists united in the 1930s to work with Japanese immigrants and the Cayua Indians. They also formed a joint institute to train theology students. In Santo Domingo, Methodists, Presbyterians, and United Brethren formed a joint church, hospital and school (Latourette 1945:173).
Comity and Latin America

The first formal comity agreements for South America were made in the early twentieth century through the Committee on Cooperation. Peru was the first to be partitioned, taking "into account communication developments" in the country (Read, et al. 1969:345). Divisions applied to missions but not necessarily to local national-led congregations, which were free to associate with any denomination. The central region, including Lima, Junin and the province of Callao, "roughly that touched within the Ferrocarril Central," went to the Methodist Episcopal Church. The Evangelical Union of South America took the southern region, Arequipa, Puno and southern Cuzco. The Free Church of Scotland claimed the north, Libertad, Cajamarca, Lambayeque and part of Piura (Goslin 1948:154), but later shared its territory with the Nazarene and Pilgrim Holiness denominations (Read, et al. 1969:345). All societies maintained their headquarters in Lima. The Methodists, Presbyterians and Episcopalians had a similar agreement in Brazil before 1916 (Read 1969:343).

Prior to the 1916 Panama Conference, mission societies in Central America divided territory through informal agreements, generally based on the order of their arrival. The British dominated the major port cities, particularly in Belize, while international societies were concentrated in Mosquitia and along the railways of Panama and Costa Rica. Americans, the last to arrive, moved inland to establish stations in urban centers along the volcanic axis (Beach 1903, plate #4). After 1916, the Northern Baptists were formally assigned to El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua (Nelson
They never occupied Honduras, but did begin works in Managua, Masaya, Diriamba and León. Panama and Costa Rica were assigned to the Methodist Episcopal Church, which had been working along the railroad since the mid-nineteenth century and the canal since 1906. In reality, the 1916 agreement had little impact on where denominations worked, unlike the division of Mexico, beginning in 1914, which completely reorganized missions in the country.

James Barton, secretary of the ABCFM, proclaimed after his tour of Mexico that it "is not overcrowded with foreign missionaries, and there is no quarreling for territory" (1901:9). However, in the period of political unrest and anti-religious sentiment following the revolution, the country was divided between eight major denominational boards at the Cincinnati Conference in 1914 and Panama in 1916. Under the "Cincinnati Plan," Presbyterians turned over their northern works to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and assumed work from Oaxaca through the Yucatán. The Methodist Episcopal Church and Disciples of Christ worked in the central region. The Presbyterians, South, and Congregational Church took the Pacific coast; and the Associate Reformed Presbyterians and Friends Church worked on the Gulf (Beard 1925:402). Mexico City served as a central headquarters for all boards.

A significant factor in the failure of the "Cincinnati Plan" was the exclusion of Mexican pastors from the decision-making process. Territory was to be divided according to a ratio of missionaries to population, but national pastors, who outnumbered foreign missionaries by more than 2 to 1, were not counted (Read, et al.}

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An additional problem was the impression of some workers and pastors that saving money, rather than spiritual objectives, was the primary focus of the reorganization (Grubb 1935:104-5).

**Catholics and Comity**

Catholics did not participate in the Protestant mission conferences and were not expected to adhere to comity agreements. The following quote taken from the minutes of the London Conference of 1888 encapsulates the sentiment of such meetings:

No regard for Comity is expected from that quarter. The propaganda avows the design of establishing a countermovement beside every Protestant station in the heathen world. This proceeds from the monstrous assumption by the Roman Curia of jurisdiction over all nations on earth. Having large resources and a measure of government aid, that Church is enabled to confront nearly all Protestant evangelism with a perpetual menace or actual hostilities. (Johnston 1889:443)

Competition between Protestants and Catholics was intensified by the policies of missionary-sending nations in their colonies. The German government assigned Catholics and Protestants to different regions, but the British did not (Binder Johnson 1957:182). Both the French and Portuguese governments preferred sending Catholic missionaries to their colonies. The Portuguese passed a law supporting missions as "one of the most powerful agencies through which they [the Portuguese] can achieve their aims" of "civilizing and nationalizing" colonists. However, only Catholic missions were granted legal status and given government subsidies (Bell and Buckley 1927:43).
Disintegration of Comity

Comity agreements served as a useful tool for coordinating mission efforts; however, they also created problems for the boards involved. As in the case of Mexico, difficulties arose when territory was divided after years of mission activity. The Cincinnati Plan required some churches to turn over their buildings and property and start over in a new area (Annual Report, PCUSA 1922:47-48). Even if territory was "amicably divided," missionaries sometimes resisted accepting people into membership who differed on fundamental doctrinal issues such as baptism, confirmation, and communion (Latourette 1929:668). This problem was solved in Mexico by allowing churches started by missionaries to remain affiliated with their original denominations. The various boards also cooperated in establishing and maintaining a university, hospital, agricultural school, publishing house and seminary to promote unity (Beard 1925:402).

Another blow to comity agreements was the increasing mobility of the population as converts left in search of employment and education opportunities. Their movement was facilitated by improving transportation networks and technology. Booms in the coffee and banana industries in Central America pulled people seeking seasonal labor away from their rural villages. As the attraction of urban places increased, rural churches lost many of their national pastors. Sometimes entire churches were relocated to cities after a large portion of the congregation had migrated (Read, et al. 1969:346).
Finally, the growing evangelical movement in the early twentieth century proved disruptive to comity agreements in Latin America. Many of the newly-emerging fundamentalist and pentecostal sects were independent of larger organizational bodies, which made them difficult to incorporate into formal comity plans. As a growing number of national pastors assumed leadership, an increasing portion of the Protestant population was beyond the authority of foreign missionaries. Pentecostals resisted efforts to control their selection of church locations and worked wherever they perceived a need, being "moved by the Spirit" rather than by other Protestant bodies. In an analysis of missions, Goslin characterized the new churches as a threat to the progress of Protestantism, at least to mainline growth. "At the same time that improved transportation helped [Protestant expansion], non-cooperating groups, i.e., the Pentacostalists and the Seventh-Day Adventists, hindered" (Goslin 1948:155).

**Endnote**

12. Read gives different figures: a total of 304 delegates, of which twenty-six were Latin American (1969:43).
CHAPTER 8

POINEER PERIOD (1896-1945)
RISE OF FUNDAMENTALIST EVANGELICALS

By the turn of this century, European and North American mission societies had accepted Latin America as a legitimate mission field. The number of foreign missionaries in Latin America nearly doubled from 1,306 in 1911 to 2,300 in 1923 (Latourette 1945:172). In 1896, Central America Mission (CAM) missionaries arrived in Santa Rosa de Copán, in western Honduras, initiating what Lopez called the "pioneer period" in Honduran missions (1993). This marked the large-scale expansion of missions beyond English-speaking settlements on the Caribbean Rimland into the interior where the bulk of the *ladino* and Indian population lived. Similar works started throughout Central America.

Political Context

Political and economic relations between the United States and Central American leaders were amicable at the turn of the century. The industrialized nations of Europe and North America represented enlightenment and progress. One author optimistically wrote about Honduras that "The coming in of North Americans and other foreigners is introducing good roads, improved methods, etc., so that a better future is before the republic" (Beach 1901:70). However, the enthusiasm of Central American leaders waned in the face of increasing political and economic intervention. The acquisition of Puerto Rico following the Spanish-American War (1898) expanded U.S. possessions in the Caribbean. Under a 1903 treaty with Panama, the United States
assumed the task of completing the canal and gained sovereignty over the Canal Zone.
This meant a vested interest in the region that warranted whatever intervention was
necessary to maintain transportation and communication, especially following the rise
of Central American dictators in the 1930s. As for direct military intervention, Marines
invaded Honduras in 1904 and tried unsuccessfully to intervene in Nicaragua in 1909
and between 1912 and 1925. During the Nicaraguan civil war (1926-1933), the U.S.
was instrumental in putting the Somoza family in power, a position the family retained
until overthrown forty years later.

Despite hopes for industrialization and development, Central American
countries became increasingly dependent on foreign imports. In Honduras, the value of
imports grew from $4.8 million in 1913 to $9.5 million in 1925 (Melick 1927:42), with
eighty-seven percent coming from the U.S. in the 1920s (Volk 1987:10). Perhaps
frustration with foreign political and economic interference, combined with continuing
anti-clerical sentiments among Liberals, led some Central American leaders to lash out
against foreign missionaries. The 1917 Guatemalan constitution banned religious
groups and, in 1926, the government called for the expulsion of all foreign clergy
(Martin 1990:94). Guatemalan President Ubico established a quota for missionaries
entering the country, claiming they created an economic burden when in reality they
provided many medical and educational services at little or no cost to the government.
Mission schools were also attacked for being socialist institutions.
Relations with the United States improved under Roosevelt and Truman's Good Neighbor Policy of cooperation and non-intervention. Mission boards adopted a spiritual version of the policy. Their journals featured articles like "The Church Appeals to Good Neighbor Mexico" (*Fourth* 1944) and "Our Neighbor, the Mexican* (*The Missionary Herald* 1925), which extolled the virtues of Latin American citizens and stressed their industrious character and desire for progress. Educational missions were viewed as the best option for securing the region's peace and prosperity.

You, kind reader, who go yearly to Florida and occasionally to California; who have visited Europe at least once . . . why have you allowed Mexico to remain a sealed book? Why have you never entered the homes of these, your next-door neighbors? He is mighty well worthwhile knowing--is the Mexican . . . joyous, courteous, proud--as all people ought to be--seeking no man's patronage any more than we do; enterprising, ambitious to throw off oppression's yokes, to give the educational opportunity to his children, rising and hopeful. (Beard 1925:403)

Ironically, the policy made it difficult for both Catholic and Protestant missionaries to obtain passports for travel to Latin America. The U.S. feared that "a large missionary invasion would provoke ill will and so jeopardize its good neighbor policy" (Latourette 1945:167).

**Agents of Diffusion**

**Soldiers**

The U.S. desire for friendly relations with neighboring countries intensified on the eve of World War II. While European and North American soldiers had little time for evangelism on the battlefield in the First and Second World Wars, they represented a Christian presence (at least a nominal one) in formerly remote regions of the globe.
Forth, a journal published by the Protestant Episcopal Church, had a monthly feature called "The Soldier's View of Missions" which included letters from soldiers relating "intimate first-hand accounts of the Church's Missions overseas" (1944:10). In cases where soldiers married women they met while overseas, there was the potential for the conversion of their wives and children. More important for Protestant diffusion was the arrival of missionaries to provide moral and spiritual support for soldiers in non-combat areas, like Cocoli in the Panama Canal Zone (PCZ), "largely an American settlement composed of Army and Navy personnel" (1948:19). There were also evangelism campaigns for soldiers during World War II that sparked an evangelical movement in the military and resulted in GIs entering the mission field after the war.

**Foreign missionaries**

While the First and Second World Wars opened the globe to soldiers, northern Africa, Asia and the Pacific were closed to missionary activity. In Africa, 126 of 1,534 stations were closed, at least temporarily, along with 21 of 65 in West Asia, and one each in Melanesia and Micronesia (Beach and Fahs 1925:177). Missionary efforts were redirected to more hospitable regions, particularly Latin America. In Central America, the total number of missionaries grew from 102 to 284 between 1903 and 1925; and, the number of stations increased from 48 (with 57 out-stations) to 100 stations, 236 churches and 525 "other places having regular services" (Beach and Fahs 1925:92, 115). By 1925, the U.S. dominated in the number of stations and missionaries in every country except Belize, which was predominantly British.
The historical mainline agencies continued to support missions during the pioneer period, but the fundamentalist evangelicals and independent faith missions represented a growing percentage of workers. The schism between mainline denominations and fundamentalists began in the nineteenth century as congregations struggled to reconcile their Christian faith with new scientific theories like Darwinism and post-Enlightenment methods of historical criticism. Another point of contention was the purpose of missions. Industrialization and immigration into American cities redirected mainline domestic and foreign mission efforts away from evangelism toward meeting social and political needs. Mainline churches called this new focus the "Social Gospel." Fundamentalists "objected . . . that sociological analysis was sometimes replacing rather than supplementing theological analysis, that emphasis on improving social conditions was leading to a neglect of evangelism and Christian nurture" (Smith 1992:94). Theological differences became more pronounced as denominations united into separate cooperative bodies. In 1903, thirty-three historical churches joined together to form the Federal Council of Churches, which evolved into the National Council of Churches. Conservative evangelicals united in the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association (IFMA) in 1917, and the Evangelical Foreign Mission Association (EFMA) in 1945. The EFMA was more inclusive of pentecostals than the IFMA.

The mainline/fundamentalist schism widened during the wars and Depression. Mainline churches struggled with an emerging perception of missionary work as a type
of spiritual imperialism. A representative at the Bethlehem mission conference in 1923 voiced the need to "get away from the idea of imposing upon other nations a purely Western interpretation of Christianity and education" (*Missionary Herald* 1923:96).

Such views impacted missionaries in the field as well as laymen at home. Following World War I, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. had to launch an investigation into "alleged irregular beliefs among some foreign missionaries:

> The Board deeply deplores that during these restless days of Post-War readjustments, a doctrinal disturbance has arisen to produce evident ill effects upon the attitude of some members of the Church at home, resulting in disquieting reactions on the Mission field. (*Annual Report* 1922:11)

While mainline denominations distanced themselves from foreign missions, fundamentalists interpreted the social and political chaos of the times as a sign of the imminent return of Christ. The millennial fervor of the period is encapsulated in John Mott's *The Evangelization of the World in This Generation* published in 1900. Mott, executive of the Student Volunteer Movement, called for 50,000 Protestants to serve as missionaries (one per 20,000 "unreached" people) to reach the goal of global evangelism within one "generation." By 1925, there were 14,000 North Americans and 15,000 Europeans serving around the globe (Wilson and Siewert 1986:37).

As for missionary demographics, those sent by U.S. mainline denominations tended to be from rural, midwestern areas, "people of lower-middle-class well-churched Protestant backgrounds," while fundamentalists were less educated and came from urban areas on the West Coast, in the northeastern states, and Great Lakes region.
(Carpenter 1990). Women, who made up 49% of the Protestant missionary force in 1830, constituted 67% one hundred years later (Lanais 1933:28).

**Short-term missionaries**

Expectations about the length of service for missionaries changed radically with the development of rapid and inexpensive means of transportation. According to an annual report of the Methodist Episcopal Church (1891), Mexico City was just four days away from Nashville by train and Cuba could be reached from Florida by steamer in a matter of hours. This opened the mission field to short-term workers, particularly college students, who served anywhere from a week to a couple of years. Organizations like the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, Youth for Christ, and Youth With A Mission (YWAM) developed to train and employ such workers. By the end of World War II, 20,500 students had served around the globe (Roy 1979:200).

**Nationals**

Most important for Central American Protestant diffusion during the pioneer period was growth in the number of national pastors and evangelists. The number of Protestant converts grew from approximately 5,000 at the turn of the century to 62,000 in 1938 (Beach 1903:20; Damboriena 1963:16). In 1925, national workers in Central America outnumbered foreign missionaries 463 to 284 (Beach and Fahs 1925:92, 115). Rapid growth was closely tied to the precipitous drop in foreign contributions and missionaries sent during the Depression. As one example of the effect on mission-sending agencies, contributions to the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., dropped from
$1,248,000 in 1926 to $611,763 in 1936 (Jubilee Report 1936:6). Likewise, the number of Presbyterian missionaries worldwide dropped from 516 to 395. Reduced resources from abroad meant greater independence for national pastors. Under national leadership, church membership in Central America more than tripled, growing from 18,564 in 1916 to 62,073 in 1938 (Damboriena 1963:16).

**Methods of Evangelism**

**Education**

Education continued to be an important vehicle for evangelism among mainline and fundamentalist agencies. Some missions required converts to go through extensive training before baptism, including learning to read and write. With the cooperation of Guatemalan president Juan José Arévalo and the Comité de Alfabetización (1945), U.S. churches provided money and labor for literacy programs and the construction of rural schools. Such ties ended with the election of Jacobo Arbenz in 1950 (Burnett 1989:135-56). Missionaries also established various vocational programs, including domestic skills for women and agricultural techniques for men. William Townsend, founder of Wycliffe Bible Translators, visited Guatemala in 1917 and saw agricultural progress as a way of liberating people who had become "liquor-indebted" through a cycle of religious and social obligations. "Economic and spiritual liberation were inseparable, the Indian's passport to independence" (Annis 1987:43). Townsend established an agricultural store, coffee producing plant, and a coffee marketing cooperative.
Indians

Mainline denominations like the Moravians in Nicaragua and the Presbyterians in Guatemala worked with Indians during the nineteenth century, but such efforts intensified during the pioneer period as missionaries expanded beyond the coastal region into the mountainous Central American interior. One of the greatest obstacles was the language barrier. Korean missionary J.V.N. Talmage wrote:

The first years of a missionary's life are always a hard grind; for to be a successful worker, missionaries, especially evangelists and teachers, must have free use of the language that they are to hear and to speak daily for the ensuing years. (1947:14)

The Summer Institute of Linguistics ("incorporated" as Wycliffe Bible Translators in 1942) developed to facilitate the acquisition of language skills and prepare missionaries to translate the Bible. In 1931, SIL translated the New Testament into Cakchikel. A Quiche version followed soon after (Nelson 1984:39). In some cases, among the Miskito for example, missionaries hesitated to translate the Old Testament, fearing that the stories would encourage practices like polygamy (Marx 1996). Mission organizations also established programs to train Indians for evangelism among their own people, like the CAM Bible Institute started in Panajachel, Guatemala, in 1923. Other agencies that dealt specifically with indigenous peoples were the Pioneer Missionary Agency (1930) and New Tribes (1940).

Bringing the "Good News" to the Indians was politically sensitive work. In situations where Wycliffe and other agencies had government support for translation work, politicians sometimes had ulterior motives. In the case of Guatemala, President
Barrios hoped missionary work would break down the cultural unity of the Indian groups in the northwestern highlands by creating religious factions. In addition to the political ramifications, both intentional and unexpected cultural changes accompanied indigenous missions. The Choco in Panama abandoned their traditional pattern of dispersed settlements and formed villages either near schools or around missionaries (Herlihy 1985). Similar resettlements occurred in the Amazon. Such cultural changes were precipitated by both “push” and “pull” factors. Pull factors included the desire for medical care and education. Indians felt pushed to seek changes by the encroachment of traditional homelands by agricultural colonists, corporations and roads; the concomitant loss of hunting or agricultural land; and the introduction of a cash economy.

While some missionaries experienced success in this "virgin field," not all indigenous communities welcomed Protestants. Mission journals published accounts of missionaries being beaten, driven from villages, and even killed. In Alta Verapaz, Indians tried "to drive missionaries away by tainting their food with ground-up red ants and chili peppers" in the 1930s; and in Huehuetenango, residents claimed that missionaries caused a statue of Jesus to "cry and sweat blood" (Burnett 1989:2). Protestants were also blamed for natural disasters and epidemics.

**Technological developments**

While the focus of fundamentalist and mainline mission agencies diverged in the pioneer period, with the former focusing on evangelism and the latter emphasizing social programs, the methods of both were transformed by rapid technological
developments. Various audio and visual inventions, the phonograph and moving pictures, promised a captive audience for the gospel message. James Eaton, a missionary in Chihuahua, reported "great success" with his stereopticon, a type of projector:

As 'Holy Week' was drawing near, I showed the biblical views appropriate to that time; and so deep was the impression, and so large the attendance of outsiders, that our deacon . . . remarked; 'I assure you if we could have these views here during Holy Week, nobody would go to the Roman Catholic Church; all would come to our chapel. (1901:248)

This was just a foretaste of the competition between Catholics and Protestants witnessed today.

Short-wave radio was initially used by mission boards to send words of encouragement and support to their missionaries in the field. The American Board (ABCFM) made its first broadcast to missionaries at 1:45 p.m. on March 30, 1932, courtesy of the Westinghouse stations WBZ and W1XAZ in Boston (Missionary Herald 1932:128). Radio evolved into a tool for broadcasting sermons and music to a larger population than missionaries could possibly reach in person. This became more important as governments restricted or prohibited missionary activity. Two well-known Latin American evangelism stations were the "Voice of the Andes" transmitted from Quito and Trans World Radio from Bonaire in the Dutch Antilles.

Diffusion

Technological advances changed methods of preaching, and the continuing improvement of transportation networks allowed missionaries to carry their message
farther and faster than ever before. The relationship between commercial interests and Protestant diffusion continued because of the reliance of missionaries on commercial transport. The perishability of bananas meant that Central American nations had to rely on U.S. steamships, giving companies like the Snyder Banana Company a virtual monopoly on shipping to the region. One could travel on a "passenger-carrying freight vessel" of the United or Standard Fruit Companies from New York, Boston, Miami, Mobile, and New Orleans to Puerto Cortés, Tela, La Ceiba and Trujillo in Honduras (Parmer 1943). A round trip ticket from Tampa to Honduras in 1943 cost $40, from New Orleans, $108, and New York, $162.

A missionary in West Central Africa entreated churches to supply their missionaries with cars wherever possible because they "considerably increased the usefulness and efficiency of the missionary; it is not a luxury but a necessary part of a missionary outfit; every station should have at least one" (Neipp 1929:241). The first automobile arrived in Honduras in 1905 (Portillo 1976:239) and by 1927 "auto roads" connected Siguatepeque, Comayagua, Tegucigalpa and San Lorenzo on the Gulf of Fonseca. By 1943, the primary roads in Honduras were the Carretera del Norte connecting Tegucigalpa with the North Coast and Carretera del Sur between Tegucigalpa and the Pacific. A section of the Pan American Highway between El Salvador and Nicaragua passed through San Lorenzo. These improvements integrated the central region of the country with the northern and southern coasts, but the eastern
and western portions of Honduras remained isolated. There, missionaries continued traveling by boat, bicycle, mule and on foot.

The advent of the automobile was, paradoxically, liberating and limiting. While cars enabled the missionaries to travel farther in less time, their destination was limited by available roads. As routes from their headquarters to the larger stations became more direct, missionaries made fewer circuits through surrounding settlements to establish outstations. In a letter to the *Missionary Herald* in 1923, an agent with the American Bible Society excitedly related his journey from Pachuca to Mexico City with "a genuine old-time colporteur" (Mellen 1923:541). Such itinerant methods were already becoming a thing of the past.

Rail lines continued to spread across the Americas. One could travel from Juarez to Mexico City in forty-eight hours "by the fastest express train" in 1901 (*Missionary Herald* 1901:1). Nine-hundred miles of railroad had been laid along the Caribbean coast of Honduras by the 1940s. Lines extended from Puerto Cortés east to Puerto Castilla, with offshoots to San Pedro Sula, El Progreso, Potrerillos, and Olanchito. Because the lines were built to export bananas, they were of little benefit to the interior population. When the Depression and the arrival of leafspot disease ended the banana boom in the 1930s, the United Fruit Company moved its operations to the Pacific coast and tore up the railroad between Puerto Castillo and Olanchito, and from Omoa to the Guatemala border (Volk 1987:5). Missionaries who had relied on the company trains for transportation had to abandon some of their outstations.
With the development of commercial airlines in the 1930s, reaching the Honduran interior was best accomplished by plane. One author called Honduras "one of the most air-minded countries in the world, being the birthplace of *Transportes Aereos Centro-Americanos*" (Parmer 1943). There was also a government-operated company, *Compañía Aérea Hondureña*, that flew between Tegucigalpa, Tela and San Pedro Sula. A one-way TACA ticket from Brownsville, TX, to Tegucigalpa cost $105; and, the trip took twenty-four hours because of an overnight stay in Guatemala. By 1953, there were thirty TACA airfields in Honduras. Flights arrived three times a week in Erandique, Gracias and La Esperanza (Melhado 1953:193).

Not only did planes provide transportation for missionaries, flying became an evangelistic tool for agencies like Mission Aviation Fellowship and SIL's Jungle Aviation Company (JAARS). These became known as "service missions" because they focused on "supplement(ing) the ministries of other missions" rather than on establishing new churches (Read, et al. 1969:346). These agencies continue to transport food, water, and medical supplies; bring doctors and dentists into remote areas; carry the sick out of remote areas for medical attention; transport missionaries and their supplies; and survey vast tracts of land (as in the Amazon) to find settlements and to identify suitable places to establish new stations.

**Site Selection**

In the early twentieth century, mission stations remained concentrated along the Caribbean coast between Nicaragua and Belize, and along the major transisthmian
routes across Costa Rica and Panama. As for interior stations, the most significant growth occurred in central Guatemala and along the border between Guatemala and Honduras (Figure 8.1). Roads and railroads became more important than rivers in directing the establishment of interior works.

**Urban versus rural sites**

Bastian refers to Protestantism in the early 20th century as primarily an "urban phenomenon" (1986:118). In the mid-nineteenth century there were only four Latin American cities with a population of 100,000, and more than ninety percent of the population lived in rural areas. That began to change in the late 1800s and intensified after World War II as people migrated to the cities in search of work, education and the amenities of modern life. Every Central American capital was the headquarters of several mission-sending agencies by the end of the pioneer period.

While cities provided numerous advantages, missionaries also had to cope with the drawbacks of working in urban areas. The transient nature of the population, migrating back and forth between rural and urban areas in search of work, made it difficult to adequately train nationals for ministry and ensure a stable congregation. Missionaries also faced higher living costs and property values in the cities. A.E. Bishop, CAM missionary to Honduras, discouraged the council from sending missionaries to the capital: "I would favor locating missionaries at La Paz or Comayagua before Tegucigalpa. They can live at either of these places for less than
Figure 8.1 Protestant Missions in the Pioneer Period
half of what it costs at Tegucigalpa" (Winn 1973:2/20). There was also the problem of converts not wanting to return to a rural lifestyle after being trained in the cities.

Urban areas provided a degree of freedom and anonymity for converts, but the Catholic Church presented an obstacle to Protestant diffusion in rural areas with resident priests. In the case of western Honduras, conversion posed the threat of spiritual and social alienation. The diary of a CAM missionary in Gracias revealed that only men attended their services because the women were afraid that priests kept records for the bishop of who attended Protestant meetings (Winn 1973:2/8). Priests also threatened to excommunicate anyone buying Bibles or tracts, banned converts from being buried in the local cemetery, and imprisoned people for preaching. Eight citizens of El Paraíso were sent to prison in Tegucigalpa without a trial in 1899. Bishop suspected that, in addition to the priest's anger over their religious conversion, the converts threatened the local economy by refusing to raise tobacco (Winn 1973:2/9). Many evangelical denominations did, and still do, condemn the use of alcohol or tobacco products.

Guatemala

By the middle of the pioneer period, Guatemala had the highest number of foreign missionaries, stations, and national workers. By 1938, a third of Central American Protestants lived in the country (Table 8.1). Missionaries were initially drawn by the political climate under President Barrios, and they continued to work in the country because of the receptive indigenous population. Despite anti-missionary
Table 8.1  Distribution of Protestant Membership in Central America, 1925 and 1938

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>1925</th>
<th>1938</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>10,708</td>
<td>16,515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>10,455</td>
<td>21,740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>5,170</td>
<td>17,306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>1,727</td>
<td>2,026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>1,019</td>
<td>1,663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>1,005</td>
<td>2,823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30,084</td>
<td>62,073</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Damboriena 1963:16)

sentiment in the early part of the century, the Good Neighbor Policy seemed to ameliorate the situation. Supposedly, President José Orellana visited a Townsend mission in the 1920s and asked, "Why don't more missionaries come now that we want them, as I would like to see one in every town" (Stoll 1982:31). Stations were concentrated in the central and eastern parts of the country, areas that were well-integrated by rail. Presbyterians were centered in Guatemala City, and the Society of Friends church established their headquarters in Chiquimula near the Honduran border in 1902. Central America Mission was the first fundamentalist organization to arrive (1899).

Panama

Panama had the second highest concentration of foreign missionaries, stations, and churches (Table 8.2). An almost equal number of British and American
missionaries worked in the country (Beach and Fahs 1925:92). Historical
denominations, particularly the Episcopali ans and Methodists, dominated the Canal
Zone, where they had established themselves during the construction of the Panama
railroad in the nineteenth century. They continued to focus their efforts on the English-
speaking Protestant population, including U.S. military personnel in the Canal Zone
during World War I, and West Indian laborers on the banana plantations. The first
fundamentalists, the Southern Baptists, arrived in 1900 and worked with Spanish
speakers as well as West Indians and Americans in the Canal Zone. The Seventh Day
Adventists traveled up and down the Caribbean coast by boat as far south as Colón in
the late 1890s. Their headquarters were moved from Kingston, Jamaica, to Colón in
1908 (Nelson 1984).

Table 8.2 Distribution of Protestant Workers and Stations in
Central America, 1925

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Foreign Workers</th>
<th>National Workers</th>
<th>Mission Stations</th>
<th>Churches*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>48 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>47 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>36 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belize</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>236 (13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Number in parentheses represents churches that are self-supporting.
(Beach and Fahs 1925:92, 115)
Nicaragua

In 1925, Nicaragua had the most Protestant converts and second highest number of national workers, most likely because of the long history of Moravian and Anglican work among Indians of the Caribbean coast. The Northern Baptists established missions in Managua and Masaya; but, otherwise, all of the Protestant stations were located along the east coast. Beach and Fahs' atlas showed fewer stations along the coast in 1925 than in 1903. When Mosquitia came under Nicaraguan rule in 1894, President Zelaya attempted to squelch any separatist sentiments among coastal inhabitants, who were physically and culturally isolated, by forcing them to assimilate. He required that Catholicism be taught in schools, and that classes be conducted in Spanish rather than English. Moravian missionaries protested by closing the schools instead of submitting to the demands (Hutton 1922:340-41). Other stations were destroyed by hurricanes in 1906 and 1908, and Bluefields was damaged by a fire in 1908 (Hutton 1922:342).

El Salvador

Costa Rica and El Salvador experienced the least growth in the pioneer period. Because El Salvador lacked an outlet to the Caribbean, it was isolated from the earliest missionary activity. Other than colporteurs, the first missionaries did not arrive until 1896. The "Good Neighbor Policy" lessened persecution of Salvadoran Protestants and resulted in some growth by 1938 (Martin 1990:91). The Friends entered from Honduras in 1910; otherwise, all of the missions represented fundamentalist and pentecostal
denominations. Central America Mission also entered from Honduras in 1896, followed by the American Baptists in 1910. The first pentecostals arrived in 1912. Stations were concentrated along the railroad from Acajutla on the Pacific coast to the Gulf of Fonseca.

Costa Rica

Protestantism should have flourished in Costa Rica, given the anti-clerical attitude of the government between 1890 and 1940 (Read 1969). However, mission agencies, like CAM and Latin America Mission, did not emphasize church planting until the 1950s. Stations were concentrated along the transisthmian route, particularly in and around the capital. The United Methodist began working in the barrios of San José in 1919. The headquarters for Latin America Mission's "Evangelical Campaign" was also established in San José in 1921. Despite the slow start, Costa Rica evolved into an important central headquarters for Central American mission agencies and "at least twenty Bible institutes" (Stoll 1990:170) because of its political stability.

Honduras in the Pioneer Period

North Coast

The accessibility of San Pedro Sula, just 39 miles from Puerto Cortés on the National Railroad, made it, rather than the capital, the logical location for a central headquarters. Sala Evangélica, CAM, the Plymouth Brethren and the Evangelical Synod (later Evangelical and Reformed Church) were centered there. Fundamentalist Sala Evangélica arrived in San Pedro Sula and from there branched out along the
coastal rail lines to establish missions between Omoa (1921) and Santa Rosa Aguán (1930s). *Sala* missionaries focused on laborers for the Cuyamel and United Fruit Companies. The end of the banana boom did more than disrupt the ability of missionaries to travel along the coast. It also affected church membership as workers returned to their homes in the West Indies or the United States in search of new jobs. The crisis shifted the focus of *Sala Evangélica* back to the western part of the country where they moved farther inland to El Progreso and Santa Rita (Lopez 1993). Another fundamentalist denomination, the Evangelical and Reformed Church, entered after a Honduran visiting Washington, D.C. asked the secretary of the Evangelical Synod to start a work in his country. After a preliminary scouting trip, the North Coast was recommended as the most suitable location. Their work extended from Puerto Cortés to San Pedro Sula, and Chamelecón.

**Eastern Honduras**

In 1930, the Moravians extended their work in Nicaragua into Honduras, establishing the first permanent station in Cauquira (Kaukira) on the Caribbean coast near Puerto Lempira. By 1937, a second church started in Brus Lagoon. The "Postage Stamp War," a border dispute with Nicaragua, broke out that year and temporarily interrupted work (Lopez 1993). Another station started in Ahuas in 1940; this became a medical center in 1947. Missionaries traveled by boat in a regular circuit to the outstations scattered along the Plátano, Plaplaya, and Paulaya rivers, and along the Caribbean coast. Gold mines and banana plantations attracted *gringos* and *ladinos* to
Mosquitia, who brought outboard motors for their dugout canoes and cut roads through the forests, making the region more accessible. Moravian missionary Werner Marx started a business that took down abandoned buildings in coastal plantations and shipped them upriver to be rebuilt in gold towns like La Luz and Bonanza, Nicaragua (Martha Marx 1996).

Southwestern Honduras

The pioneer period marks the beginning of permanent Protestant endeavors in the Honduran interior. Other than sporadic activity by colporteurs, Central America Mission was the first Protestant agency in southwestern Honduras. A.E. Bishop, a CAM missionary, began working in Santa Rosa de Copán in 1896 (Winn 1973:42) on the recommendation of another missionary who had traveled through Central America and felt it would be a good location from which to reach western Honduras and eastern Guatemala. Bishop and his family sailed from New Orleans to Puerto Cortés, traveled from the coast to San Pedro Sula via train, and then on to Santa Rosa de Copán by mule. Bishop's preaching circuit covered the area west of Santa Rosa, between Corquín in the south and El Paraíso in the north; but travel to these outposts was nearly impossible during the rainy season. The roads were "simply steep mountain paths" according to Bishop's diary (Winn 1973:2/11). By 1900, CAM reported 175 converts in El Paraíso, 25 in Santa Rosa de Copán, 40 in Dulce Nombre, 20 in San Agustín, and 35 in "scattered areas" including Gracias (Winn 1973:2/32). Honduran converts quickly assumed responsibility for the churches in Dulce Nombre, Corquín and San Agustín.
In 1899, a second CAM missionary, J.G. Cassel, arrived in Gracias, a 15 day journey from San Pedro Sula by mule (Franck 1916:321). Before leaving the United States, he was advised by missionaries in Gracias not to come during the rainy season. The Mission Council, however, urged Cassel and his family to leave anyway, claiming "they [Hondurans] are not paying as much attention to the seasons as they did" (Winn 1973:5/123). This proved to be poor advice. The July trip from San Pedro Sula to Gracias was long and difficult, as illustrated by an entry from his diary on July 22, 1899:

We did not get along very fast, and only traveled about two leagues. It was a day of accident and loss to us. In the morning while loading the stove, the animal [a mule], a vicious one, bucked and threw the stove down so that it was badly broken. We thought, however, it might yet be used, and so had it loaded on a very gentle animal. Later in the day this animal slipped off of the path and rolled down the embankment breaking the stove completely, so that we left it lay by the roadside. (Winn 1973:5/145)

Once he reached Gracias, Cassel's preaching circuit extended south toward the El Salvador border, including La Campa, San Sebastián, Tomalá, Vallodolid, Guarita and Colohete. Both Bishop and Cassel abandoned western Honduras for Guatemala (in 1899 and 1901, respectively) because of the difficulty of travel, prevalence of disease, and apathy of the population. However, CAM churches continued to thrive along the Guatemalan border, and spread east to Marcala and Comayagua.

The Society of Friends entered the study area from two directions. Clark Buckley and Thomas Kelly, sponsored by the Friends Church of California headquartered in Chiquimula, Guatemala, entered Honduras in 1902. Both men soon
died, but they inspired Guatemalan Fernando Martinez to continue their work. He established the church in Erandique around 1920. The Yearly Meeting of Friends sent a couple to Tegucigalpa in 1914; their parish extended as far west as La Esperanza. Missionaries accompanying a convert to his home in San Jerónimo, stopped in La Esperanza on the way. There, they preached in the market until men with whips dispersed the crowd. Despite the harsh reception, a couple was stationed in the town by 1920 (Lopez 1993:62). Because of economic problems, the Yearly Meeting of Friends turned over their Honduran works, including the one in La Esperanza, to the World Gospel Mission in 1914. The church in Erandique, associated with the Friends of California, retained its affiliation with the Friends. Between 1956 and 1958, World Gospel Mission relinquished everything to nationals, and the name changed to Iglesia Santidad. The Friends have since resumed work in La Esperanza.

Traveler Harry Franck published an account of his journey through the study area in 1916. Like the journal of Scherzer sixty years before, Franck's description of the roads and settlements provides a glimpse of what missionaries would have encountered in western Honduras in the early pioneer period. Unlike the hut-lined trails frequented by travelers in Guatemala, those in western Honduras were deserted and offered no accommodations. The trail between Gracias, "a slovenly, nothing-to-do-but-stare hamlet of a few hundred inhabitants," and San Juan was "almost level going, grassy and soft, across gently dipping meadows," growing steeper and rockier near San Juan (1916:322). San Juan was described as "a scattering of mud huts on a broad upland
plain... Cattle without number dotted the patches of unlevel meadows" (1916:330). From there he ventured "through a vast pine forest of the highest altitude of my Honduran journey--more than six thousand feet above sea-level" to La Esperanza along a "moderately wide trail" (1916:332). "This proved to be a place of considerable size, of large huts scattered over a broad grassy plain in a sheltered valley, with perhaps five thousand inhabitants but not a touch of civilization" (1916:339). Between La Esperanza and Tegucigalpa, the route deteriorated into "an atrocious mountain trail in a labyrinth of tumbled pine-clad ridges and gullies," at times difficult to find (1916:341). The trail was used by Indians carrying oranges to the market in La Esperanza and by mule teams carrying cigars from Santa Rosa to the capital. In 1920, the trip from La Esperanza to Tegucigalpa took four days by mule (Lopez 1993:63), but the construction of airstrips in La Esperanza, Gracias and Erandique by the 1950s allowed regular access.

Architecture

While technological innovations drew attention to the missionary and his message, Protestant churches became smaller and less conspicuous during the pioneer period. Sometimes this was necessary to fulfill government requirements. When missionary Stanley Rycroft visited Peru in 1922, he was surprised by the Anglican Church in Lima: "It looked just like an ordinary dwelling. By law, they could not put up a building which looked like a church" (Sinclair 1987:125). In addition to political expediency, missionaries modified church architecture out of a growing cultural
sensitivity. Guidelines passed at the 1900 Ecumenical Conference called for church
buildings "adapted to the style and ability of the people, churches being well built and in
accordance with native ideas in cities, and small thatch-roofed chapels sufficing in
places with few Christians" (Beach 1901:252). In urban areas, available commercial
buildings were sometimes appropriated, much like modern store-front churches.

Endnote

13. Missionaries sent out by faith missions do not receive money from a church or
denominational board but "raise support" by soliciting contributions from various
sources.
CHAPTER 9

POST-WAR PERIOD (1945-1980)
THE RISE OF PENTECOSTAL EVANGELICALS

After the Second World War, Central American countries were caught in a battle between democracy and communism waged by the superpowers. Despite the provisions of the Good Neighbor Policy, the strategic location of Central America and the U.S. desire to keep communism away from its borders ensured military and economic intervention, particularly in the wake of Castro's 1959 rise to power in Cuba. In an effort to aid Latin American development, and thereby secure democracy, President Kennedy launched the Alliance for Progress in 1961. The alliance promised twenty billion dollars to diversify exports and expand "non-traditional" exports like sugar and cotton (Stonich 1992:386).

In addition to foreign aid, Central Americans instituted their own programs to confront a litany of internal problems: sky-rocketing population growth, urban expansion and foreign debt. The Central American Common Market was organized in 1960. The five member nations dropped tariffs among themselves, set common tariffs on imports and established the Central American Bank for Economic Integration. While Guatemala and El Salvador prospered, the trade deficit worsened for Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica (West and Augelli 1989:383). Economic tension, immigration, and border disputes between El Salvador and Honduras erupted into the brief Soccer War in 1969. The conflict was over in three days, but it delivered a death blow to the Central American Common Market.14

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The post-war World War II transition from a rural agricultural society to an urban industrialized one led to internal unrest and feelings of social, economic and spiritual displacement. Liberation theology offered the hope of a spiritual and political solution, promising the complete restructuring of society and redistribution of wealth. Ironically, the liberation movement was most appealing to the intellectual elite and not the poor (Stoll 1990:311). The Protestant response to political and social conditions ranged from a "revolutionary" evangelical version of liberation theology to a complete withdrawal from all political involvement. Most evangelicals fell somewhere between the passive and radical elements.

**Agents of Diffusion**

Following the Second World War, substantial portions of the globe remained closed to Christians, particularly Muslim-dominated nations in the Middle East and Northern Africa, and the Communist portions of Europe and Asia. Sub-saharan Africa and Latin America proved to be the most accessible and promising regions for Protestant missions. By 1959, one quarter of all missionaries worked in Latin America, and by 1965 the figure had risen to 37% (Nelson 1984:59). Most of the growth was among evangelicals.

For mainline churches, sensitivity to spiritual imperialism intensified after World War II. Some representatives at the 1948 World Council of Churches expressed fears that missions were a form of "Western aggression and financial domination," and that the missionary was a "representative of alien and undesired control" (Neill
1964:411). Accusations, sometimes justified, that missionaries cooperated with the CIA in the 1970s increased tensions between mission-sending and receiving nations. Between 1969 and 1979, the number of missionaries sent by the National Council of Churches dropped from 8,279 to 4,817 (Stoll 1990:72). At the 1972 World Council of Churches "Committee on Ecumenical Sharing of Personnel" in Bangkok, Rev. John Gatu of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa suggested a moratorium on money and missionaries "for a reasonable length of time" to develop independence and self-reliance in Third World churches (Missiology 1973:275). The response was mixed. While some foreign churches appreciated the opportunity for independence, others saw the proposal as a ploy to rechannel resources to Europe and North America.

As mainline denominations withdrew from foreign missions, evangelicals intensified their efforts. The watchword, "The evangelization of the world in this generation," was abbreviated by Billy Graham to "The world must be evangelized in one decade!" (Wilson and Siewert 1986:38). The number of missionaries sent by evangelical agencies associated with EFMA and IFMA more than doubled between 1953 and 1968, and growth among independent and unaffiliated groups tripled between 1953 and 1968 (Wilson and Siewert 1986:39). This last category included a mix of independent fundamentalist and pentecostal groups (Table 9.1). Evangelical growth has continued, but at a slower rate.

Despite a different emphasis, evangelicals, like mainline denominations, were concerned about issues of social justice and paternalism. Conferences of the Lausanne
Table 9.1  Number of Protestant Missionaries Employed Worldwide, 1953-1985

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>1953</th>
<th>1968</th>
<th>1985</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>9,844</td>
<td>10,042</td>
<td>4,349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFMA/IFMA</td>
<td>5,731</td>
<td>13,575</td>
<td>15,481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent or Unaffiliated</td>
<td>3,565</td>
<td>11,601</td>
<td>19,905</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Wilson and Siewert 1986:39)

Committee for World Evangelization in 1974 and 1988, organized by Billy Graham, were important landmarks in evangelical foreign missions. Delegates sought to balance social, economic and spiritual needs. In recent years, evangelical mission boards have openly acknowledged past paternalism and changed their mission statements to reflect a growing sensitivity to the concerns of mission-receiving nations. A statement in a missions brochure for the American Baptist Churches, U.S.A., reads:

We celebrate our rich heritage and our world-wide reputation as a people with a balanced and sensitive mission outreach. At times, however, we have embraced misleading stereotypes of what mission is and how it ought to be carried out. We acknowledge that... we have been paternalistic and even patronizing in some of our relationships and methods; we have started some institutions that have become burdensome for indigenous churches to maintain.... (A Passion for Mission 1991:4-5)

Efforts to relinquish control to nationals were successful, and by the 1989 "Lausanne II" congress in Manilla, almost half of the 4,500 representatives from 168 countries came from the "Two-Thirds" World (Glasser 1993:16).

The most successful Protestant denominations in terms of Latin American growth, particularly after 1960, were pentecostal evangelicals. According to research by
the Fuller School of World Mission in 1969, pentecostals made up only ten percent of
the missionaries sent to Latin America, but 63% of the converts (Stoll 1990:118).
Pentecostal evangelicals, like fundamentalists, emphasized the inerrancy of scripture
and the need for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. In contrast to liberation
theology and radical Protestantism, "Evangelicals offered to improve one's life through
a simple personal decision to surrender to Christ," which "sounded easier than
overturning the social order" (Stoll 1990:314). Pentecostals differed from
fundamentalists in their emphasis on the modern manifestations of spiritual gifts
including healing, exorcism and speaking in tongues. Services were energetic and
participatory, and lay people were expected to play an active role in evangelism.
Pentecostalism was most appealing to those who felt economically displaced by the
social and economic transitions of the post-war period. The widening class
differentiation

undercuts the traditional cultural equilibrium, which was based on social
egalitarianism (or at least the assumption of shared poverty). Protestantism
finds fertile ground for converts among those who are alienated from the
traditional economy . . . . (Annis 1987:140-141)

Pentecostal Protestantism appealed to people who were socially displaced after
migrating from rural to urban areas or into frontier zones in search of land.

It is interesting to note that the two pioneers of the U.S. pentecostal movement
came from socially marginalized groups, a woman and a Southern Black man. While
ecstatic experiences associated with the Holy Spirit can be traced back for centuries, the
modern pentecostal movement started in 1901 in Topeka, Kansas, when a Bethel Bible
Institute student named Agnes Ozman received the "gift of tongues." She began traveling throughout the South preaching that the signs and wonders of the New Testament were still possible through the power of the Holy Spirit, and that glossolalia, speaking in tongues, was proof of baptism by the Spirit. The movement gained momentum when an African-American pentecostal, William Seymore, was invited to speak at a church in Los Angeles in 1906. This sparked what became known as the Azusa Street revival between 1906 and 1909, the point of dissemination to Latin America.

Nationals

Damboriena found that national pastors made up 84% of all "responsables al pastorado" in Latin America in 1961 (1963:23). The highest percentages of national pastors were in El Salvador (96%), Brazil (93%) and Haiti (87%). The lowest were in Peru (53%), Venezuela (39%) and Ecuador (34%). Although women constituted a substantial portion of foreign missionaries, Latin American women made up a mere 5.8% (2,013 of 34,608) of the "responsables nativos" in 1961 (Damboriena 1963:22). Pentecostal denominations were the most successful in making the transition from foreign mission to national church. For pentecostals, national leadership was, and is, a natural outgrowth of the participatory nature of their services, the reliance on laymen for evangelism, and a growth rate that outstripped the ability of foreign boards to provide personnel. While pentecostal churches had very strict interpretations of scripture and
prescriptions for moral living, the flexibility in the structure of worship lent itself to cultural adaptation.

The Pentecostals have not been given a foreign form of worship which they must try to fill with meaning. They have, rather, an experience which may take whatever form the content requires. (Read, et al. 1969:315)

Read discovered that the acceptance of Protestantism among Indians was most likely "where the Indians either have great self-respect or perhaps even racial pride . . . . Only the acculturating fringes are open to the gospel" (Read, et al. 1969:217). "Racial pride" is a necessary survival mechanism in the face of acculturation. In some cases, national Protestant workers found it difficult to work with Indians because of tensions between indigenous and ladino communities, and the association of Protestantism with particular ethnic groups.

Many Spanish-speaking Panamanians felt that the Evangelical faith was only for English-speaking peoples because of the West Indian Church and the North American Protestant Colony in their midst. Similarly, the ladino (mestizo) population of at least one area of Guatemala was reluctant to become Evangelical because they thought that the gospel was only for the Indians, whom they considered inferior. (Read, et al. 1969:216)

As one solution to working with multiple indigenous groups, the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala divided the country into presbyteries according to ethnicity, which allowed congregations to be under the authority of their own pastors.

Methods of Evangelism and Diffusion

An interview with Werner and Martha Marx, Moravian missionaries in Mosquitia from 1938 until the late 1960s, demonstrates the fusion of traditional evangelism with practical aid among mainline denominations in the post-war period. A
mission hospital in Bilwaskarma, Nicaragua, and medical clinic in Ahuas, Honduras, met the physical needs of the Indians, while schools and churches filled their intellectual and spiritual needs. The primary focus of the Marx' was on teaching Indians how to speak, read and write in Spanish so they "wouldn't be poor and backwards" (Marx 1996). Literacy became more important as the population of *upla-pininy* (white people) grew in nearby mines and plantations. Werner wrote a Spanish-Miskito dictionary and traveled throughout the region starting schools for children. Whenever possible, he found teachers who were fluent in Spanish. New churches were turned over to nationals as soon as possible. To train Miskito men to be pastors, the Marx' first taught them to read the Bible in Spanish.

Among evangelicals, healing campaigns gained popularity in the 1950s. Campaigns featured preaching, music and the opportunity for spiritual and physical healing. In addition to their dramatic nature, healing fit into the Latin American religious culture.

In all of these campaigns, the principal element is the preaching of the gospel. Healing is presented as just one of the blessings that God provided in Christ and His saving work. A people who live in fear of supernatural powers and blame most sickness on evil powers do not find it difficult to believe that God can and will help them. The message of physical as well as spiritual deliverance suits their world view. (Read, et al. 1969:323)

The central role of faith in physical healing for Latin American Catholics is evidenced by the popularity of pilgrimages to Esquipulas and other sites, the availability of "sacred" medicinal herbs in the markets, and complicated rituals and prayers carried out at local shrines. Protestant healing campaigns emphasized the power of Christ as a sort
of internal pilgrimage one made through conversion; the power of God was accessible to the individual, without intermediary agents.

After leading crusades in fourteen Latin American countries between 1921 and 1934, Henry Strachen developed a new campaign strategy known as "Evangelism-in-Depth" (Nelson 1984:46). The new strategy depended on the support of local, national-led churches. According to the plan, the coming crusade was heavily advertised in the targeted area, and local churches were responsible for planning and follow-up after the campaign. These events featured Latin American evangelists and drew unprecedented crowds. The first campaign took place in Nicaragua in 1959 (Read, et al. 1969:348).

Healing and evangelism crusades drew large crowds, but sustained growth depended on the everyday efforts of laypeople. Pentecostalism provided opportunities for active involvement both inside and outside of the church. During worship services, men and women shared personal testimonies, prayed, sang and read scripture. These services were interactive, with congregation members responding both physically (raising their hands, clapping and dancing) and verbally (shouting affirmations and speaking in tongues). Congregation members were expected to preach in public and "witness" to non-pentecostal friends, family and co-workers. "Pentecostal evangelistic effort is not the professional activity of the ministers but rather the responsibility and privilege of every believer" (Read, et al. 1969:317).

If someone within a pentecostal church felt "called" to be a minister, "The only requirements for service" were "knowing the Lord, a public declaration of faith in Him,
and courage to speak up" (Read, et al. 1969:318). Not requiring a formal education meant a shorter transition time between foreign and national leadership. There was, however, a trial period that could last several years, during which converts developed their evangelistic abilities by preaching in different settings. Many pentecostal denominations are now encouraging formal theological training.

The pentecostal method of training leaders and sending them out to plant churches in new areas hastened Protestant diffusion. "Instead of sending a young man to compete with the leaders of an older generation, the apprenticeship system sends him out to pioneer new territory . . ." (Read, et al. 1969:320). This "new territory" encompassed the globe as Latin American churches, particularly pentecostal denominations, began sending out their own missionaries. The distinction between mission-sending and mission-receiving nations blurred. A survey published in 1973 found that fourteen Latin American countries sponsored 1,037 missionaries (Larson 1973:102). In Central America, Costa Rica had three mission agencies by 1976, and Guatemala had seven in 1980 (Keyes 1983:59).

**Competition Between Protestants and Catholics**

In the face of declining political and social authority, the radicalism of liberation theology and growing competition with Protestants for members, the Catholic Church struggled to retain its prominent place in Latin America. In 1958, it was estimated that only 3.5% of Latin American men and 9.5% of women attended mass on Sundays (Read, et al. 1969:240-241). To combat the growing apathy or defection to
Protestantism, the Pope issued a call in the 1960s for priests and laymen to go to the Catholic regions of the world. In addition to boosting personnel, the Church acknowledged the need to confront "economic, social, political and moral disequilibrium," an effort known as the "preferential option for the poor" (Costello 1979:146). In Latin America, the Church encouraged Indian education programs, introduced credit unions and cooperatives into rural areas, and worked for land redistribution. Such activism earned the distrust of landowners and politicians because of the association with liberation theology with Marxism. A peasant uprising in Olancho, Honduras, in 1975 ended with the death of two priests accused of inciting the rebellion and eleven protesters (Costillo 1979:187-88).17

In addition to development programs and political involvement, the Catholic Church encouraged greater participation by laymembers. The Church recognized the central role of small groups and lay leadership in the growth of evangelical Protestantism. In the 1970s, the Church began organizing parishioners into groups of 20 to 30 people to meet weekly to study the Bible and discuss issues like alcoholism, adultery, syncretism, women's rights, and public health (Chapman 1985:15). These groups were prevalent in South America, particularly in Brazil, where they were known as Comunidades Eclesiásis de Base (CEBs). In Honduras, Chapman encountered similar groups called "Caballeros del Cristo Rey." Such a group currently holds bi-monthly meetings in Erandique.
Even a charismatic movement developed within the Catholic Church. The church in La Esperanza began weekly charismatic masses in the 1970s, which still continue on Wednesday nights. The response among Latin American parishioners to charismatic worship was surprising to Catholic leaders. Instead of stemming the flow into pentecostal churches, people liked the new masses and felt free to explore other worship options, namely evangelical Protestantism. In Read's study in the 1960s, he found that Catholic attempts at renewal appealed least to those who were nominal Catholics. Among this group, evangelicals experienced greater success. Only the Seventh Day Adventists have succeeded among actively practicing Catholics (1969:268).

Protestant Distribution

With the exception of Elim from Great Britain and Foursquare Gospel in Los Angeles, the primary pentecostal denominations and sects originated in the U.S. South, signaling a shift away from the traditional New England core to the social and political periphery, "which is in part oscillation and in part a long-term retirement from the central and metropolitan areas of a society" (Martin 1990:275). The Church of God started in Cleveland, Tennessee, in the late 1800s; Pentecostal Holiness in Anderson, South Carolina, in 1898; Church of Christ Holiness in Mississippi and Alabama; and the Assemblies of God in Hot Springs, Arkansas, in 1914 (Mead 1970).

In South America, the pentecostal movement began in Chile when the Chilean Methodist church split to form an indigenous branch in the first decade of the twentieth
century (Clawson 1989:62). Two Swedish missionaries "received a prophecy that they were to do mighty works for the Lord in a place called Pará," and embarked for Brazil in 1902 (Stoll 1990:107). From these two countries, a grassroots pentecostal movement spread throughout the continent. In Central America, independent pentecostals arrived in Guatemala in 1901 and El Salvador in 1912, but it was not until the 1920s that the movement gained momentum.

The first pentecostals to arrive in Central America were independent of any larger organizational structure. The Assemblies of God, which has become the largest Protestant denomination in many Latin American countries, started after a group of independent pentecostals banded "together for the purposes of fellowship and doctrinal unity" in 1914 ("Assemblies of God Information Series" brochure). The Assemblies first entered Nicaragua in 1926, and then moved northwest into El Salvador in 1929, Honduras in 1931, and Guatemala in 1937. The Church of God, another pentecostal denomination, arrived in Guatemala in 1935. Pentecostals represented 2.3% of all Latin American Protestants in 1936 but grew to a third in the 1960s and half in the 1980s (Nelson 1984:59; Martin 1990:52).

By the mid-1960s, pentecostals constituted the largest percentage of Protestants in Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Guatemala (Read, et al. 1969). They made up seventy percent of the Protestants in El Salvador. Read attributed the dramatic growth to a revival among the Salvadoran Assemblies of God. On the other end of the spectrum, only thirteen percent of Nicaraguan Protestants were pentecostals (Table 9.2).
Table 9.2  Distribution of Protestant Types as a Percentage of Total Protestant Population in Central America, 1969

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Mainline</th>
<th>Fundament.</th>
<th>Pentecostal</th>
<th>Adventist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nicaragua was clearly dominated by the mainline Moravians, followed by the Baptists. While the largest denomination in Panama was the Foursquare Gospel, membership was evenly split between pentecostals and mainline churches because of the strong Episcopal and Baptist core in the Canal Zone. Adventists dominated in Costa Rica and represented a large portion of the Protestant population in Honduras and Panama. Adventists are categorized separately from other Protestant denominations because of their strict observance of the Sabbath and food taboos, and supplementation of the Bible with the teachings of founder Ellen White.

Site Selection

In the post-war period, mainline denominations remained concentrated along the Caribbean, in national capitals, and along transisthmian routes. Fundamentalist stations and churches had diffused throughout the interior among indigenous and ladino
populations. Pentecostals flourished in peripheral areas, among urban slum dwellers and frontier colonists.

**Ethnicity**

The historically prominent churches continued their work along the Caribbean coast where English and creole-speaking Black populations worked in banana and coconut plantations. Those who had migrated from the West Indies remained in their traditional denominations: Moravian, Methodist and Episcopal. Only the Adventists gained popularity among both *ladinos* and West Indians. Because a large number of these coastal Blacks came from families that had been Protestant for several generations, their faith tended to be "for the most part nominal; great numbers are Protestant only by tradition" (Read, et al. 1969:212). Following the Honduran laborers' strike in 1954, banana companies were pressured to hire non-immigrant workers. As a result, the demographic composition of the work force was altered. By the late 1960s, eighty percent of the banana workers were "light-skinned, Spanish-speaking people" (Read, et al. 1969:155). This forced mainline churches to expand their efforts to accommodate Spanish-speaking worshippers.

**Urban sites**

Beginning in the post-war period, Latin American migration from rural to urban areas exploded as national economies shifted away from agriculture to industry and as population pressure in rural areas increased the demand for land. By the late 1960s, forty-one percent of the population in Nicaragua and Panama lived in urban areas.
Honduras had the smallest urban population at that time, only 24 percent (Read, et al. 1969:238). Pentecostal agencies quickly adapted their strategies to fit the urban boom and flourished among the migrant population. Drost, a missionary for the United Pentecostal Church, chose San Salvador for his initial mission because of the large population. Once in the capital, "We quickly set out to learn the layout of the city and locate the more populous areas where it would be best to establish the first congregation" (1987:27). Stoll attributed the dominance of the new sects to the fact that "North American missions had been slow to shift from previous frontiers of the faith, so that much urban evangelism was pentecostal or heretical in nature" (1990:127). Urban converts also became agents of diffusion as they carried their new ideas back to rural areas.

Missionaries continued to struggle with training people from rural areas in urban seminaries. Of 264 students who attended the Presbyterian Seminary in Guatemala over a twenty-five year period, only 15 led churches in the late 1970s (Stoll 1990:126). Some decided not to relinquish the comforts of urban life. "The few city pastorates that existed became competitive jobs, while the many rural churches were left without pastors" (Read 1969:158). Others emigrated to the United States. Of those who did return to rural churches, many had trouble relating to their congregations: "They were professionalized into the middle class, creating a gap between themselves and the majority of their brethren" (Stoll 1990:126). To solve the problem, seminaries established extension programs in rural areas. Under these programs, seminaries send...
instructors and resources to rural areas where potential pastors can take courses without traveling far from their communities.

**Rural sites**

Scholars debate whether or not the majority of Protestants convert in urban or rural areas. One study in Brazil found that "the majority of urban pentecostals converted in chapel-centered rural settlements" (Stoll 1990:108). These rural converts then immigrated to cities where "sister churches provided fictive kin and served as a referral agency" (Stoll 1990:108). Likewise, people who converted in cities would go home and establish new churches in rural communities by converting their friends and families. One of the difficulties of establishing rural churches was, and continues to be, the lack of a stable population base as men and women leave for seasonal or permanent job opportunities.

Not all migration is from rural to urban areas; some people move from rural communities into sparsely settled frontier zones in search of land. Economic changes following World War II have intensified competition for land between small-scale farmers, foreign banana companies, and *hacienda* owners. Despite reforms, more than a third of rural Honduran families had no land by 1974 (Stonich 1991:140). Of those with land, more than 80% of the holdings were smaller than 5 hectares. In El Salvador, half of the arable land was held by less than two percent of the farms, while five percent was divided between half of the farms in 1971 (Volk 1987:13). As people leave their
homes in search of land, they face the same alienation and need for new social networks as urban migrants, and pentecostal groups have flourished in these frontier zones.

**Southwestern Honduras**

In the 1930s, the Assemblies of God entered southwestern Honduras from El Salvador in the 1930s. A Salvadoran pastor, Federico Mebius, established a mission in Plan de Rosario, Ocotepeque, just 2 km from the border. Converts attended services in El Salvador until a church was built in San Agustín de Copán in 1936. When more Salvadoran missionaries arrived in 1940, they moved north into the department of Copán to establish missions in Santa Rosa, San Raimundo and San Antonio. In 1947, they built a Bible institute in Florida de Copán which was moved to Santa Rosa de Copán in 1949, and then to San Pedro Sula in 1965 (Lopez 1993:85). During the 1930s, Nicaraguan missionaries for the Assemblies entered Choluteca and El Paraíso in the Pacific region of the country.

The Baptists initiated their work in Honduras in the Pacific departments as well. In the 1940s, an American missionary in the Panama Canal Zone and a Costa Rican national pastor were invited to visit independent churches in Choluteca and San Marcos de Colón. When the missionaries departed, they left the Choluteca works under the direction of other denominations. The increased attention to this southern region, by the Baptists and CAM, could be due to the improving transportation network connecting the Pacific coast with the northern and central parts of Honduras. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Carretera del Sur linking the capital with San Lorenzo was
completed by the 1940s (Parmer 1943:5). The Pan-American highway between El Salvador and Nicaragua also ran through Choluteca.

Protestant growth in the frontier area along the Salvador border was boosted by the Soccer War in 1969. Before the conflict, thousands of Salvadoran colonists entered Honduras, established farms, and took jobs in small border settlements. Pentecostals made up a sizable portion of the Salvadoran population, so their presence increased the Protestant population of the area, at least temporarily. Their contacts with Hondurans led to the establishment of at least two pentecostal churches within the study area. The was also accelerated Protestant growth in the southwest because of the influx of Christian organizations that came to aid refugees. In 1969, Baptist missionary David Harms began flying relief supplies for Salvadoran refugees into the border towns of Mapulaca, Gualcual, and Candelaria until funding ran out. He was replaced in the early 1980s by Leslie and Brenda Shawl, who established a medical mission in Gualcince. Mission Aviation Fellowship also worked in the area following the war. Finally, the conflict drew the attention of the Honduran government to the fact that this region was better-integrated with El Salvador than with the rest of the country. Politicians launched integration efforts to improve roads and bridges in the area, which indirectly encouraged Protestant diffusion.

Architecture

In addition to issues of cultural sensitivity, church architecture was simplified to fit the cultural expectations and economic limitations of their national-led congregations
in the post-war period. The change also reflected evangelical theology. Catholics and Protestants have long differed in their response to manifestations of the sacred in the secular world. Evangelicals, particularly pentecostals, reject the notion that buildings have inherent sacred significance. As one Protestant author wrote, "It is little short of astonishing that we can read the New Testament and still believe in the inherent sacredness of places as distinguished from other places... By some such stubborn tendency toward error, Fundamentalism in our day is moving back toward spiritual slavery" (Tozer 1958:125-26). Instead, emphasis is placed on the body of the believer as the temple of God. The believer, and not the church, is sacred. Therefore, the internal and external appearance of the structure are irrelevant.

Endnotes

14. In the 1960s, twenty percent of the farmers and thirty percent of the banana workers in Honduras were Salvadoran refugees (Volk 1987:13; Durham 1979:24).

15. A 1986 list of "closed" or restricted countries included approximately 3 billion people in Afghanistan, Burma, Burundi, China, Cuba, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Kampuchea, Libya, Nigeria, Poland, Romania, Somalia, the USSR, Vietnam, and North and South Yemen (Wilson and Siewert 1986:54).

16. An important form of glossolalia in relation to missions was xenolalia, a Spirit-given ability to speak a foreign language without having to learn it. This would have greatly accelerated the diffusion of the gospel by removing language barriers.

17. Norsworthy and Barry claim that the military killed six people and landowners, fourteen (1993:112).

CHAPTER 10

"INDIGENOUS CHURCH" PERIOD (1980 TO PRESENT)

The Eighties were a volatile decade in Central America, characterized by political instability and violence between the military and guerrillas in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua. In 1979, the government of El Salvador was overthrown by a military coup, and the Sandinistas overthrew the Somoza regime in Nicaragua. In each of these conflicts, religious affiliation carried political connotations. Villagers were scrutinized by the military and guerrillas, and neither Catholicism nor Protestantism guaranteed safety. In both Guatemala and El Salvador, being a Protestant offered a degree of protection from the military but ensured trouble with guerrillas. Under "born-again" Guatemalan president Rios Montt, people in rural villages converted to avoid being associated with Marxism and liberation theology, but guerrillas interpreted conversion as acceptance of the government. In El Salvador, the military left Protestants alone because, "Their habit of denouncing revolutionaries as servants of Satan made it easy to identify evangelicals as a progovernment block" (Stoll 1990:167).

In Nicaragua, evangelicals were caught between U.S. supported Contras (christened "Christian freedom fighters" by Reagan and the "religious Right") and the Sandinistas. In a 1985 interview, members of the National Council of Evangelical Pastors of Nicaragua expressed their frustrations with the difficulty of maintaining a neutral political stance.

If the evangelical church calls for an end to hate and war, we can be accused of placing ourselves on the side of the revolution. If we don't say anything then we're accused of being with the contras. If evangelicals help with the
cotton and coffee harvests, then the newspapers say that we support the revolution. If not, then you’re a contra. So if you participate you’re manipulated, and if you don’t you’re in trouble too. (Stoll 1990:228)

When the Sandinistas relocated Miskito residents from forty-two villages along the Honduran/Nicaraguan border to resettlement camps in 1981, many fled into Honduras (Stoll 1990:232). Among them were a number of Moravian pastors who helped organize an insurrection that, combined with several other incidents, led to the association of evangelicals with the Contras. As a result, churches in Managua and in the eastern part of the country were vandalized or seized, and several Jehovah’s Witness missionaries were deported. Many other missionaries, national pastors and converts fled the country. However, tales of persecution were exaggerated in order to draw money and support from the Reagan administration and the U.S. religious Right, further polarizing the situation.

Honduras, encompassed by civil unrest, served as a haven for refugees and a staging area for U.S. military efforts to stabilize the region and prevent the spread of communism. To keep soldiers and arms from entering El Salvador from Nicaragua, the U.S. military established bases near Comayagua and Trujillo, sent troops for training exercises and road construction projects, and improved airfields. General Mather, commander of U.S. Southern Command, explained the rationale for intervention in Central America:

since it [Central America] dominates the land, sea, aerial electronic lines of communication between North and South America and permits access by relatively defensible routes to the raw materials of South America. Not only would lines of communication and area solidarity be threatened; but, a
Communist government in Central America would foster the growth of communism in adjacent countries with obvious threats to the Canal and its operations. (Best 1987:6)

In 1987, five Central American presidents united in a call for peace and an end to foreign military support for opposing sides. Despite the agreement, known as the Arias plan, the U.S. continued to support the Contras while the Soviet Union aided the Sandinistas. The 1990s have brought a degree of peace and stability to the region. The overt conflict in Nicaragua ended with the election of Chomorro in 1990, and the civil war in El Salvador ended in 1992. The conflict in Guatemala is currently approaching a resolution.

**Agents of Diffusion**

**Refugees**

As refugees fled from Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala, they served as agents of Protestant diffusion in two ways. El Salvador and Guatemala both had substantial evangelical populations that, at least temporarily, added to the Protestant population of neighboring countries. Secondly, Christian aid organizations entered border areas to work with refugees, just as they had following the Soccer War. In eastern Honduras, Moravian Miskitos and other refugees were assisted by Christian organizations like World Relief Corporation and Friends of the Americas (Stoll 1990:251). According to a 1993/94 missions brochure, the Disciples of Christ have been working to relocate Guatemalan refugees as they returned home "after years of exile."
Politicians and soldiers

Mainline and fundamentalist Protestant mission agencies have traditionally targeted the social and political elite, believing that converting the upper classes was the most effective means of Protestant diffusion. Pentecostals, on the other hand, have focused on socially and economically marginalized people. However, the visibility of pentecostals in the political arena in recent years attests to evangelical Protestantism’s growing appeal to the upper classes, and even the military. Rios Montt, president of Guatemala from 1982 to 1983, is the most obvious example. He was associated with Gospel Outreach of the Word Church (El Verbo) based in California, a sect which had come to Guatemala following the 1976 earthquake. Montt regularly used radio addresses and evangelical crusades as forums for evangelism, referring to Guatemalans as "the chosen people of the New Testament . . . the New Israelites of Central America" (Stoll 1990:180).

The first elected Protestant president in Guatemala (Montt came to power through a coup) was Jorge Serranio Elias, who, like Rios Montt, was a Catholic convert to pentecostalism. He was considered to be a prophet in the Elim Church and later the El Shaddai Church. He and his evangelical vice-president, Gustavo Espina, were accused of abusing their power in 1993 and left the country for Panama and Costa Rica, respectively (Sywulka 1993:52). In Honduras, former head of the armed forces Gustavo Alvarez Martinez was exiled to Miami in 1984 and returned in 1987 as a fundamentalist
"baring his soul to anyone who would listen, trying to convert the unconverted" (Schulz and Schulz 1994:250). He was assassinated in Tegucigalpa in 1989.

Foreign missionaries

Stoll noted that in 1985, Latin America was home to more Protestant missionaries than any other part of the world. "One-third [11,196] are concentrated among less than 10 percent of the world's population" (1990:10). Of the remaining missionaries, 27% were in Asia, 24% in Africa, 11% in Europe, and 5% in Oceania (Wilson and Siewert 1986:583). Despite the overall increases in Latin America, the number of North American Protestant missionaries in Central America dropped in every country, except Belize and Costa Rica, between 1979 and 1985 because of political instability. Nicaragua showed the most precipitous decline, falling from 102 to 36, followed by El Salvador, which dropped from 92 to 43 (Table 10.1). The figures are

Table 10.1 Distribution of Foreign Missionaries in Central America, 1979-1993

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>1979</th>
<th>1985</th>
<th>1993</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belize</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Wilson and Siewert 1986:586-589; Siewert and Kenyon 1993)
now rebounding in El Salvador and Nicaragua, but continue to decline in Guatemala, Panama and Honduras. In addition to civil unrest, the decline reflects the general trend toward national leadership. In Honduras, it could also reflect the departure of Christian aid organizations as refugees return to their homes.

**Nationals**

By the mid-1980s, Guatemala had the highest percentage of Protestant converts in Central America, with estimates ranging from 18.9% to 30% of the population (Stoll 1990; Martin 1990). El Salvador was close behind, followed by Panama and Honduras. Costa Rica and Nicaragua had the fewest converts. In the case of Honduras, Protestants grew from only 1.6% of the population in the 1930s to 11.7% in 1980. The annual growth rate increased from 2.2% to 13.4% in the same period (World Vision 1986:14).

As more Central Americans convert, and as foreign missionaries withdraw, nationals are taking up the slack in their own countries and abroad. National workers have several advantages over foreigners in producing Protestant growth. From an anthropological perspective, native converts do not have to deal with cultural and linguistic barriers between themselves and the people they work with. For mission-sending agencies, national workers require fewer financial resources. The average income for a North American missionary in 1975 was $17,754. For a Brazilian, the figure was $4,800 (Keyes 1983:13). The difference is even greater today. While some foreign missionaries support themselves through "tent-making" activities, most rely on
the financial support of their sending boards and individual contributions. Nationals, on the other hand, are usually self-supported.

By 1980, Latin American nations supported at least fifty-six mission-sending agencies (Keyes 1983:57). A Brazilian Assembly of God church centered in Rio de Janeiro supported 82 workers throughout South America, the United States, Portugal, Belgium, and England in 1980. The Brazilian Baptist Convention, also headquartered in Rio, had 70 workers in South America, France, Spain, Portugal and Mozambique (1983:191). Of the mission organizations sent to Honduras in 1985, five came from Puerto Rico and two from Guatemala. Brazil, El Salvador, Antigua and Grand Cayman were each represented by one organization (World Vision 1986). Honduran urban charismatic sects are the most active in sending out workers. *Las Brigadas de Amor Cristiano* started churches in Miami, Florida, and Cordoba, Spain. *Iglesia Amor Viviente* sent missionaries to New Orleans in 1985 (Lopez 1993). Latin American Indians, as well as *ladinos*, are serving as missionaries. Keyes encountered Aymara Indians from Bolivia working with the Navajo in the United States (1983).

**Methods of Evangelism**

A 1992 survey of the types of work done by mission societies found that most focused on evangelism (43%), followed by church planting (37%), literature distribution (20%), and support for national workers and churches (19%) (Siewert and Kenyon 1993:246). Traditional methods of Protestant evangelism are being augmented by psychological counseling, community development, video and film. The emphasis on
media has made Southern California a center for mission activity because of the entertainment industry. "[T]his latter-day Babylon was headquarters for more Christian missions than anywhere else on the globe" (Stoll 1990:68). Computers are also becoming more important for communication between missionaries and their sending organizations, and for evangelism. Christ the King Moravian Church in Durham, North Carolina, has e-mail addresses for missionaries in Eastern Europe and Asia. Amity United Methodist in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, communicates via e-mail with a missionary family in New Guinea. As an evangelism tool, computers are of limited use in Central America because few people have access to such equipment. However, Moravian missionary Will Sibert is developing programs to train national pastors through radio and computer technology; this is particularly important with the growing number of rural extension programs. One project will establish Internet links between major Latin American theological institutions to facilitate the exchange of resources and information. A second will provide remote training facilities access to library resources through "packet radio technology" (Sibert 1994; Morgan 1996).

Particularly relevant to Central American Protestant growth in recent decades is "disaster evangelism." The civil wars of the 1980s, along with natural disasters (earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and hurricanes), have provided Christian organizations with opportunities to send personnel, food, clothing, construction materials and medical supplies. According to one missionary, "We pray that God will spare us from that kind of church growth strategy, but as the clouds gather on the horizon, we must prepare
ourselves for a great harvest in times of acute suffering” (Stoll 1990:11). Although a
direct link between natural or political turmoil and conversion is difficult to establish,
Stoll claimed that the annual growth rate for Guatemalan evangelicals rose from 8% a
year before the 1976 earthquake to 14% after the disaster (1990:12). During the war in
El Salvador, CAM growth rose from 4% in 1979 to 30% in 1980, and the membership
of the Assemblies of God grew from 63,000 to 200,000. According to Drost, "in 1980,
the year considered the worst for violence, we had our greatest harvest of souls"

In addition to the psychological vulnerability of people following calamity,
disasters elevate foreign organizations to a higher financial and political status, because
they "control vast quantities of money and material resources [sent from the U.S. or
other countries], to reinforce their power to co-opt rural Protestant sectors" (Cleary
1992:188). To address the problem of economic dependency, mission agencies have
devised creative means of financial assistance. Several denominations have annual
markets or permanent stores, like the Moravian World Market and the Church of the
Brethren SERRV program, that sell handicrafts from foreign countries and send the
proceeds back to the communities. The Brethren also have volunteers in Honduras
working with Project Global Village, "a project that provides short-term loans to small,
family-based businesses" (Ober 1994). Such programs are intended to lead oppressed
people to spiritual freedom by first helping them become economically independent.
The World Council of Churches has even adopted the Catholic "preferential option for
the poor." Environmental concerns are closely tied to poverty issues because the exploitation of natural resources often results in the exploitation of poor people. The National Council of Churches recently issued a statement calling for an end to practices that precipitate climatic changes. Member churches reason that the poor people of the world, particularly subsistence farmers, are the ones most affected.

**Diffusion and Site Selection**

Because foreigners are no longer the primary agents of diffusion, the location of Protestant missions is less important than the location of national-led churches in the modern period. Therefore, this section will deal specifically with the distribution of Protestant denominations and the density of churches in Honduras at the departmental and *municipio* levels. Similar patterns can be observed throughout Central America. The most useful resource for understanding the modern Protestant landscape of Honduras is a "socio-religious" study published by World Vision in 1986. Combining mail-in surveys with field work, the organization compiled a directory with the names and locations of each church at the *municipio* level. There are several flaws in the data: the information is now ten years old; churches are under-represented in the most remote areas, particularly in the southwest and Mosquitia; and denominations not considered to be Protestant by the authors (Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons) are omitted. Despite these problems, this is the most comprehensive listing of churches available; and when mapped, the information accurately reflects general patterns of church density and
concentrations of denominational types. A similar study was done in Guatemala by PROCADES, Projecto Centroamericano de Estudios Socio-Religiosos (1981).

Density

Protestant density is the ratio of Protestant churches to the total municipio population. In the absence of Protestant population estimates at this scale, it is assumed that the ratio of churches to the total population reflects Protestant density. The regions of highest density correspond to the North Coast, major urban centers, and natural corridors connecting the coast with interior cities— the Aguán and Comayagua valleys (Figure 10.1). The World Vision survey shows 685 churches in San Pedro Sula and 2,357 in Tegucigalpa, by far the greatest concentrations in the country. The high density areas are the most accessible, have a high population density, and therefore have been the traditional focus of Protestant mission activity. The only coastal municipio between Trujillo and Puerto Castillo with a low Protestant density is San Francisco. Here, the Cordillera Nombre de Dios approaches the coast.

The greatest diversity (number of denominations and sects represented) is found in the largest urban centers. At least 34 different Protestant groups are active in San Pedro Sula, and 52 work in Tegucigalpa. In Zelinsky's study of Protestant regions in the United States, he attributed the proliferation of U.S. denominations to "an unusually productive economy, since it is difficult to see how a less prosperous nation could afford to support such an obvious surplus of religious accommodations" (1961:151). Economic prosperity is not a prerequisite for diversity in Central America. In the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Figure 10.1  Protestant Church Density in Honduras
1980s, Guatemala had over 300 denominations and sects and Honduras, the poorest country, had more than 100 (PROCADENES 1981; World Vision 1986). This can be attributed, in part, to financial support from foreign countries. Forty percent of the money and supplies for medical and educational programs of the Assemblies of God in Honduras supposedly came from Jimmy Swaggart's ministry (Stoll 1990:322). However, as foreign contributions and the number of missionaries decline, the number of churches and sects continues to multiply. More important is the nature of pentecostalism, which lends itself to schisms.

The moderately high density of Protestant churches along the Guatemalan border reflects diffusion from Guatemala and El Salvador in this century. In 1985, Stoll estimated that Protestants made up 19% of Guatemala's population, and 13% of El Salvador's (1990:337) The process has intensified during recent civil unrest. The Salvadoran pentecostal denomination, Peña de Horeb, has its headquarters in Puente Alto, Cortés. The Friends, who first came from Guatemala, have a Bible institute in San Marcos de Ocotepeque, farther to the south. The low church-to-population ratio along the El Salvador border is misleading. In each of these municipios, there is only one Protestant church, but the population is small.

The highest church to population ratios for Honduras are in the municipios of Orocuina (1:15,481) and Pespire (1:26,378), both in the department of Choluteca. Other low density regions include a corridor south of Tegucigalpa to the Gulf of Fonseca, the southwestern departments, and Yoro mountains. In the southwest and Yoro, population
density is low, and the terrain makes these areas difficult to access. Both regions are also inhabited by Indians, the Lenca and Jicaque, so the lack of Protestant churches could reflect ethnic resistance. Because Indians tend to live in the more isolated portions of the country, it is difficult to determine whether low Protestant density is due to topography or ethnicity. Translators with SIL started working with the Jicaque in Montaña de Flor in the 1970s, but "the translation was difficult and the progress, slow" (World Vision 1986:20). Southwestern Honduras is becoming more integrated with the rest of the country, particularly since the Soccer War, but the lack of roads has delayed Protestant diffusion.

Church density in the department of Gracias a Dios in the east is deceptively high because of the low population density. The average for Honduras is one church per 2,000 inhabitants. For Brus Lagoon, the ratio is one to 245, and in Puerto Lempira, one to 621. However, if one compares the ratio of churches to area, this is a low density region. Many settlements in Mosquitia are accessible only by boat and plane; discouraging Protestant diffusion. Being a frontier zone, pentecostals should do well among colonists. This seems to be the case, particularly in the southern part of the department of Gracias a Dios where the Church of God is the dominant denomination.

Dominant Protestant types

Again using the World Vision data, a map of dominant Protestant types was constructed by dividing the churches into three categories: mainline, fundamentalist-evangelical and pentecostal-evangelical. Each municipio was assigned to the category
of the denomination with the most churches. Basing the map on the total number of churches of each type, rather than on the specific denomination, would seem to more accurately reflect dominant types. However, this creates an homogenous map showing almost every municipio as pentecostal. By choosing the single denomination with the most churches (a minimum of three), core regions emerge. Those municipios that are not categorized had fewer than three churches affiliated with the same denomination or sect.

To briefly review the three denominational categories, the mainline churches are the historical denominations, now usually associated with the socially and theologically liberal National Council of Churches. Moravians, Episcopalians, and Methodists are representative denominations. These groups dominated missions in the colonial and independence periods, but now constitute just 2.2% of Honduran Protestants (World Vision 1986:14). The fundamentalist-evangelical churches are doctrinally conservative, but do not emphasize the charismatic gifts. They constitute the largest segment of Honduran Protestants (45.7%). These include the Baptist, Sala Evangélica, and Santidad denominations, as well as non-denominational mission agencies like CAM. Pentecostal-evangelicals, known for their charismatic worship, dominated in Central America after 1960s. They have grown to 38.9% of Protestants. The most popular pentecostal denominations in Honduras are Church of God and Assembly of God.
Pentecostal-dominated municipios

The resulting map demonstrates that church types, as well as specific denominations, tend to cluster together in neighboring municipios (Figure 10.2). The greatest concentrations of pentecostal churches are along the Guatemalan and Nicaraguan borders, and in the major urban centers. In western Honduras, the departments of Copán in the south and Cortés to the north, are dominated by the Church of God, interrupted by a concentration of Assembly of God churches in Santa Barbara. The Church of God, particularly Church of God Pentecostal and Church of God Prophecy, entered after the Assemblies and flourished in the same regions.

The pentecostal presence along the Nicaraguan border could be due to the influence of Nicaraguan Assembly of God missionaries in the 1940s and 50s, or to the more recent influx of Nicaraguan refugees. Because evangelicals made up only 6% of the Nicaraguan population in the 1980s, the lowest percentage in Central America (Stoll 1990:337), it is more likely that pentecostal growth is related to their success among refugees and agricultural colonists who convert after arriving in this frontier area. The dominance of pentecostals in Puerto Lempira in the northeast is surprising given the work of Moravians in Caukira and neighboring communities since the 1930s. The survey counted only four Moravian churches compared to eight Baptist and eighteen Church of God congregations. A small pentecostal area around the Gulf of Fonseca is probably the result of Nicaraguan mission work in the 1930s and 40s, strengthened by diffusion from the capital.
HONDURAS – DOMINANT PROTESTANT CHURCH TYPES, 1985
Municipios with at least 3 churches of same denomination/sect

Figure 10.2 Dominant Protestant Church Types in Honduras
The primary urban centers, Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, are both dominated by pentecostals and serve as centers for diffusion into other parts of the country. Many urban Honduran sects were not introduced by foreign sources, but splintered from fundamentalist and mainline churches or started independently. *Vida Abundante* developed when members of the Friends church from western Honduras migrated to Tegucigalpa in search of work. They decided to meet regularly; and in 1979, the group began speaking in tongues, distancing themselves from their denominational roots (Lopez 1993:120). By 1980, they formed their own sect. *Las Brigadas de Amor Cristiano*, a military-style organization for troubled youth, began in Tegucigalpa in 1972 and developed into a church by 1974. Other congregations formed throughout the capital and surrounding towns, and youth groups formed in San Pedro Sula and La Ceiba to the north and in El Rincón (Valle), Choluteca, San Lorenzo, and Amapala to the south (Lopez 1993:115). Another sect, *Iglesia Amor Viviente*, grew out of a Mennonite literacy program in Tegucigalpa in 1973. By 1980, the sect had established churches in Puerto Cortés, Danlí, Choluteca and San Pedro Sula. During the 1980s, work expanded to the larger cities in El Paraíso, Comayagua, and Atlántida. The first rural church was not started until 1986, in Moroceli (Lopez 1993:116).

**Fundamentalist-dominated municipios**

The largest concentrations of fundamentalist churches are along the Caribbean coast, around Lake Yojoa, and in the department of Valle. With the exception of the United Brethren in Masica, all of the coastal fundamentalist municipios are dominated
by Baptists. The Baptist core is divided in two where the Cordillera de Nombre de Dios approaches the coast. The western portion includes the municipios of Tela and Puerto Cortés. The eastern region seems to correspond to the roads and railroads that run from the coast inland to Saba, and west along the Aguán river. The fundamentalist municipios farther inland in Olancho are accessible in the dry season (Mapa General 1987). Baptist work started in southern Honduras but shifted to the central and northern regions in the 1950s. The first resident Baptist missionaries arrived in Comayaguela in 1954, and in San Pedro Sula in 1960. Churches in Olancho and Atlántida were established in the 1960s (Lopez 1993:93-94).

The two smaller fundamentalist regions are centered around Lake Yojoa and along the El Salvador border in the department of Valle. Both areas are predominantly CAM. Central America Mission established its first work in Santa Rosa de Copán and the surrounding area (1896). Their activities have since shifted to the central part of the country. The headquarters were moved from San Pedro Sula to Tegucigalpa, and are now being transferred to Siguatepeque near Lake Yojoa. According to long-time CAM missionary Charlotte Marcy, Siguatepeque is centrally located, provides access to San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa along the best paved highway in the country, and has lower rent costs than the larger urban centers. In addition to the advantages of Siguatepeque, Lake Yojoa offers recreational facilities. Central America Mission and the Southern Baptists each have church camps on the lake.
Mainline-dominated municipios

Despite their efforts along the Caribbean during the colonial and independence periods, mainline denominations have the largest number of churches in only nine municipios. These are scattered throughout the country with small clusters in the east and southwest. The eastern region is dominated by the Moravians and Mennonites, both recent arrivals. Moravians entered Mosquitia from Nicaragua in 1930 and the Mennonites came in 1950. A string of municipios in the southwest, through eastern Ocotepeque into Lempira, is a Society of Friends core. The denomination entered from Chiquimula, Guatemala, in 1902.

Unclassified municipios

Unclassified municipios are concentrated in the southwestern portion of Honduras and, except for a corridor to the northwest, form a band around the capital. Another unclassified concentration extends through Olancho to the Caribbean coast at Trujillo. In the case of 27 unclassified municipios (15%), there were three or more churches, but not of the same denomination. Most notable were Santa Rosa de Copán with nine churches and San Lorenzo with eight. In the remaining municipios, there were fewer than three churches, and in many cases, none. These areas of low Protestant activity correspond to the most mountainous portions of Honduras, including Montaña de Flor, north of the capital, and the Puca/Opalaca range in the southwest. Among the possible factors in the lack of churches are inaccessibility, low population density, a
strong Catholic presence, and ethnic resistance to Protestantism. These issues will be examined in the context of southwestern Honduras in the next chapter.

**Endnotes**

19. The total is more than 100% because agencies ranked the top five areas of interest.

20. It is evident that the Moravians have been under-counted in eastern Honduras, but it is assumed that all churches are equally under-represented.
The previous chapters have provided a geographical and historical overview of the diffusion and distribution of Protestants in Central America and, more specifically, in Honduras. This chapter provides a physical and cultural context for Protestant activity in southwestern Honduras. The six principal towns in the study area are La Esperanza, Intibucá and Yamaranguila to the east, San Juan in the center, Erandique to the south, and Gracias to the west. All are connected by unpaved, all-weather roads (Figure 11.1). To understand the spiritual dynamics of the area, the cultural and physical characteristics will first be outlined.

**Physical and Socio-Economic Context**

The six towns are situated in valleys and *mesetas* between the Celaque range to the south and west, and the Puca/Opalaca range to the north and east. The two ranges are separated by the northward-flowing Río Grande de Mejocote and the southward flowing San Juan, a tributary of the Guarajambala. Geologically, this is part of Old Antillia, "the oldest geologic area of Middle America" (West 1964:38). The Gracias valley, along with the Otoro valley east of the study area, was formed in the late Eocene/early Miocene (Portillo 1976:26). The mountains in the study area were volcanically active during the Tertiary period, covering the southern half of Honduras with a layer of andesitic and rhyolitic material that has weathered to crystallized rock, with a limestone or sandstone cap (West 1964:74; Augelli and West 1989:419). Pieces
Figure 11.1 Map of Study Area in Southwestern Honduras
of obsidian can still be found along the road beds, particularly between La Esperanza and San Juan. To the south, the Río Lempa delimits the Honduras/El Salvador border, and separates the eroded mountains of the Sierra Madre range from the fertile slopes of the Pacific volcanic axis.

La Esperanza and Intibucá lay adjacent to one another on a 12 km long intramontane meseta within the Opalaca range. Yamaranguila is 10 km west of La Esperanza in a small valley ringed by Cerro de La Patasteras to the northwest, Cerro San Francisco to the east, and Cerro Pueblo Viejo to the south. San Juan Caite, usually referred to as San Juan, is 34 km west of La Esperanza at the confluence of the Gualmoy and Azacualpa rivers, tributaries of the San Juan. Erandique is 21 km south of San Juan. Río Riyito, which eventually joins the Guarajambala via the Río Jupual, loops through the settlement, serving as a natural boundary between the barrios. The area is famous for its opal mines. Finally, Gracias is 69 km west of La Esperanza in the plain of the Río Arcagual y Tejar.

The central and western portion of the study area, from San Juan (at an elevation of 1,175 m) west to Gracias (800 m) and south to Erandique (1,240 m), would be considered tierra templada or mesothermal (Cw) according to Koeppen's categorization. Temperatures are moderate in the summer months; winters are windy and damp. Yamaranguila (1,760 m) and the La Esperanza meseta (1,680 m) are classified as tierra fría. These are the highest large towns in Honduras. The average temperature ranges
from 15° to 20°C, but can drop as low as 5°C in the winter (Salinas 1991:83). The
coldest months are between October and January; the warmest are March and April.

Precipitation is more important than temperature in distinguishing the seasons
for local people—summer is dry and winter is wet. The rainy season begins in early
May and continues through October, with September and October being the wettest
months. However, there is a short dry spell, about two weeks long, between mid-July
and mid-August. Black referred to this as the canícula or veranillo, a little summer
(1995:121). According to tradition, la Virgen de las Mercedes is venerated as the rain
provider (Chapman 1986:12), and May 3, Dia de la Cruz, marks the beginning of the
rainy season. It begins a week or two earlier at the higher elevations to the east than in
the lower portions of the study area. According to West, thunderstorms are common
from May to October (1957a:4). December through February, at least in La Esperanza,
precipitation falls in the form of heavy fog or mist. La Esperanza and San Juan receive
approximately 1,500 mm of precipitation annually, while Yamaranguila gets 1,800 mm,
and Erandique, 1,900 mm (Andrade 1990:91,95).

La Esperanza and Intibucá

The department of Intibucá and the municipio by the same name were created in
April of 1883 (Castañeda 1971:4). The department had two previous seats north of the
current location, Pueblo Viejo and Azacualpa. The Azacualpa site was abandoned for
Pueblo Viejo after a smallpox epidemic, and cholera drove the survivors from Pueblo
Viejo to the present location (Castañeda 1971:1). The sister settlements of La
Esperanza and Intibucá are located in the northwestern portion of a Y-shaped plain. According to the 1988 Honduran census, there were 7,023 inhabitants in Intibucá, and 3,737 in La Esperanza.

La Esperanza and Intibucá appear to be one town due to their proximity, but they serve as the capitals for two separate municipios. Each town has its own Catholic church, although both buildings are actually located in La Esperanza. Residents have difficulty describing the boundary between the towns, but, if asked about a specific feature, can identify which it belongs to. As described in a municipal study conducted by the School of Social Services in Tegucigalpa, there are three dividing lines. One boundary runs from the house on the northeast corner of the central plaza, east to the bridge over the Río Grande and along the highway toward the capital. Another line extends from the same house, north to Quebrada Carrizal or Maneadero, and the third follows Quebrada Carrizal to the west toward Yamaranguila (Castañeda 1971:3).

Intibucá lies north of this line and La Esperanza is south. Parmer saw the division as an ethnic one in the 1940s, although that no longer seems to be the case: "In the town is a street on one side of which live only pure-blooded Indians who if they can help it do not speak to the people whose homes are on the other side" (1943).

The Indians Parmer referred to are the Lenca who live throughout the study area, but are concentrated in the small towns immediately surrounding La Esperanza and Intibucá. They travel into town, particularly on the weekends, to sell produce in the market and attend mass. With a population as high as 300,000 at the time of the
Conquest, the Lenca were the largest Indian group in Honduras (Olson 1991:209). Despite their dramatic decline during the colonial period, they are still the country's largest indigenous group. West estimated the population to be 65,000 "full-bloods" in the 1950s. Modern estimates range from 49,000 to 95,000 (Herranz 1990:5; Olson 1991:209). Because of their degree of acculturation, Chapman referred to the Indians as "campesinos de tradición lenca" rather than "indios lencas" (1985:13). Their language disappeared, perhaps as early as the nineteenth century. Campbell wrote, "the Lenca area of Honduras is vast with many remote villages. Therefore, though I cannot assert with full confidence that Honduras Lenca is extinct, I can affirm its extremely moribund state" (1976:73).

What remains of Lenca culture is retained in their clothing and religious practices. Religion will be discussed in the next chapter. Lenca women living in or near La Esperanza continue to carry their infants in shawls on their backs and wear headcoverings, usually a small scarf or towel. They also wear a distinctive dress with an ankle-length skirt, wide collar, and short full sleeves (Figure 11.2). These dresses are not worn by Lenca women in Erandique or Gracias. In Erandique, they favor a particular style of store-bought dress made of polyester with an elastic waist and short sleeves, and no headcoverings. In Gracias, there seems to be no particular dress-type, but some women wear scarves around their necks or draped over one shoulder. When worn on the head, the material is rolled into a coil and used for padding or stability when carrying items. The clothing of most Lenca men is indistinguishable from that of
Figure 11.2 Photograph of Lenca Women in La Esperanza Market

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Today, all but the poorest and elderly Lenca wear shoes. The men sometimes wear sandals fashioned from old tires cut into strips called "goodyears."

In recent years, political activism among the Lenca has increased their visibility in the study area. The Organization Nacional Indígena Lenca de Honduras, ONILH, was formed in 1988 and has an office in La Esperanza. The organization's primary task is securing land titles in surrounding Lenca communities. Members have also established agricultural cooperatives to market Lenca produce. José Vásquez, resident of Intibucá and electronic repairman, is referred to as the cacique. Lenca from communities surrounding La Esperanza participated in a protest march in 1993 against local logging companies whom residents blame for deforestation and concomitant climatic changes. Residents of each village carried a banner with the name of their community: Zapote Lojas, Santa Fe, Pelón, Planta Varios, Semaní, San Lorenzo, Monte Verde, Yamaranguila, La Esperanza, Nueva Union, and Lepi.

In the 1950s, West encountered "Indian type" houses near La Esperanza with either two- or four-shed thatch roofs and wattle and daub walls (1957b). Today, few houses fit this description. The dominant construction materials throughout the departments of Intibucá and Lempira are adobe walls and tile roofs. Eighty percent of the houses in La Esperanza are made of adobe and 72% have tile roofs (Census 1988). In Intibucá, 76% of the houses are adobe and 74% have tile roofs. The few bahareque dwellings, 9% in Intibucá and less than 2% in La Esperanza, are concentrated on the periphery of the towns in the barrios of Eramani, Candelaria and Calvario.
At the time of Squier's journey through southwestern Honduras, he noted that "all of these mountains [Puca and Opalaca] are heavily timbered with pines and oaks" (1870:87). In the 1950s, West observed only small pockets of remaining cloud forest within the study area, north of La Esperanza/Intibucá, northeast of San Juan, west of Gracias (Celaque), and west of Erandique (1957b). He attributed deforestation to roza (swidden) agriculture. Now, even the steepest slopes are cultivated with potatoes, beans and corn. The remaining forest is mostly oak, pine, and cedar. The government and development agencies are attempting to curb clearing through education and visual reminders like the ubiquitous hand-painted signs, "The forest is life," and "The forest is your future." Where mountain slopes have been cleared, the Peace Corps has introduced erosion control measures. Farmers either plant rows of zacate grass, barrera viva, or construct walls of dead brush along the contours of steep slopes to control runoff, barrera muerta (Moran 1995).

Generally, the soils of western Honduras are shallow and well-drained, although clay is prevalent in the study area. Agronomist Humberto Mendez described the soil in the Yamaranguila/La Esperanza area as acidic, with traces of aluminum oxide and a high clay content. Horticulturalist José Alberto Serrano classified the soil around Erandique as a sandy clay loam with 5-10 cm of topsoil, heavy in organic material, with 4-6.5 pH. As West noted, the clay loams at higher altitudes (above 6,000 feet) "are more fertile than the shallow acidic soils derived from pine-covered rhyolite" (1957a:4).
Soil fertility, combined with a shortage of land in the valleys, explains the increased clearing at higher elevations surrounding the towns.

In La Esperanza, agricultural activity is concentrated on the southeastern part of the plain where small plots of corn are planted in mounds, and in the west where the fields are larger. However, these areas make up only a small percentage of the land; most of the plain is devoted to pasture. The bulk of local produce, beans, cabbage, potatoes and cauliflower, comes from the Azacualpa valley to the north. Potatoes are the only crop grown on a large enough scale for export to the rest of the country (Chapman 1985:26). Men throughout the study area work the land with a variety of tools including the typical long, straight-bladed machetes and pandos (machetes huelgas), machetes with short curved blades resembling sugar cane knives. Serrano believed the pando originated in El Salvador where the curved blade proved ideal for removing rocks from the soil. West observed that the dibble stick was commonly used by the indigenous population in the 1950s; however, this simple implement has largely been replaced by the oxen-drawn wooden plow (arado), at least in the fields near major settlements. Ox-drawn carts are a common site on the roads around Esperanza/Intibucá where they transport firewood, produce, and even cases of empty soda and beer bottles from outlying areas into town. The use of these carts disappears as one moves farther west in the study area. Horses and mules are used throughout the area for transportation. While some western-style saddles are seen, most are wooden wishbone-shaped frames covered with hides.
Yamaranguila

Yamaranguila, with a population of only 594, is the smallest town in the study area (Honduran Census 1988). The buildings are mostly adobe and tile. A unique feature of houses in Yamaranguila is a stone foundation. This is not a decorative zócalo, but rather a foundation for the walls made of stones stacked less than a foot high, usually without mortar. Unlike the other five towns in the study area, the Catholic church is not located on the central plaza, but is two blocks to the northwest. The area around Yamaranguila is used intensively for agriculture; less than 20% of the surrounding slopes are still area covered by forest. The main crops are corn, beans and potatoes.²² Cabbage, cauliflower and fruit trees (peaches, apples and pears) also do well. Most of the fields are enclosed to protect them from wandering cattle, but in La Esperanza the pastures are enclosed.

San Juan

The valley around San Juan is almost devoid of trees. Erosion is eating away the available pasture land, reducing its capacity to support the “cattle without number” Franck observed in 1916. Unlike La Esperanza, where pastures are fenced in, the cattle roam freely here. This is the second smallest town in the study area, with a population of 643 (Honduran Census 1988). Houses and businesses are concentrated along two parallel streets. Most of the buildings are stuccoed adobe with tile roofs, interspersed with an occasional building made of vertical boards or bahareque. San Juan's central plaza is a simple grassy area dominated by an enormous ceiba tree on the eastern side.
of, and just behind, the Catholic church. San Juan, like La Esperanza and Gracias, has a 
post for the Honduran military police, FSP.

Most houses throughout the study area have dooryard gardens. Chapman 
referred to these as "huertas," or market gardens, where crops like yuca, plantain, 
guineo (miniature bananas), sugar cane, chayote, maicillo and chia are grown to sell 
(1985:19-20). Gardens at lower elevations, like San Juan and Erandique, contain the 
greatest variety of plants (fruit trees, flowering shrubs, and coffee), but vegetables are 
surprisingly lacking. This results in a starchy and monotonous diet of beans, tortillas, 
rice and quajada. While this is the typical meal (plato tipico) throughout Honduras, it is 
usually supplemented with local produce like avocado, shredded cabbage, and chayote 
in other places. With the exception of a plantain and coffee plot outside of Erandique, 
intercropping is restricted to dooryard gardens.

Erandique

In the 1980s, Erandique had a population of 1,299 (Honduran Census 1988).
While the architecture of La Esperanza and San Juan is simple and utilitarian, a result of 
development in the former and poverty in the latter, Erandique and Gracias retain hints 
of their colonial character in the elaborately carved wooden eaves and heavy lintels 
above the doors. The colors here are more subdued, pastels and white rather than 
turquoise, bright green and yellow. Erandique is an agglomeration of three settlements, 
Gualmuaca, El Centro (Santa Barbara) and Erandique, each with its own Catholic 
church. According to the mayor, the northern and southern barrios, Gualmuaca and
Erandique, were Indian settlements and the central *barrio*, Santa Barbara, was settled by Spaniards. Chapman characterized the population of both Erandique and El Centro as *ladino*, and Gualmuaca as more Indian and *campesino* (1986:40). This still seems to be the case, although the differences are slight. Erandique and Gualmuaca both have enormous ceiba trees in the plazas in front of the churches, suggesting that they were established first. An 1881 map of *ejidal* boundaries in the municipal archives shows only Erandique and "Gualmoaca."

Gualmuaca, also called San Sebastián, is the northern-most barrio, separated from the other two by Río Riyito, which is crossed by bridges at two locations. The plaza is a large dirt and grass area with a ceiba tree. El Centro, also called Santa Barbara or Lempira, is immediately south of Gualmuaca. This is the administrative center of the town and has an elevated plaza with paths, cedar trees, benches and a statue of the legendary Indian leader Lempira. The main streets in Barrio Centro and Barrio Erandique are cobblestone, but there is so little vehicular traffic that horses graze on the grass that has grown up between the stones.

There is no visible boundary between El Centro and Barrio Erandique. As with Gualmuaca, there is a grassy area to the west of the Catholic church dominated by an enormous ceiba. This church, reportedly constructed in 1864, is the oldest in town (*Recursos* 1987:36) and has a Black Christ enclosed in a glass case. The town has two resident priests, one an octogenarian Spaniard who presides over the Erandique church. The other, a Honduran, preaches in the Gualmuaca and Santa Barbara churches. On a
small hill at the southern end of town is what some people refer to as the fourth barrio, Buenos Aires, a recently settled area. There are no cobble-stone streets here, and unlike the orderly grid pattern of the rest of the town, the houses and streets are randomly oriented.

West observed houses around Erandique with vertical wooden slat walls and grass roofs; and in the surrounding highlands, he encountered champitas, temporary shelters built by men tending cattle under a "pseudo transhumance" system (1957b). Herders led livestock into the highlands to graze during the dry season and returned to the lowlands during the rainy season when grass was available (1957a:4). As with San Juan, most of the level land adjacent to Erandique is used for pasture and surrounding slopes are cultivated. Beans and corn are grown in the Ojueras (Opalacas) to the east, which reportedly receive the most rain. Wheat, beans, and a limited amount of corn are grown at Azacualpa to the south. Wheat is planted in late May or early June and harvested in September (West 1957b). Sugar cane and rice are grown at lower elevations between San Juan and Erandique, and local trapiches are used to process the cane into panela. The infertility of the soil immediately surrounding the settlement has encouraged local residents to shift away from agricultural occupations to opal mining, animal husbandry and commerce (Reyes 1970:49).

Erandique is famous for its nearby opal mines and residents approach every visitor to sell stones in vials of water. According to a geologist, the high moisture content of the stones makes it necessary to keep them wet to prevent drying and

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fracturing. Opals from different local mines vary in color and clarity. Those from San Antonio tend to be black, Erandique mines yield clear or opaque stones, and those from Gualguire are mottled. Opals are mined at ground level by chiseling away exposed rock to uncover veins, only millimeters wide, that are removed with a pick. The mines near Erandique are on public land, so anyone can work them; but because it is labor intensive and rarely produces good veins, few people continue to mine. The opal trade had already declined by the time Scherzer passed through in the 1850s (1857:274).

Gracias

Gracias, the western-most town in the study area, is surrounded by a plain used primarily as pasture. It is overlooked by San Cristóbal, an old Spanish fort. The town has three Catholic churches, but only is used regularly. Another has been converted into a storage facility. It is ironic that in Gracias, where Indians are less visible than in La Esperanza, Lenca images have been appropriated by businesses and incorporated into public places. There are two Lenca statues in the plaza, one of Lempira with a bow, and another of an Indian carrying a load of pottery. In the courtyard of a European-owned tourist shop is a mural titled "Guancasco," the name of a Lenca ritual procession. A radio station near the plaza is called "Congolón," site of the legendary battle between Lempira and the Spaniards. In La Esperanza, where the Lenca are most visible, ladinos are often oblivious to them. The name "Lenca" is rarely recognized and, when asked if there are indígenas living nearby, the response is invariably "no." One schoolgirl explained that there were no Indians, but that Eramanies and Lentercales lived around
La Esperanza long ago. The difference between the eastern and western towns is probably tourism. Gracias draws European and North American "ecotourists" who come to visit the Celaque national reserve area, the highest point in Honduras (2,827 m), is only 12 km away. La Esperanza's market is well-known, but draws fewer gringos. Nostalgia might also be a factor. Because the Lenca are less visible in Gracias, they have come to symbolize ethnic pride, nobility and courage. In La Esperanza, on the other hand, residents associate the Lenca with poverty and ignorance, not bravery.

Commerce

In terms of commercial activity, there is a great disparity between towns in the study area. San Juan and Erandique each have fewer than thirty businesses in the entire village. By comparison, within four blocks of the central plaza, La Esperanza and Intibucá have 140 businesses and Gracias has 132. The predominant enterprise in all towns, except for La Esperanza, is the pulpería, a small store with a variety of common household items and usually some groceries. Comedores, restaurants, are the most common in La Esperanza and the second most common business in the other towns. While the stores in Erandique and San Juan supply only the most basic merchandise, La Esperanza, Intibucá and Gracias offer banking, medical, dental and legal services as well as "luxuries" like a theater, electronic shops, and discotecas.

In addition to permanent commercial establishments, there are the periodic markets set up along the streets and in designated shelters. The market is held daily in
La Esperanza and Gracias. More than a hundred Lenca and ladino vendors sell spices, kitchen utensils, used clothing, and a limited amount of pottery. Fresh produce varies with the season, but might include mangos, nance, peaches, bananas, onion, cabbage, and green pepper. Dried goods include salt, fish, rice, beans, and panela. Although the market is daily, weekends draw the most vendors and customers. By contrast, Sunday is the only market day in San Juan and draws only 5 or 6 vendors. In Erandique, most market activity occurs on the weekends when 20 to 30 vendors fill the alley on the south side of El Centro's church. Goods include used clothing from La Esperanza and Gracias, fruits and vegetables (mangos, nance, onion, green pepper, potatoes, cabbage, panela), salt, dried goods (fish, rice, beans), rope and other tack. Pottery is rare. The few pieces sold in Erandique are large utilitarian vessels, while the available items in La Esperanza are miniature items, more suitable for souvenirs than actual use.

Unlike La Esperanza where the majority of the vendors are women, men dominate the Erandique market. There are also fewer Lenca vendors and customers at the market in Erandique than in La Esperanza or Gracias. In addition to the fact that fewer Lenca live in the area, their absense might be related to the transportation network. To get to Erandique from outlying areas involves walking long distances on eroded foot paths. This would be a difficult trip for the elderly and women with small children who make up a large portion of the customers in La Esperanza. By contrast, La Esperanza is well-integrated with surrounding communities. Differences in integration will be discussed further in the next chapter.
Electricity and other services

As for available services, Gracias, Intibucá/La Esperanza, and Yamaranguila have electricity supplied by a hydroelectric dam. Toward the end of the dry season, the water level is sometimes insufficient to generate power for the whole country, and planned power outages are implemented until the water supply is replenished. "Los Cortes De Hoy," a daily schedule of outage locations and times (7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.) is published in newspapers. In theory, the outages rotate equally throughout the country, but in reality, some areas suffer disproportionately. In the summer of 1994, sections of San Pedro Sula lost power for several hours every night, while others, especially those with high-priced tourist hotels, were never without electricity. La Esperanza consistently blacked out around 6:00 p.m. for at least an hour and sometimes for the whole night. Although San Juan and Erandique have had power lines since the early 1990s, there was still no electricity in June of 1994. Residents rely on candles and kerosene lanterns for light, and an occasional kerosene generator to power a refrigerator.

The telegraph network in Honduras dates back to 1877 when the first line was installed between Comayagua, the capital at that time, and La Paz. Comayagua and Tegucigalpa were connected later the same year (Portillo 1976:24). Telephones were introduced in the early twentieth century and modernized in the 1960s. La Esperanza and Gracias have telephone service through "Hondutel," the national communications company, while residents of San Juan and Erandique still communicate via the postal service and Hondutel telegraph. The only phone in Erandique belongs to COHASA, a...
joint German/Honduran nutrition development agency, but it is not accessible to residents. All parts of the study area have adequate plumbing for flush toilets and running water. While the water is supposedly potable, many residents are leery of drinking it.

Life expectancy in Honduras is 62 years (Norsworthy and Barry 1993:105), a substantial rise from 52.1 years in 1976 when the country ranked twenty-first of twenty-six countries in Latin America (Torres 1979:34). The average infant mortality rate is 70 deaths per thousand, but rises to 157 per 1,000 in rural areas (Norsworthy and Barry 1993:105). A UNICEF study in 1989 found that malnutrition has worsened in the last twenty years. Twenty-five percent of Honduran families have a protein deficient diet, 70% are iron deficient, and 62% are calorie deficient (Norsworthy and Barry 1993:105).

The most common health problems in the study area are respiratory diseases, partly caused by wood smoke in inadequately ventilated houses, various intestinal ailments, and in San Juan and Erandique, Chaga's disease. This disease is caused by insect-borne trypanosomas and is "the major cause of sudden death in rural Latin America" (Almendares, et al. 1993:1400). According to nurses working in San Juan and Erandique, Chaga's-carrying insects (Rhodnius prolisis and Triatoma dimitata) live in tile roofs. In people who have been bitten, the disease gradually destroys major muscles, particularly the heart, over a period of 10 to 15 years. Twenty-four percent of the people tested for the disease in endemic areas of Honduras tested positive in a 1992 study. Climatic changes attributed to deforestation and overgrazing have intensified the

Alcohol also contributes to local health problems and violence. It is not uncommon for drunk men to get into machete fights, with disastrous results. Wives complain that their husbands spend all of their trade profits on alcohol instead of food, an accusation supported by health workers in San Marcos de la Sierra. In a legislative effort to combat the problems of alcohol-related violence and poverty, citizens voted to outlaw the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages at the municipio level, creating "dry zones" (zonas secas). Zonas secas are not unique to this area. According to interviews, land owners in the central and eastern parts of Honduras will often designate their haciendas as dry zones to increase the productivity of hired laborers.

As with Prohibition in the United States, the dry laws were ineffective and short-lived. Erandique retained its dry laws for only two months, from March to May of 1993. When the municipio of San Juan voted to became dry in the summer of 1992, there were three cantinas in town. The number of "underground" bars in private homes mushroomed after the legislation as demand and prices tripled. The law was repealed on June 1, 1993. The municipal secretary claimed it was necessary because of lost tax revenues and the difficulty of enforcement. Those arrested for buying or selling alcohol were sent to prison in Gracias or La Esperanza and charged a 40 or 50 lempira ($6-$7) fine. While the military was authorized to enforce the regulations, residents protected known producers and vendors, a surprising problem given that people voted for the
measure. In addition to the difficulty of enforcement, the repeal of dry laws was attributed to political expediency in Erandique. It was an election year and local candidates needed the votes of businessmen, who were angry about lost alcohol profits.

It is tempting to attribute zonas secas to the growth of Protestant sects that often oppose the use of alcohol and tobacco. However, the initiative had the support of both Protestant and Catholic residents.

Endnotes

21. Castañeda does not specify whether the seat was in Azacualpa de Intibucá (9 km north of La Esperanza) or Azacualpa de Yamaranguila (10.5 km north).

22. West mentioned in his field notes that the potato was introduced early in the twentieth century (1957b). Chapman, however, lists them as an established Lenca crop in this area at the time of the Conquest (1985:75).
Nearly half of Honduras' Protestant population (45.7%) belongs to fundamentalist denominations, while 38.9% are pentecostal and only 2.2% are mainline (World Vision 1986). Among the fourteen Protestant denominations represented in the study area, pentecostals have experienced the greatest success. They make up fifty-four percent of the congregations, fifteen of twenty-eight. Eighteen percent, or five churches, represent mainline denominations. This includes the Mennonites in La Esperanza and the Friends, who have a church in every town except Yamaranguila. Fundamentalists (Santidad in Yamaranguila and La Esperanza, and Baptist in La Esperanza and Gracias) make up only fourteen percent of the congregations. The remaining churches are unclassified. This include three Jehovah's Witness congregations and the Iglesia Jesucristo outside of Yamaranguila, which is probably pentecostal. As Table 12.1 indicates, the earliest churches to arrive represented mainline and fundamentalist denominations. Of the pentecostal churches, only one was established before 1980.

Table 12.1 Period of Founding for Protestant Churches in Study Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church Type</th>
<th>Pioneer</th>
<th>Post-war</th>
<th>Post-1980</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mainline</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamentalist</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostal</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The "twin towns" of La Esperanza and Intibucá have the largest population in the study area and the highest number of churches. Eleven of the twenty-eight churches, representing nine denominations, are located here, with the addition of at least one independent home congregation. Most of the churches have no written membership records, but reported membership ranges from 200 at the Foursquare Gospel Church to 15 at the Mennonite Church. The average is 55 people if the Foursquare Gospel is counted, and 34 if it is not. All of the churches in La Esperanza and Intibucá now have Honduran pastors, but the Friends, Mennonite, Foursquare Gospel, Church of God Prophecy and Baptist were founded by North American missionaries. United States Friends missionaries arrived in the 1920s and established the first permanent mission in town. Their church was turned over to World Gospel Mission (now Santidad) in 1943. They have since resumed work, and built a new church in Barrio Guay in 1989. The second denomination in La Esperanza was Baptist. The Fosters, an independent Baptist couple from the United States, arrived in 1976. The current pastor of the Cuadrangular (Foursquare Gospel) church in Intibucá claimed that it also was founded by foreign missionaries in 1976. The Mennonite church was the last one started by foreigners. Missionaries Catalina Bleer and Linda Shelly left a brief written history and membership roster. The church is now pastored by a Honduran woman.

Yamaranguila has one Protestant church building in town, Santidad, and another, Iglesia Jesucristo, just outside of town on the road from La Esperanza. Santidad claims to have 70 members, and a Santidad splinter group has 50 members.
The couple who now leads the independent group in their home say they left the church because it was "too conservative." This is a common excuse for factions in pentecostal churches. The Jehovah's Witnesses come regularly from La Esperanza and anticipated starting a church in Yamaranguila in 1995. There is no evidence that North American missionaries have worked here, not even Jim Foster, who has lived in La Esperanza for twenty years. Because La Esperanza is so accessible now by public transportation, resident Protestants probably attend church there.

San Juan has a surprisingly high number of Protestant churches considering its small population. There are five: Friends, Jehovah's Witness, Pentecostal, Alpha y Omega and an Alpha y Omega splinter group. The Friends church was established in 1970, but the others were started after 1980. The largest denomination is Alpha y Omega, with a membership of 200. The church was started in San Juan by converts, possibly Salvadorans, from Erandique. Otherwise, no foreign missionaries have worked in the area. The Pentecostal church was started by converts from La Esperanza. The newest and smallest church is that of the Jehovah's Witnesses. It has only three members, but regular attendance exceeds membership. Their weekly discussions revolve around a monthly periodical, The Watchtower (La Atalaya), sent from Brooklyn, New York. It always arrives a month late.

If San Juan has an unusually high number of churches given its population, Gracias has surprisingly few. According to a sign in the migration office, the urban population of Gracias was 3,571 in 1988, but there were only four confirmed churches.
Central America Mission workers arrived at the turn of the century but left no permanent work, making the Friends Church the oldest. Friends missionaries visit periodically from their headquarters in Santa Rosa de Copán. A Baptist church was just constructed in 1993 and reportedly has 200 members, but the pentecostal *Vida Abundante* is the most popular Protestant option in town. The pastor was unsure of the membership, but about 100 people regularly attend. Several residents mentioned that an Assembly of God congregation meets in private homes, but that could not be confirmed.

Erandique has two confirmed Protestant churches, one pentecostal and the other mainline. The Friends church in Barrio Gualmuaca is the oldest. It was started by a Guatemalan missionary in 1920, and now has a reported membership of 70 to 80 people, with average attendance at weekly night services between 15 and 20 people. The current pastor was born into a Friends family in Gracias, and farms to supplement his pastoral income. The other church, *Peña de Horeb*, is a pentecostal sect from El Salvador, established by a Salvadoran migrant in search of work. Its building was originally constructed for an *Alpha y Omega* church that disbanded. The pastor, the town's telegraph operator, reported 35 members. Several Protestants mentioned a third church, *Arco de Noe*, a Church of God splinter headquartered in Comayaguela. If it exists, members meet in an unmarked house.

**Agents of Diffusion**

The primary agents of Protestant diffusion throughout the study area today are national pastors, converts and Christian aid organizations. Foreign missionaries play
only a limited role. Aid organizations like the Christian Commission for Development (CCD) in La Esperanza combine Christian principles with education about agricultural techniques and nutrition. The CCD Workers encourage people to share both the practical and spiritual knowledge they acquire. World Vision, an internationally-funded Christian organization, has a central office in Intibucá and projects in Erandique, Yamaranguila and San Juan. Programs revolve around agriculture, sanitation and health issues. The expressed goal of the organization is to show people that "they are capable of . . . their own development. They need to know that God has given them a mind, hands and a heart, through which they can solve the majority of their problems" (Hernandez 1993).

All of the churches in the study area are led by Hondurans, with the exception of Vida Abundante in Gracias, whose pastor is Guatemalan. Eleven were established by Hondurans, six by U.S. missionaries, two by Salvadorans, and one by a Guatemalan. The only resident foreign missionaries are the Fosters in La Esperanza, but even there the Baptist church has been led by Hondurans for the past twelve years. Three other U.S. Baptist couples live near the study area, the Gagnons in Ologosí west of La Esperanza, and the Shawls and Wyse’s in Gualcince, south of Erandique.

The majority of pastors are from the western part of Honduras, the departments of Ocotepeque, Santa Bárbara and Copán. At least two came from the North Coast and two from central Honduras. There seems to be some correlation between the denomination of the pastor and the predominant denomination of his home municipio.
The Church of God pastor came from Comayagua, which is dominated by the Church of God; two Friends pastors came from Friend-dominated municipios in the southwest. Most of the churches in the study area are part of a national or international organization. Pastors are assigned by the organizational body based on the needs of churches. Regardless of their denomination, most of the pastors who have attended seminary went to the Baptist Bible Institute in Tegucigalpa. The Friends have their own institute in San Marcos de Ocotepeque. Some pentecostal pastors have not graduated from theological institutions, but participate in rural extension programs. Leslie Shawl, a Baptist medical missionary in Gualcince, conducts pastoral training courses several times a year. Seminaries in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula also send teachers to the area once or twice annually.

Reasons for Conversion

Protestantism generally appeals to young, ladino women, while the Catholic Church appeals to middle-aged and older ladinos and Indians of both sexes. Women make up the majority of every Protestant congregation in the study area. In some services, the pastor is the only adult male present. This is not true of the Catholic Church, where attendance is more evenly split. Women might be drawn to Protestantism by the special ministries offered by churches in the larger towns. The most active church in this regard is Vida Abundante in Gracias, which provides agricultural training (poultry and plants), English, and sewing classes for women. Given the number of single mothers in Honduras, programs that aid children are also a
The rural adult female has an average of seven children (Norsworthy and Barry 1993:xiv). The church buys school supplies and uniforms and pays for medical check-ups. However, such programs cannot account for the attraction of Protestantism in places like Erandique and San Juan where no such services exist.

Some authors have suggested that evangelical Protestantism offers the hope of "domesticating" men. Many fundamentalist and pentecostal evangelicals prohibit the use of alcohol and tobacco, condemn adultery, and hold men responsible for providing for their families. The most compelling reason for women to join Protestant churches seems to be a sense of empowerment that comes with opportunities for participation and leadership. During worship services, laywomen read the Bible, lead prayers and share testimonies; outside the church they might visit prospective converts and distribute literature. In three churches, two Friends and the Mennonite, women even serve as pastors. However, street preaching seems to be a male activity.

With each generation, more people are born into Protestant churches. At least three pastors within the study area, Vida Abundante in Gracias, Church of God in La Esperanza and Friends in Erandique, grew up in Protestant homes. For those who convert as adults, some individuals report dramatic changes before or after conversion. The nineteen-year old pastor of La Esperanza's Church of God Prophecy claimed that everything changed, including "my vocabulary, my manner of talking to people." The current pastor of the Baptist church in La Esperanza was a former marijuana dealer. Jim Foster reported that a group of potato farmers from Ologosi, east of La Esperanza,
were alcoholics who gave up drinking after their conversion, and "now they've all built nice houses" (1994). This was the only reference to changes in economic status.

A survey of businesses in Gracias was inconclusive in establishing any connection between religion, economic status, and entrepreneurial tendencies. The survey included twenty-three businesses within a four block radius of the central plaza. After a brief explanation of the research project, owners were asked several basic questions: "Do you own this business?" "Are you a Protestant or Catholic?" "If Protestant, when and why did you convert?" Only four owners were Protestants, two each from the Friends and Baptist churches. Two converted before they started their businesses, and two converted after. About fifteen owners were surveyed in La Esperanza. Of those, three were members of the Santidad church and one was the pastor of an independent pentecostal home church. Before answering, Santidad owners in two different stores asked their own questions. "Which is better, the Protestant or the Catholic Church?" "What church do you belong to?" "Do you have a relationship with Jesus Christ?" Once satisfied with the academic nature of the survey, both people were very friendly. As for negative responses to the interview, one female proprietor in Gracias ignored the questions. Only one owner, another woman, claimed to be an agnostic. None were atheists.

The most common reason given for conversion among Protestant store owners and randomly selected people on the street was neither financial nor dramatic, but stemmed from dissatisfaction with Catholicism. Clawson encountered a similar
"doctrinal dissatisfaction" with the "alleged lack of authority in the former church" among Mexican converts (1989a). Honduran converts refer to the Catholic veneration of saints and the Virgin as idolatry, and complain that "our ancestors never knew the power of God." This complaint is most common among pentecostals. Doctrinal dissatisfaction is also a factor in the waning influence of mainline churches. Finke and Stark used a marketing analogy to explain the decline of mainline churches in North America that might be applicable to Latin American churches.

Whether the commodity is tangible . . . or intangible, as in the case of ultimate meaning or salvation, the 'invisible hand' of a freemarket prunes the weakest participants and rewards the fit . . . . We argue that a major weakness of the colonial mainline was precisely a matter of doctrinal content, or the lack of it. (1989b:32)

It is not uncommon for mainline or fundamentalist church members to adopt more charismatic practices and become pentecostals, or even form new sects perceived as "more spiritual."

**Methods of Evangelism**

Interpersonal relationships between missionaries or between missionaries and converts are vital in the diffusion of Protestantism in the modern period. In his research in Mexico, Clawson found that "friendshipping," relationships between Protestants and non-Protestants, was a key factor in ninety-eight percent of conversions (Clawson 1989b:66). When missions are started in near-by towns, whether by missionaries or nationals, there is usually some sort of personal contact between converts and a relative, friend, or church member who has moved away. For example, a
Baptist church was started in Ologosí after the Gagnons met a man on a bus. The man expressed interest in Christianity, and, when Mr. Gagnon visited the man in his home, he and his brothers converted.

**Visual methods**

As more denominations enter southwestern Honduras, the competition between the different Protestant groups, and between Protestants and Catholics for members is visibly manifested in the landscape. As Sopher noted in the *Geography of Religions*, "The expression of formal religious systems on the land is always more conspicuous when a common environment is occupied by two or more locally dominant systems" (1967:45). For Catholics, faith is often expressed visually. Every devout driver covers his car or bus with stickers of the Virgin and Jesus (often displayed next to silhouettes of naked women), and hangs a Saint Christopher's medallion from the rearview mirror. Catholic churches are elaborately decorated inside and out, ostensibly to glorify God and draw people. The landscape is peppered with shrines, crosses and other markers to designate sacred places. In local folklore, God speaks through messengers who leave behind some physical sign of their presence, usually an icon. The emphasis on the visual elements of faith could be a vestige of colonial efforts to communicate Catholic doctrine to Indians who were not literate in Spanish. Illiteracy would also explain the visual nature of European folk Catholicism.

The Reformation originated with the word when Luther, and other reformers, read the Bible for themselves. Protestants, in general, do not attribute sacred
significance to objects or places, but that does not keep them from projecting their beliefs onto the landscape. In contrast to Catholics, even visual expressions of faith revolve around words (or The Word), rather than images. As Richardson pointed out, "seeing and touching are the principal religious modalities" for Catholics, while "speaking and hearing the sacred are" the "primary experiential forms" for evangelicals (1990:6). In Protestant churches, the most common decorations are hand-lettered signs of Bible verses rather than pictures. The interiors of Catholic churches, on the other hand, are highly ornamented with visual images in murals, retablos, and statuary.

Catholic-Protestant differences are evident outside the church building as well. The Catholic billboard in San Pedro Sula, mentioned in the introduction, and one erected by Protestants in Yamaranguila differ in their emphasis. The San Pedro sign is dominated by an image of Christ, with his arm outstretched. The text is secondary. The Yamaranguila billboard emphasizes text. It reads, "Jesus is coming soon, look for him," and has no illustration. On a smaller scale, a couple in the Friends church in Erandique painted "Jehova es mi pastor. Nada me falta" on the side of their house. It is accompanied by a picture of a Bible, the sacred text. Evangelical business owners occasionally paint Christian symbols on their buildings, a cross or fish, or give their stores Christian names. The "Shamar Librería Evangélica" in La Esperanza carries a few Bibles, but is mostly stocked with office supplies. An occasional house will have a sign above the door proclaiming, "Jesus is the Lord of this house," similar to plaques declaring, "This is a Catholic home."
Auditory methods

In addition to the written word, the spoken word plays an essential role in Protestant evangelism. To draw in passers-by, pentecostal churches broadcast their services into the streets with loudspeakers. Even without speakers, the doors are usually left open during the service, making the preaching and singing audible outside. In recent years, the Intibuca Catholic Church has also begun using speakers to broadcast music in the mornings. Radio programming has long been a popular method of Protestant evangelism. Six days a week, the Baptist church in La Esperanza broadcasts a radio program with preaching and music in Spanish. Radio is gaining popularity among Catholics: "The powerful beam" of the Radiophonic Program broadcast from Sonsonate, El Salvador, "extends beyond the hills where most of the population lives without the assistance of priest, teacher or catechist" (Bacigalupo 1980:358). Programming included daily Bible readings, commentary and music, and weekly masses.

Catholic Presence

It is difficult to compare the active membership of the Catholic and Protestant churches in the study area, but in terms of attendance at worship services and estimates of membership, Catholics dominate in each town except San Juan. This is particularly evident in La Esperanza and Intibucá where the two Catholic churches and market are the focal points of activity. While La Esperanza has the greatest number of Protestant churches, attendance in all of these combined is less than that of the two Catholic
churches. Where the Catholic presence is strong, physically and personally, Protestant churches are less successful. "Physical presence" refers to visible symbols of faith in the landscape, churches, shrines and icons. "Personal presence" applies to the clergy. One reason cited for the success of Protestants in Latin America is the scarcity of Catholic clergy. In Mexico, Clawson found that Mormon growth flourished in the town of Nealtican after an active priest died and was replaced by someone who did not visit the settlements regularly (1984:48). The clergy shortage in Honduras has been extreme.

In the 1970s, the ratio of priests to parishioners was 1 to 10,327 (Carías 1991:98). By comparison, Nicaragua had one priest per 5,215 parishioners, and Costa Rica had 1 per 3,738 (Carías 1991:99). Forty-four percent of Honduran priests were concentrated in the capital, leaving most of the country without resident clergy (Carías 1991:99).

Given these figures, it is surprising that there are at least five resident priests in the study area. La Esperanza has two, Padre Muñoz and Padre Guillermo. Father Guillermo travels to Yamaranguila on the third Sunday of each month and makes sporadic visits to San Juan throughout the year. Erandique also has two resident priests, Padre Manuel from Spain and Padre Horea from Copán. Horea travels to the neighboring settlements of San Andrés and Santa Cruz to celebrate their saints' days. Gracias has at least one resident priest. In addition to the priests, a group of nuns live in a convent attached to the La Esperanza church.

Protestants have been most successful in towns without resident priests, or regular contact with clergy. San Juan has the highest number of Protestant churches.
relative to its population and the least contact with priests. The areas south of the study area, toward the El Salvador border, are seldom visited. Residents claim they cannot afford the fees charged by the priests to perform sacraments, so he does not bother to come. Whether or not this is true, such perceptions create tension between priests and parishioners. The clergy shortage is so extreme that Catholics in Gualcince invited the resident Baptist missionary to preach in their church. The Shawls reported that the priest who lives in Candelaria visits more frequently since they arrived.

Priests both draw people to the Church, and discourage them from attending Protestant churches. Jim Foster related several experiences he has had with Father Muñoz since his arrival in La Esperanza. During a festival honoring a patron saint in the 1970s, every building along the main streets was decorated, including the Baptist church. Jim Foster did not want the church to be associated with the festivity, so he removed the decorations and was confronted by the priest and the police. He was not arrested, but following the incident, he and his wife were stopped, and his truck searched by the FSP every time they drove through town. The Fosters no longer face harassment from the military, but the priests continue to discourage people from attending their services. Several converts have returned to the Catholic church after Father Muñoz visited them at home to warn them that Protestants cannot go to Heaven because they do not believe in purgatory. Priests have also warned parishioners not to accept any Protestant literature.
In addition to the “personal” presence, ten Catholic churches, six Black Christs and a grotto for the Virgin attest to the powerful physical presence of the Catholic Church in the study area. A grotto honoring “la Virgin de la Immaculada Concepción” overlooks La Esperanza and Intibucá from a rocky slope of Cerro San Cristóbal on the western end of town. The grotto houses a statue of Mary with another woman kneeling at her feet. It is closed off by a metal gate until Holy Week, when offerings of food and coins, along with jars of holy water, are placed inside. On the slope immediately above the grotto is a small area where clay has been removed, possibly a sign of ritual geophagy. The consumption of clay tablets associated with El Señor de Esquipulas is not uncommon in the area. The practice baffled missionary Frederick Crowe, who visited Esquipulas, Guatemala, in the 1840s.

Most of the visitors to this fair [periodic market at Esquipulas] are induced to purchase, as a kind of memorial of the image, some small and rude medallions made of clay, and bearing its impress and suitable inscriptions, which have been blessed by the curate of the place. On returning to their homes, these are put into the hands of their children as something sacred, and, strange to say, are frequently eaten by them. The consequence is, that an extraordinary but incurable propensity of eating earth is provoked, which gradually assumes the character of a habit and is continued till it produces death. (1850:305)

Esquipulas is near the Honduran and Salvadoran borders and draws thousands of pilgrims a year. They come seeking healing and blessings from "El Señor de Esquipulas," a black figure of Christ. He is an important object of devotion, particularly in the western part of Honduras, while the Virgin of Suyapa is popular throughout the country, especially in the central region (Carias 1991:92).
There are at least six Black Christs in the study area. Two are in the San Marcos church on Gracias' central plaza. The Intibucá church also has two, referred to as "El Señor de Intibucá," the brother of El Señor de Esquipulas. One image is approximately 4 feet high and hangs on a cross behind the altar. The other is smaller and hangs on a cross on the southern wall of the church. This one is painted black with red streaks to represent blood. The other Black Christs are in San Juan, veiled behind the altar, and in Erandique, where he hangs in a glass case on the south side of the church. None of these Black Christs seem to draw pilgrims. However, they are prominent in local folklore.

Folklore demonstrates the importance of Catholicism in interpreting and shaping the physical and cultural surroundings. El Señor is credited with selecting the site for the town of La Esperanza. The image, carrying a bell, appeared at the foot of a tree (cedar, oak or cacao) at the site of the Intibucá church on the central plaza. Someone carried the image to Azacualpa, but the bell did not ring, and the saint returned to his original site. Next, he was taken to Pueblo Viejo where a church was built, but the bell still did not sound and he returned to the first site. Finally, a church was built there, and the saint is the very one who now occupies the place behind the main altar (Chapman 1986:30). As mentioned in the previous chapter, the settlements in Pueblo Viejo and Azacualpa were abandoned because of contagion, but that has been re-interpreted to reflect spiritual rather than historical reality. Another saint, San Sebastián, is credited with selecting the Gualmuaca church site at the foot of a ceiba tree in Erandique. A
large statue of the saint occupies the area behind the main altar and a smaller version stands in a niche to the side. The central figure in Yamaranguila's church is Saint Francis of Asisi. A smaller figure, St. Francis de la Conquista, occupies a niche in a side wall. According to tradition, the saint appeared at the present site, either in a waterfall or a hole in a tree (Chapman 1986:34).

**Lenca and Catholicism**

Clawson found that "Protestantism is strongest in the regions dominated by nominal Catholicism and weakest in those that retain either formal or folk Catholicism" (1989:47). In addition to the resident priests and significant religious sites, another possible reason for the continued strength of Catholicism in the study area could be the Lenca. By 1550, the Mercedarian Order had established *reducciones* in Comayagua, Gracias and Tencoa, all within Lenca territory (Black 1995). Four centuries later, the Lenca identify themselves as Catholics; but, as with many indigenous converts, the Lenca version of Catholicism is intertwined with vestiges of their pre-Hispanic faith. For Chapman, *copal* and candles, both important in Lenca religious rituals, symbolize the syncretism of Catholicism and pre-colonial practices. *Copal*, used as incense, represents the Indian traits, and candles represent Hispanic traits (1985:14).

Until recently, the Lenca continued ritual offerings of blood, cacao and *chicha* for the renewal of the earth. These were given during a *compostura*, a domestic ritual that celebrated various events in the life cycle or agricultural cycle. A temporary rectangular altar was made by tying branches together into a frame to which various
plants and crosses were attached. Cups of chicha, copal and sacrificed birds were placed at the foot of the altar (Chapman 1985:75). The exact procedure and offerings presented varied with the occasion. In another ritual known as the carrera de patos, men sacrificed ducks by riding under a low rope on horseback and attempted to decapitate the tethered birds by hand (1986:12). A third ritual, the guancasco, was practiced until recently. Lenca would don wooden masks and carry the patron saint of their village, on the saint's celebrated day, to another village with whom they had a reciprocal agreement. The "guest" saint was then put in the place of the host village's patron saint (Chapman 1986:12). Such exchanges were conducted between Guaimaca and Erandique, Mejicapa and Gracias, Chinacla and Marcala, and Intibucá and Yamaranguila (Otero 1963:155). The saints were exchanged on the road half way between Yamaranguila and Intibucá in an encounter called "El Consejo." The custom continued from the time of the municipio's founding in 1764 until the 1970s (Chapman 1971:82; 1986:9).

Despite the Lenca identification with Catholicism, Carías criticized the Church for being the primary force "against the tradition of Yamaranguila" (1989:53). In the 1960s and 70s, the Church began discouraging syncretic practices and the use of chicha. The compostura, carrera de patos and guancasco might still be carried out covertly, but they are no longer public community rituals. In Belén Gualcho during the 1970s, one of the largest settlements of Lenca descendants, the priest removed the icons from the church to "simplify the worship environment," in accordance with suggestions of
Vatican II. In retaliation, the citizens had the priest imprisoned. After he was freed, the town was excommunicated until the people submitted to the priest's reforms (Moran 1995).

There have also been conflicts between the Lenca and individual priests because of unethical behavior on the part of the clergy. A priest in San Antonio tried to "appropriate" land and livestock from the Lenca, and when accused of stealing, he retaliated by having Lenca representatives sent to prison. The Secretary of Culture had to intervene to bring about a resolution (Carías 1989:53). In 1993, the residents of Yamaranguila accused Fathers Guillermo and Muñoz in La Esperanza of stealing gold coins from their church (Foster 1994). Lenca leaders have taken their grievances to Tegucigalpa, but nothing had been resolved as of 1994.

Chapman (1986) mentioned Protestantism as a new religious option for young Lenca, and another factor in the loss of their culture. However, fieldwork suggests that the Lenca are uninterested in Protestantism. I met only one self-identified Protestant Lenca woman in La Esperanza. Most pastors claimed to have no Indian members in their churches. The Mennonite church of Intibucá had the most, with only four. The primary cause for Lenca resistance to Protestantism seems to be the role of Catholicism as an essential element of their culture, despite the Church's attacks in recent years. Sheldon Annis (1987) found a similar association between indigenous culture and Catholicism in San Antonio Aguas Calientes, Guatemala. Indian identity is encapsulated in the concept of "milpa logic." This includes religion, subsistence
techniques, and social structures that maintain community stability. Protestantism, along with over-population and landlessness, is an "anti-milpa force" that threatens "Indianness" by disrupting the social and economic balance. Religion and political activism are unifying cultural elements. A Lenca man at a 1993 logging protest outside of Yamaranguila claimed, "We do more than sing and pray. We also fight for the environment. Protestants do not care about such issues."

In addition to cultural resistance on the part of the Lenca, Protestant pastors and missionaries have neglected Indian communities. Some Protestant leaders seem unaware of their Indian neighbors, while others, like the Baptists in La Esperanza, focus their efforts on ladinos because of past Lenca-resistance to evangelism efforts. In the 1970s, missionaries were chased out of a Lenca village north of Intibucá by women wielding brooms. The early loss of the Lenca language has also discouraged mission groups like Wycliffe Bible Translators from working with them.

Diffusion

In addition to ethnic identity and relative Catholic strength, Protestant growth is influenced by population size and the transportation network. There is some correlation between the size of a town and the number of established Protestant churches. La Esperanza and Intibucá are the largest settlements in the study area and have the most churches. Yamaranguila has the fewest inhabitants and Protestant churches. Otherwise, the connection between Protestant growth and population is weak. Gracias and Erandique are larger than San Juan, yet have fewer churches. The transportation
network is more significant than population density for Protestant diffusion. The correlation between roads and religious diffusion was noted by Martin (1990), who found that missionary efforts are directed by transportation arteries, and by Semple who wrote that religious ideas travel "along established lines of communication" (1911:27). Hannemann found that the transportation network "channeled the Reformation into specific sections" of Germany while natural barriers blocked diffusion in other directions (1975:210-211). In the case of southwestern Honduras, road improvements since the Soccer War have facilitated the movement of denominations into the study area and between settlements.

**Travel into the study area**

The eastern-most towns, La Esperanza and Intibucá, are now well-connected with central Honduras, the core Protestant region in the number of Bible institutes and seminaries, denominational headquarters, and converts. The route from central Honduras to La Esperanza has improved in recent years. When a new road was cut between Siguatepeque and La Esperanza in the 1970s, the trip took five hours. The road was paved in 1994, and travel time has been reduced to two hours. Buses run daily to Siguatepeque and Tegucigalpa, and to San Pedro Sula every other day. Six churches have entered from the east.

Gracias is well-integrated with Guatemala and the western part of Honduras. The road into Gracias from Santa Rosa de Copán was not cut until the 1950s, but is now almost entirely paved. Buses run daily to Santa Rosa, a trip of 1.5 hours, and to San
Pedro Sula, four hours north along the same route. The oldest Protestant groups entered Gracias from the north and west. Central America Mission entered Honduras at Puerto Cortés and traveled inland through San Pedro Sula and Santa Rosa de Copán. Friends missionaries came from Guatemala. More recently, the Assemblies of God entered from Assemblies-dominated municipios along the Guatemala border.

Erandique is not well-integrated with any major settlements outside of the study area, but the flow of commercial goods is oriented to the south and west. Most commercial vehicles follow a circuit from Guatemala or western Honduras, south to the El Salvador border, east along the border to Mapulaca, north through Erandique to San Juan, and then west to Gracias. Protestants have diffused into the town along the same routes. Peña de Horeb and its predecessor, Alpha y Omega, were introduced from El Salvador. The Friends arrived from Guatemala.

Travel within the study area

Within the study area, it is easier to travel from east to west (La Esperanza to Gracias) than west to east (Gracias to San Juan or La Esperanza) because of the traffic flow. Few residents own automobiles and instead depend on public transportation or hitch-hike with commercial vehicles. There are no paved roads in the study area now, and, until the 1970s, most of the routes to the smallest villages were impassable in the rainy season. Physically and economically, the area was better-integrated with El Salvador than with central Honduras until the Soccer War. Between 1969 and 1976, the government initiated an emergency development plan to deal with the economic
repercussions of the war, which resulted in the loss of markets and supplies. The government focused on constructing roads and bridges.

Intibucá and La Esperanza are well-connected with surrounding villages by a network of all-weather roads. Vans go hourly to Yamaranguila, just 10 km away, and northward to Azacualpa. The southern route to Santa Lucía on the Salvador border has also improved. Mini-vans make the four hour trip every other day. Protestant churches in La Esperanza have started eight satellite missions in surrounding settlements, five in the southwest, two in the northeast, and two in the northwest, at an average distance of 29.3 kilometers (Figure 12.1). The road network allows Protestants in the closest villages to attend churches in La Esperanza and Intibucá; so, with the exception of Yamaranguila and Ologosi, there are no satellite missions within a 20 kilometer radius.

The small settlements surrounding Gracias are difficult to reach, particularly in the rainy season. Other than a road from Gracias to the foot of Celaque, built to accommodate tourist traffic, the roads out of town are only a few kilometers long. Buses run to San Manuel daily. Another to Lepaera was discontinued in 1994. Only five satellite missions, two in the south and three in the north, have been started by Gracias Protestants. These are located an average of 19.6 kilometers away. The low Protestant diversity and density of Gracias is surprising given the population size and connection with San Pedro Sula. However, if churches are going to establish a headquarters or central mission from which to radiate out into the surrounding area,
Direction and Distance of Protestant Diffusion

Lines represent the straight-line distance and direction of diffusion from the original central church to satellite churches started by the central church.

La Esperanza
A. Camasca
B. Colomonceagua
C. Jiquinlaca
D. Magdalena
E. Ologosi
F. San Juan
G. San Miguelito
H. Yamaranguila

Gracias
A. La Campa
B. La Iguala
C. La Union
D. Lepaera
E. San Manuel

Figure 12.1  Protestant Diffusion from Gracias and La Esperanza
Santa Rosa de Copán and Ocotepeque are more accessible from San Pedro Sula and Guatemala.

San Juan is the pivotal point in the transportation network of the study area. It is located at a *desvio*, a y-intersection, where the east-west route between Gracias and La Esperanza joins the north-south road to the El Salvador border. The 35 km trip from La Esperanza takes two hours during the dry season, and anywhere from 2.5 to 3.5 hours in the rainy season. In addition to commercial vehicles, a pick-up truck makes the trip daily. Gracias is another 34.2 km west of San Juan (69 km from La Esperanza) and takes an hour and a half to reach.

San Juan has as many Protestant churches (5) as Gracias and only a fraction of the population. While it is accessible, San Juan is too far away from La Esperanza for Protestants to attend church there, so converts have started their own churches in town. The trip is also too expensive for many local residents to make regularly. The average fare between the principle towns of the study area is $1 each way. The San Juan churches have been the most active in establishing satellite missions, 14 (only 12 were located on a map) compared to eight in La Esperanza, five in Gracias and three in Erandique. These are located an average of 7.6 km away, much closer than those of Gracias or La Esperanza (Figure 12.2).

The 21 km trip from San Juan to Erandique takes an hour in the dry season and between 1.3 and two hours in the rainy season. Finding a ride can be difficult, especially Monday through Wednesday when there is little commercial traffic. It is not
Direction and Distance of Protestant Diffusion

Lines represent the straight-line distance and direction of diffusion from the original central church to satellite churches started by the central church.

San Juan
A. Agua Caliente
B. Azacualpa
C. Cocire
D. El Naranjo
E. Erandique
F. Espinal
G. Llano Redondo
H. Loma Limpia
I. Montanita
J. San Jose de Cataulaca
K. San Miguelito
L. Santa Cruz

Erandique
A. Chemisal
B. Matasano
C. San Antonio Montania

Figure 12.2 Protestant Diffusion from San Juan and Erandique

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uncommon to wait four or five hours for a ride. Thursday through Sunday, when goods are coming to and from the markets in La Esperanza and Gracias, the wait can be less than an hour. When traveling north from Erandique to San Juan, there are more opportunities to go west from San Juan to Gracias than east to La Esperanza. A mini-bus made regular trips between Erandique and Gracias every other day but the service is now sporadic because of maintenance problems with the vehicle. The two Protestant churches in Erandique have started three new missions in surrounding villages, at an average distance of 5.7 km. The satellite churches for San Juan and Erandique are much closer than those of La Esperanza and Gracias because of poor road conditions and inadequate public transportation connecting the smaller towns with neighboring settlements. Alpha y Omega members say they must walk to visit their out-stations. Another factor in the number of satellite missions is population size. La Esperanza and Intibucá have adequate populations to accommodate new congregations, without converts having to venture out into smaller communities to expand. San Juan's population is small and can accommodate fewer churches.

The transportation network also influences the Catholic Church in the study area. As previously mentioned, Catholicism is strongest in towns with resident priests, La Esperanza, Erandique and Gracias. It is moderate in areas immediately surrounding La Esperanza, because Father Guillermo, who has a private vehicle, visits regularly. The public transportation system also allows parishioners from nearby settlements to worship in town. In San Juan, where clerical visits are sporadic, the Church is weakest.
La Esperanza and Gracias are too far away and too expensive to visit regularly. In addition to road conditions, the health and personality of the priests are factors. The areas south of La Esperanza and Intibucá are accessible, but they are under the jurisdiction of Father Muñoz, who is old and seldom travels anymore.

**Church Location**

Many of the Protestant churches in the study area began as home congregations. Once a home church or new mission has grown to a sufficient size, the members select a suitable location for a permanent meeting place. Evangelical churches are usually located in the peripheral sections of town, while mainline churches are closer to the central plaza (Figures 12.3 and 12.4). Factors in location include their time of arrival, available space and property values. Mainline churches, the Friends in Erandique and La Esperanza, were established early in the twentieth century when more land would have been available near the center of town. In La Esperanza, the Friends church, now occupied by Santidad, is on the southeastern corner of the same block as the Intibucá Catholic church. The Friends church in Erandique is on the main street in Barrio Gualmuaca, a block from the Catholic Church. The Friends church in Gracias is located on the same road as the primary Catholic church, just two blocks from the plaza. The Mennonite Church in Intibucá is an exception. This mainline church is far from the town center, but it was not established until 1990. One fundamentalist church, the Baptist in La Esperanza, occupies a central position, just a block away from the central
Figure 12.3  Map of La Esperanza and Intibucá
plaza. This prime property was acquired in 1980 when the owner, a friend of the missionaries, decided to move and offered to sell the building to the Baptists.

Pentecostals, who have all arrived since the 1980s, have constructed their buildings in peripheral areas, sometimes completely outside of town. There is more space available and property costs are lower. In La Esperanza and Intibucá, one pastor claimed that a plot of land on the edge of town is at least 30% cheaper than one near the plaza. The Baptists acquired their church in La Esperanza for 35,000 lempira in 1980. Now, a vacant lot three blocks east of the main plaza, approximately 75' by 65', costs 80,000 lempira. The pastor of Peña de Horeb in Erandique estimated that property near the town center is worth 15,000 to 20,000 lempira, versus 10,000 on the outskirts of town. Most of the pentecostal churches in the area are totally self-supported by nationals who generally have fewer financial resources than congregations that receive foreign contributions.

**Architecture and Church Types**

Church structures fall into three general categories: free-standing, multi-unit and home-based. Free-standing churches are surrounded on all sides by a lot of varying size (Figure 12.5). Fourteen churches fit this description. In addition to the church building, there might be a residence for the pastor and a separate Sunday school building. There are seven multi-unit churches in the study area (Figure 12.6). These occupy one or two units in a multi-occupancy building, similar to a store-front church. The property is rented, while most of the free-standing buildings are owned by the
Figure 12.5  Photograph of Free-Standing Church (Erandique)

Figure 12.6  Photograph of Multi-Unit Church (La Esperanza)
church. Four known congregations meet in homes. There are two types of home churches: those that are unmarked and unaffiliated with any denomination, and those that are clearly identified by a sign and may or may not be associated with a denomination. The two Jehovah's Witnesses "salas" in Esperanza are in homes with signs. Whenever possible, churches are built on corner lots; or, in the case of multi-unit occupants, the end unit near a street corner is selected. Forty-three percent of the churches are located on corners. Unlike Catholic churches, which are oriented to the west, Protestant buildings are constructed to face major roads, with little regard for cardinal direction.

Protestant churches in the study area have little in the way of external ornamentation other than a sign with the church name and schedule of services and meetings. Only the Santidad Church, formerly Friends, in La Esperanza fits the standard North American model. This was built by mainline North American missionaries in the early twentieth century, when visual dominance was a goal of Protestant architecture. Despite their simplicity, free-standing Protestant churches do have architectural features that make them identifiable, even if they remain unmarked. The main entrance is usually a set of double doors on the gable end of the building. Some free-standing churches have a facade with stepped sides or a semi-circle crowning the center. All of the churches are constructed of the typical building materials in the area, stuccoed adobe walls with a tile or laminate roof. The average church is 28 feet wide by 55 feet long (Table 12.2).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>La Esperanza/Intibucá</th>
<th>Year Founded</th>
<th>Size in Feet</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>72 wide</td>
<td>multi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of God #1</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>26 X 41</td>
<td>free, corner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of God Prophecy</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>multi, corner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of God #2</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuadrangular</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>25 X 48</td>
<td>free, corner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah's Witness</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mennonite</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>26 wide</td>
<td>multi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santidad #1 (was Friends)</td>
<td>1940s</td>
<td>53 X 79</td>
<td>free, corner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santidad #2</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erandique</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arco de Noe</td>
<td></td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>19 X 53</td>
<td>multi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peña de Horeb</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>19 X 36</td>
<td>free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gracias</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>1920s</td>
<td>24 X 53</td>
<td>free, corner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vida Abundante</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>62 X 29</td>
<td>free, corner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>41 X 65</td>
<td>free, corner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elim</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>34 wide</td>
<td>multi, corner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assembly of God</td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Juan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpha y Omega #1</td>
<td>1980-83</td>
<td>26 X 54</td>
<td>free, corner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpha y Omega #2</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah's Witness</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>multi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>18 X 60</td>
<td>multi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostal</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>free</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

multi = multi-unit   free = free-standing   corner = corner lot

Table continued
Interior decorations continue the theme of simplicity. The walls are covered with the previously mentioned posters of Bible verses. The most festive elements are multi-colored streamers that hang from the ceiling, sometimes with holiday messages like "Merry Christmas," that hang up year-round. Furniture is minimal: rough wooden benches or chairs and maybe a table or podium with a vase of artificial flowers. In keeping with modern evangelical theology, the emphasis is on the worshipper and message, not the building.

**Endnote**

23. Residents did not identify the figures in the churches of Yamaranguila or Barrio Centro, Erandique, as Black Christs in 1993; however, William Davidson believes they might be, based on fieldwork in the area.
Almost a hundred Indians and ladinos clapped, waved their arms, and sang praise songs, led by a group of men and women with guitars and tambourines. The priest’s sermon was punctuated by an occasional "Gloria a Dios" from the parishioners. This charismatic mass occurs every Wednesday night in the Intibucá Catholic Church, under the leadership of Padre Muñoz. This would have been a strange site to both Roman Catholic priests and mainline Protestant missionaries in the nineteenth century.

In the last five hundred years, these two branches of Christianity have shaped, and been shaped by, Latin Americans. Since the colonial period, Protestantism has evolved from the incidentally-introduced religion of foreigners to an increasingly visible and powerful spiritual option for Central Americans. The transition from foreign missions to national-led churches has been accompanied by the territorial advance of Protestantism inland from the Caribbean Rimland, a global shift in the geographical center of mission-sending activity, and the rise of pentecostalism over mainline and fundamentalist denominations.

The initial diffusion of Protestant Christianity into Central America depended on its relocation from Europe by secular agents (merchants, immigrants and pirates) who had little interest in evangelism. Throughout the colonial and early independence periods, Protestantism was essentially contained in foreign enclaves concentrated in the "Euro-African Caribbean Rimland" (West and Augelli 1989). In addition to their
accessible, offered a degree of freedom from Spanish political and religious control, and were inhabited by the target population of Europeans, African slaves and former slaves.

Protestant expansion in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was hindered by Spanish efforts; the Inquisition stands out as the most striking example. In addition to external political and military resistance, boards hesitated to commit missionaries and money to a region that was not truly "heathen." Therefore, colporteurs served as the transitional agents between secular Protestant contact and full-scale mission endeavors. Because colporteurs were largely self-supported, their work did not require a large financial commitment from sending agencies. Their itinerant methods and lack of permanent stations also made them less vulnerable to attacks from the Catholic clergy.

At the encouragement of Liberal political leaders, U.S. and European mission agencies expanded inland to establish permanent works during the independence period. In addition to a favorable political climate, this expansion was motivated by U.S. aspirations for territorial and economic expansion embodied in "Manifest Destiny," particularly in the post-Civil War period as manufacturing output increased the need for markets. Another factor was the proliferation of independent and fundamentalist mission-sending organizations, particularly on the U.S. frontier, a zone of "free religious enterprise that can be traced to a vacuum of traditional authority" (Stoll 1990:46-47). This intensified competition for resources and territory. As fundamentalist and independent missionaries entered Central America, they ventured inland to avoid areas already "claimed" by mainline denominations. Diffusion occurred in a hierarchal
pattern, spreading from coastal stations inland to urban centers along natural and man-made transportation arteries. Economic and strategic factors in site selection became secondary to population density and accessibility.

Protestant territorial expansion in the late independence and early pioneer periods paralleled a widening demographic focus. Missionaries began working among interior indigenous and *ladino* populations, as well as immigrants. Just as Manifest Destiny spurred Protestant expansion in the nineteenth century, the millennial fervor in the late 1800s renewed evangelical zeal among fundamentalists. Even though the twentieth century dawned without Christ's anticipated Second Coming, fundamentalist expectations were fueled by the turmoil of World War I and II, the Depression and Cold War. The increased zeal and commitment of forces to Central American missions accelerated Protestant growth in the pioneer and post-war periods.

The most dramatic growth in both the number of foreign missionaries and Central American converts has occurred since the 1960s, particularly among pentecostals. Because of the evangelical emphasis on the evangelistic responsibilities of converts, contagious diffusion has superseded relocation and hierarchal diffusion as the primary means of Protestant expansion. In addition to the relational element, transportation improvements and urban growth are among the key factors in Protestant expansion in the modern period. Undoubtedly, the highest density and diversity of Protestant churches is found in major urban centers of Honduras: Tegucigalpa, La Ceiba, and San Pedro Sula. However, the correlation between population size and
number of churches is complicated by existing transportation routes. Within the study area, decent all-weather roads and regular public transportation encourage the diffusion of Protestantism by facilitating travel between central churches and surrounding villages. Such conditions promote the flow of Protestant ideas, but do not necessarily encourage the establishment of new churches. In the case of La Esperanza and Intibucá, the relative ease of travel makes satellite missions unnecessary in villages within twenty kilometers. From San Juan, on the other hand, road conditions and traffic flow allow some contact between Protestant evangelists and converts in nearby towns, but are insufficient for new converts to worship in San Juan on a consistent basis. The lack of access necessitates the formation of new satellite missions that are turned over to the leadership of local residents as quickly as possible.

The transition from foreign to national leadership is occurring in Third World nations around the globe, shifting the geographic center of mission-sending activity away from both Europe and the U.S. Keyes referred to this as the fourth phase of world missions (1983). The initial phase of missions occurred in the first centuries A.D. as Christianity diffused throughout the Middle East, southern Europe and western Asia. The second focal point was Europe, the source of Catholic and Protestant diffusion into the New World. Most of the mainline Protestant denominations originated in, and diffused from, post-Reformation Europe: the Moravians in Bohemia (Czechoslovakia) in the 1400s, Lutherans in Germany, Presbyterians in Scotland and continental Europe in the 1500s, and the Baptists in England in the seventeenth century.
The First and Second Great Awakenings ignited an evangelical fervor in New England and along the Atlantic Seaboard that signaled the beginning of North America's dominant role in Protestant diffusion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions (ABCFM) was formed in 1812, and by the 1920s, the United States surpassed Great Britain and continental Europe in the number of missionaries and stations around the world. Within the U.S., the rise of pentecostalism in this century has shifted mission activity from New England to the South, and in recent years, Southern California.

Of the Protestant "waves," pentecostalism has been most successful in bringing about a transition from foreign missionaries to national leadership in Latin America. In the first decades of the twentieth century, an indigenous pentecostal church was established in Chile, and independent pentecostals arrived in El Salvador. An indigenous church has grown out of these foreign roots. Not only are Latin American Protestants leading their own churches, they are sending missionaries to other nations. This change is occurring throughout the Third World. The shift in the center of mission-sending activity from the Middle East to Europe, and then to the United States was accompanied by shifts in political and economic power. The same cannot be said for the modern rise of Third World missions.

The two key factors in the declining influence of Europe and the U.S. are growing secularism and cultural sensitivity. Secularism in industrialized nations, particularly in Europe, has been accompanied by a decline in financial and human
contributions. This necessitates greater independence among traditional mission-receiving nations. One might question whether or not a similar trend toward secularism is occurring in the United States, given the growing strength of fundamentalism. However, it is true that U.S. mission agencies are contributing fewer resources to foreign missions. Increased cultural sensitivity seems to be a key factor. Those foreigners who continue to serve in Central America, and in other regions, do so under the authority of nationals. A letter from the Director of Overseas Planning of the American Baptist Church stresses the "partnership" between mission-sending and receiving churches:

It has been the policy of International Ministries for many decades to seek relationships of genuine partnership between ourselves and the overseas churches with which we work. Rather than maintain separate 'missions' structures (let alone, missionary control of national church structures), we seek to have missionaries clearly situated under the guidance and authority of national leaders. (Slade 1994)

A letter from the president of Overseas Ministries for the Christian Church outlined a similar role for their missionaries.

Our strategy for choosing mission locations and placing mission personnel is to work with national church leaders of our partner churches around the world. We . . . determine both project support and assignment of missionaries through a process of prioritization and consultation with those partners. (Spier 1994)

More important than secularism and cultural sensitivity is the dynamic and participatory nature of pentecostal Protestantism. Every convert is an evangelist, and every non-believer is in need of evangelism. Because of this proselytizing fervor, Protestant
growth sometimes exceeds the capacity of foreign missionaries to minister effectively without the aid of nationals. If the work were not turned over, denominations would face the same dilemma as the Catholic Church, which has been weakened by a lack of priests.

As for the future of Protestantism in Central America, the phenomenal growth rates in some countries, 6.7 percent in Guatemala and 5.2 percent in El Salvador (Stoll 1990), will probably level off in the coming decades as successive generations of converts become more nominal in their faith. However, the tension between Protestants and Catholics "as rival organizations . . . manipulating resources, disposing of personnel, and generally fighting for their share of the market" ensures the continued vitality of both (Martin 1990:292). In recent years, Protestant mega-churches, with thousands of members, have sprung up in urban areas; but the majority of national-led congregations have inadequate resources to compete with the Catholic Church in the scale and grandeur of their buildings. Instead, they wage their battle for converts on billboards, on the airwaves, in the ubiquitous simple meeting places, and in the streets through public evangelism.

Ironically, the competition between Protestants and Catholics makes them more alike, at least superficially. This is most evident in the adoption of evangelical methods by the Catholic Church: like small group meetings (CEBs), the promotion of lay leadership and Bible study, and even charismatic masses. Efforts to eradicate syncretic practices among the Lenca and other indigenous groups reflect an attempt to "purify"
the Church and counter Protestant accusations of idolatry. In less obvious ways, Catholicism influences Protestantism. However, the changes are more connected to Latin American culture, as it has been shaped by faith, than to formal Catholicism. Among Latin American Protestants, there is a propensity for emotionalism that can transform even mainline denominations into charismatic churches.

For all their similarities, Protestantism and Catholicism are still very different spiritual options. The former internalize the sacred. Rather than worshipping in holy places, converts are holy, "the temple of God." Catholics, on the other hand, invest the external world with sacred meaning. They possess what Jackson and Henrie referred to as "geopious awareness" (1983:95). Associated with this internal/external dichotomy is the emphasis on visual aspects of faith among Catholics, and on the word (spoken, read or heard) among Protestants. In addition to the already mentioned impact of these differences on the physical landscape, they are relevant in the social and political realms. In some cases, Protestantism has served as a tool for political and economic empowerment for both Indians and ladinos. For the Lenca, however, Protestantism represents an abandonment of their cultural heritage. Catholicism is tightly interwoven with their political and territorial aspirations as they face the rapid integration of southwestern Honduras with the rest of the country.

As for future research, the Lenca response to Protestantism should be explored more fully. This study focused on the major settlements in southwestern Honduras, which are predominantly inhabited by ladinos. To more fully understand the Lenca,
As for future research, the Lenca response to Protestantism should be explored more fully. This study focused on the major settlements in southwestern Honduras, which are predominantly inhabited by ladinos. To more fully understand the Lenca, one needs to spend time in the aldeas dispersed throughout the mountains of the region. It will be interesting to see how the growing political activism of the Lenca affects their relationship with the Catholic Church. They could revive syncretic practices like the guancasco and compostura, strengthening the connection between cultural identity and Catholicism, but further distancing themselves from the Catholic establishment. On the other hand, the increasing integration of southwestern Honduras might draw them to pentecostal Protestantism as they cope with economic and social change.

Another aspect of Protestant growth in southwestern Honduras to watch is the fate of the Catholic Church as the older priests in Erandique and La Esperanza pass away. Considering the Honduran clerical shortage, and priority of urban centers, these men might not be replaced. The current situation in San Juan, where the Catholic presence is weak and Protestant growth is strong, might reflect the future of other settlements.
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VITA

Shawn Chamberlain Mitchell was born at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in 1969. As the daughter of a career Army officer, she had the opportunity to live and travel all over the United States, which contributed to her early interest in geography. Shawn attended Louisiana State University as an undergraduate and majored in anthropology. She was inducted into the Phi Beta Kappa Honors Society and graduated magna cum laude. In 1991, she entered the doctoral program in geography at LSU with a four-year Graduate School Fellowship. She currently lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, where her husband Doug is completing a doctorate in English. They have one daughter, Emily Rose.
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: Terri Shawn Mitchell

Major Field: Geography

Title of Dissertation: Moved by the Spirit: Protestant Diffusion and Church Location in Central America, with a Case Study from Southwestern Honduras

Approved:

[Signature]
Major Professor and Chairman

[Signature]
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signature]

[Signature]

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Date of Examination: December 2, 1996