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CHURCH IDENTITY BETWEEN
REPRESSION AND LIBERATION:
THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN GUATEMALA

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WITH A FOREWORD BY LUKAS VISCHER

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GUATEMALA

Population (1981) 6,054,227
 Population Growth Rate ca. 3% /year
 Land Area 41,375 sq. mi. (108,881 km²)



Toto: Totonicapán
 Quetzal: Quetzaltenango
 Chima: Chimaltenango
 Suchite: Suchitepéquez
 Guate: Guatemala
 Saca: Sacatepéquez

<u>Important Cities</u>	<u>Population (1981)</u>
Guatemala City	754,243
Quetzaltenango	62,719
Escuintla	36,931
Retalhuleu	22,001

Sources: Informationsstelle Guatemala e.V., *Guatemala, der lange Weg zur Freiheit*, (Wuppertal, Peter Hammer Verlag, 1982); National Census (1981).

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FOREWORD

Guatemala: the name calls to mind repression, torture and murder. For years, we have been confronted by news reports which bring a world of horror before our eyes. Thousands have been killed, or simply have disappeared without a trace. The police and the military, together with paramilitary groups, are working to repress all free expression. Massacres of entire villages, with the single goal of intimidation, are in recent years no exception. The "chronology of political violence" found in this book (pp. 36-37) can give the reader an impression of the unspeakable suffering which the Guatemalan people have endured. Neither protests nor pleading have been able to break this circle of violence. Indeed, it seems that this story of terror will only continue.

What is the position of the churches in Guatemala? The study at hand is an attempt to provide a picture of the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala. How did this small Protestant minority come into being? How has it developed and changed in the slightly more than one hundred years of its existence? To what extent has it grown from its North American origins and become a real part of Guatemalan society? What witness does it give today?

Why direct so much attention to this church? The Presbyterian Church is not a decisive factor in the current situation in Guatemala. Even today, the church is a numerically small community. Despite this, we can learn much from the history of the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala. It is like a mirror, allowing us to see the broader stages in the history of the entire country. Through closer examination of its history, we can learn a great deal about the development, spread and characteristics of Protestantism in Guatemala. Each new wave of Protestant missionary activity from the North - Fundamentalism, Pentecostalism, and the contemporary American movements - has resulted in tension and conflict within the Presbyterian Church.

Has the Presbyterian Church really gained a foothold in Guatemala in its century there? This study shows that in recent years the church has grown most rapidly among the Indians. The communities that have arisen among the simple people of Guatemala give great hope for the future: here, amidst the fires of suffering, a true Church of the poor is growing from Protestant roots.

The initiative for this study came from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the worldwide confederation of Reformed, Presbyterian and Congregationalist churches. Heinrich Schäfer took on the project of

writing the manuscript; this draft was presented to a number of persons in the Presbyterian Church of Guatemala with the request for a response. On the basis of the few replies received, the manuscript was then revised. I would like to thank Heinrich Schäfer for taking on this project, and for carrying it out with commitment, prudence, and care. It is important that Reformed churches throughout the world see the witness that their sister churches are giving. In my opinion, this study makes a welcome contribution to this urgently needed dialogue.

Lukas Vischer

INTRODUCTION

*I give you here my testimony;
I will tell you the good and the bad,
and I do not like ambiguities.*

First and foremost, the author would like to thank all those people who made the following study possible through their willingness to converse - some despite personal risks. The interview partners have entered in this way into a discussion on the recent history and the future of the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala. The following contribution seeks to give an account of this discussion. The author has attempted to leave as much of the portrayal and commentary as possible to those interviewed; the analysis, interpretation and criticism given by those interviewed stands in the foreground, and the author has sought to reduce his own analytic and interpretive intrusions and has excluded his own criticisms. Only the considerations in the last chapter make an exchange of theological arguments with the various positions in the Guatemalan church necessary. But even here, the author has attempted to put his own criteria of evaluation aside and present those arguments that are common within the Presbyterian Church itself.

Guatemala's past and present are marked by stark contrasts which have not remained without effect on the church itself. We will therefore follow a dialogue between very different persons with very different histories, often with opposing viewpoints. Although each of their histories has been shaped through a life in the service of the church, this does not make the task easier. When conflicts become visible in the presentation, each reader should bear in mind that it is in conflict that the seeds of renewal lie hidden; there, where conflicts cannot be avoided, we can find new solutions to old problems and "continue on our way rejoicing" in a dialogue of brothers and sisters under the forgiveness given by the cross. The conversion from unbelief to belief shows that the new arises from the crisis of the old. The following depiction of the life of the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala will not overlook conflict: like the research which has preceded it, it is oriented to the most controversial questions facing the church today. It is exactly the temptations and uncertainties of this church which can give direction to other churches in the worldwide Reformed community, in the face of their own uncertainties. This line of inquiry should not obstruct our view of the fact that the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala is much more than what can be depicted here.

After a brief look at the social history of the Presbyterian Church in the context of the development of Guatemalan society, the following topics will be considered:

- The influence of Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches;
- The church's actions in response to the social and political situation;
- The work of the new Indian presbyteries.

The question of a specific theological identity for the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala forms the context for discussion of each of these topics. In this decade this question has been posed with a new intensity.

It is clear that a presentation of the discussion in the Presbyterian Church must also consider the spectrum of churches in Guatemala, as well as the Guatemalan social situation. The Appendix contains several autobiographical accounts from the Presbyterian Church; they further illustrate how deeply the different theological positions are anchored in personal experiences.

The field work which forms the basis of this study was carried out as a research project on Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches in Central America.¹ The methods of oral history have been used in this examination of the Presbyterian Church, because they allowed the largest possible freedom for the people interviewed in the church to formulate their contributions. Corresponding to this method, the most important sources of the study are the tape-recorded interviews and the conversations, which were summarized with written notes. These sources are dealt with extensively in the study.² With the help of secondary research, the details given in the conversations have been checked and a basic framework of facts has been constructed. In oral history, the names of the interview partners are usually not given; the author has made additional effort to concentrate the presentation on issues and not on individuals. Thus, in the interviews and conversations, the church members and pastors are not identified by name. This decision was borne out by the fact that the author was often asked by the persons interviewed - regardless of their political position - for anonymity. This is a reflex of the political situation. Those persons who have been or are now involved in political conflicts, whether on the side of the opposition or on the side of the ruling groups, have also not been identified by name. Leading members of the church, to whom the topics are often closely and personally connected, and who al-

ready hold a representative function, are the only interviewees who are identified by name.

The author hopes with his whole heart that this study succeeds in faithfully portraying the situation and the discussions in the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala. He is convinced that the path of Guatemalan Presbyterians can give valuable insights to the Reformed community far beyond the borders of Guatemala.

Finally, it is a pleasure for the author to express his gratitude to the following persons and institutions. The present study was motivated by Prof. Dr. Lukas Vischer, whose commitment and invaluable counsel has made this publication possible, and to Prof. Dr. Konrad Raiser, who has contributed much thought as well. The study forms part of a larger research project of the author on Central American Protestantism at Ruhr University, Bochum, Germany, under the direction of Prof. Dr. Konrad Raiser.

Heinrich Schäfer

CHAPTER 1

A SURVEY OF PROTESTANTISM IN GUATEMALA:
THE TREND TOWARD CRISIS RELIGION

*And the people do feel sick.
They are sick, but spiritually;
maybe a wife, for example,
because she is treated badly by her husband,
because of the economic and social problems...*

The past and present of the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala are embedded in the history and social development of a Third World country, under foreign domination since its conquest by the Spanish in the 16th century, who first robbed the land of its wealth and subjugated its population. Since the nineteenth century, the USA has taken the place of the Spanish. With the Spanish conquest of Guatemala, the Roman Catholic Church became the bearer of religious power; since the beginning of the twentieth century the importance of the Protestant churches has steadily increased. According to careful estimates, in 1985 between 25 and 30 percent of Guatemala's total population were members of a Protestant church or were close to one.¹ All the Protestant churches in Guatemala (as in Central America as a whole, with a few exceptions) have their roots in the Protestantism of the USA.² The historical development of US-American Protestantism and its major theological currents are reflected in the structure of Protestantism in Guatemala. The Protestant churches in Guatemala can be classified in four categories, each of which can be traced directly back to currents of Protestantism in the USA.³

The first is historical Protestantism, composed primarily of churches from Europe which came to America during the colonial period. Their continuity is preserved today in "mainstream Protestantism", represented principally by the Episcopalians, the Lutherans, the Presbyterians and the Methodists.

As a result of the revivalism in the nineteenth century, those who criticized established devotional practices and laxity of historical churches split, forming groups which stressed the personal experience of devotion; the Holiness movement began with such churches as the Church of the Nazarene and the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana). This movement adapted itself to the current of conservative evangelicalism which in the meantime had emerged. Similarly, the nineteenth century saw the interde-

nominal missionary societies, such as the Central American Mission or the Latin American Mission, which followed the pattern of emerging commercial companies of American capitalism, reaching out toward Central America. Later, individual missionaries such as Billy Graham or Bill Bright (Campus Crusade for Christ) would take up this tradition and develop it further. Eschatological teaching contributes an important factor towards separating the Protestantism of the Great Revival from established Protestantism. These placed a special emphasis on the imminent destruction of the world with the Second Coming, countering the tendency of the period to identify its mercantile culture with the Kingdom of Heaven. This element was elaborated in the doctrines of dispensationalism and premillennialism to form an overall historical-theological picture.

At the turn of the century, conflicts arose within the Holiness movement over devotional forms - especially over the actions and manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Out of revivals in Topeka, Los Angeles and Chicago emerged the Pentecostal movement. Although John Wesley, the great theologian of Christian holiness, a century earlier saw the realization of holiness in love, the Pentecostal movement postulated as prima facie evidence of the gift of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, faith healing and miracles. Pentecostal churches also soon arose from the background of historical churches, but these differ little from those whose roots lie directly in the Holiness movement. The Assemblies of God and the Church of the Foursquare Gospel belong to the former group; the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee), for instance, belongs to the latter group.

With the appearance of politically ultraconservative fundamentalism at the beginning of the 20th century, heated discussion between this fundamentalism and the social-reform oriented "social gospel" forced most Protestant churches to choose sides. The churches of historical Protestantism mainly followed the path of a moderate social gospel, although sections of these churches split off, expressing their option for fundamentalism. Divisions also arose within the Holiness and Evangelical churches, but the majority took the side of fundamentalism. The same is true for Pentecostal churches and interdenominational missionary societies.

In the course of the 1960s the charismatic or neo-Pentecostal movement emerged in the USA. It is distinguished by an especially strong emphasis on ecstatic elements of spiritual devotion and by a close connection between Protestant and Catholic Christians. Socially, the neo-Pentecostal awakening, in contrast to the Holiness and Pentecostal awakenings, appeals to the middle class in the USA.

These various currents of church doctrines have all come to Guatemala in the course of the twentieth century.⁴ Historical Protestantism ar-

rived first in 1882 with the Presbyterian mission, retaining its singular influence until Lutheran missionaries (Missouri Synod) came in 1947.⁵ Evangelical Protestantism - including the Holiness movement - followed shortly afterward: in 1899 the dispensationalist Central American Mission arrived in Guatemala, and in 1901 the first missionary of the Church of the Nazarene arrived. The first Pentecostal church, the Assemblies of God (Asambleas de Dios), came in 1937, followed in 1940 by the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee), (Iglesia de Dios del Evangelio Completo), and in 1955 by the Church of the Foursquare Gospel (Iglesia del Evangelio Cuadrangulaf). The neo-Pentecostal churches appeared in Guatemala with the mission from Gospel Outreach (Iglesia del Verbo), 1974, and Literacy and Evangelism, Inc., 1977, as their first representatives. Protestantism in Guatemala developed differences from US-American Protestantism, but its origins are distinct and remain more or less easy to recognize:

- Historical Protestantism (most similar to the traditional European Protestantism) practices stately, liturgical, or pietistic forms of worship. The Bible is often interpreted historically and with a certain regard to commentaries by pastors. The justification of the sinner stands in the center of the teaching of the church. A stronger interest in education and social work than in the other currents is present. The doctrine of the last days - at least in the official church doctrines - is of little importance.
- Evangelical Protestantism practices a strictly pietistic worship service. The Bible is interpreted ahistorically and in an authoritarian way. In the center of the teachings of the church stands the Bible, coupled with an emphasis on the imminent Second Coming; this results in intensive conversion activity.
- With an equally authoritarian interpretation of the Bible, Pentecostal churches strongly emphasize the expectation of the imminent Second Coming, combined with the teaching of the outpouring of the spirit in present times, to the converted through miraculous healing or through glossalalia (speaking in tongues). Worship services are shaped by an experience of community and by moderately enthusiastic forms.
- The neo-Pentecostal churches place ecstatic elements of the worship services and Pentecostal practices strongly in the forefront, but do not agree with the Pentecostal movement in certain impor-

tant aspects. The Bible interpretation is, however, equally authoritarian and ahistorical.

These different currents of church practice assume varying forms of religious organization, determined by the following variables: participation in the life of society; distribution of class membership among church members; degree of education in church bureaucracy; formalization of clerical education; and degree of anonymity of visitors to the religious services.⁶ For Central America, three types of religious organizations can be distinguished as relevant: denominations; established religious groups; and others. For the first, all of the above-mentioned variables are high; for the last, all are especially low. From the possible combinations of four types of Protestantism with these three types of religious organizations, the following combinations typify Central American Protestantism:

Types of Central American Protestantism Symbolic System and Organizational Form

	Historical Protestantism	Evangelical Protestantism	Pentecostal Protestantism	Neo-Pentecostal Protestantism
Denomination	A			
Established Group ²	A'	B	C	D
Group ¹		B'	C'	

[*The terms "group" and "established group" are used instead of the sociological terms "sect" and "established sect" in order to forestall any possible polemical interpretation.]

Historical denominations (for example the Presbyterian Church) and evangelical established groups (for example the Central America Church) have their center of gravity in the middle and lower classes; the Pentecostal established groups (such as Asambleas de Dios) and Pentecostal

groups (an uncountable number) almost exclusively among the lower class; neo-Pentecostal established groups (such as El Verbo) bring together parts of the upper middle class and the upper class.

The following trends appear: (1) a strong increase in the number of (non-established) Pentecostal groups, from the 377 (1) individual churches which could be identified in Guatemala in 1985, the largest number of them belong to this type.⁷ Nonetheless, these individual groups are continually splitting up yet win few new members. (2) With regard to membership numbers, established Protestantism is dominant, not the sectarian - especially in the Pentecostal movement. It is established Pentecostal groups which have had the strongest membership growth in the last decade.⁸ (3) In addition, neo-Pentecostal Protestantism is an important new force. Its membership is actually still small compared with the whole of Protestantism, but its growth rate is high; its expansion is however, socially limited to the middle and upper classes. The upper-class orientation of these churches, combined with corresponding financial power, increases their social impact considerably.

The development of Protestantism outlined here cannot be separated from the development of Guatemalan society. The 1950s and especially the 1960s, the decades when the growth of Protestantism began to increase markedly, were a period of rapid social change, followed by an economic crisis which began in the late 1970s and has yet to be overcome. It can be assumed that the severe changes in the forms of production and social organization, and above all the polarization of society, required new forms of religious interpretation. It is the dualistic religious system of Evangelical and Pentecostalist churches which gives the most conclusive answer to the changed demand for religious meaning in wide circles of society, especially in combination with Pentecostalist spiritual piety. Correspondingly, the share of the Pentecostal churches (which arrived later in Guatemala) in total Protestantism soon exceeded that of the historical and fundamentalist churches. In the second half of the 1970s, the Pentecostal churches broke the 50-percent-mark and now represent the largest group of all Protestant Christians in Guatemala.

In its regional distribution, Protestantism is strongest in those areas where radical economic changes have taken place, or where the victims of such changes are to be found. This applies foremost to the Petén Department; here, displaced small peasants, driven from fertile plains of the south coast due to the expansion of large-scale agriculture, are forced to build a new existence in the middle of the jungle. Many of these uprooted people join the Pentecostal churches, which accordingly made up 80 percent of all Protestantism in Petén in 1980. The situation is not much differ-

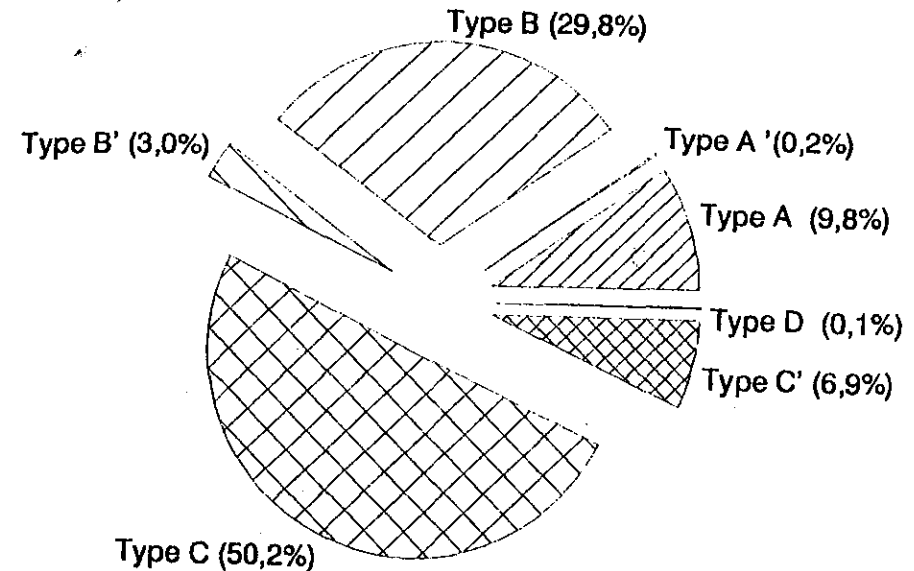
ent in the Izabal Department; on the banana plantations of this region, it is again the Pentecostal churches which are springing up, attended by the agricultural workers. Their share of the Protestantism there is 75 percent. In the agro-industrial departments of the Pacific coast, Pentecostal churches are also growing.

Even in Retalhuleu, where the Presbyterian Church traditionally held the majority of the Protestants, the Pentecostal churches have, with 67 percent, an above-average share. This indicates that the answer of the Pentecostal churches to situations of sharp social contradictions is seen by many as more plausible than that of historical Protestant churches. The increase of neo-Pentecostal churches in the urban middle and upper classes takes place on a similar stage. Their message opens a possibility for these social groups to confront and come to terms with the political and economic crisis in Guatemala in a way that has meaning for them.

The strongest social and church dynamic is shown by the Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal established groups and by Pentecostal groups - forms of Protestantism which can be designated best as "crisis" religions. These expressions of Protestantism offer a special challenge for the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala, because they are sapping the membership in the lower as well as in the middle class. The fact that these expressions of Protestantism have the wind of social developments at their backs makes the situation even more difficult for the Presbyterian Church. In addition, problems also arise, because the Presbyterian Church, in its century in Guatemala, has developed a very contradictory approach to social and political responsibility.

COMPOSITION OF PROTESTANTISM BY TYPE

GUATEMALA (in percent)



Source: PROCADES, *Directorio de iglesias, organizaciones y ministerios del movimiento protestante. Guatemala*, (San José, Costa Rica, 1981.)

The author's typology and calculation.

(n = 4986 congregations)

CHAPTER 2

A CENTURY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN GUATEMALA. THE CHURCH IN A CHANGING SOCIAL CONTEXT: FROM NINETEENTH-CENTURY LIBERALISM TO THE CURRENT CONFLICTS

For the purpose of achieving high social goals, a ... Protestant congregation is being founded ... so that our liberal theories will become actions.

In the course of its history, the Church has been shaped more and more by a theology of evangelism.

We were united ... in a front against the oppression.

1. 1882 to 1930: The Presbyterian-Liberal Alliance and the Beginning Competition with Fundamentalism¹

CHRONOLOGY 1523-1899*

1523-24: Conquest of the Maya Empire by Spanish troops led by Pedro Alvarado. Despite strong resistance, more than half the Mayan population is wiped out. A system of taxes, forced labor, deportation and military control keeps the remainder in check.

1600-1699: Cultivation of indigo is intensified.

1803-20: Mayan revolts in Cobán, Santa Cruz del Quiché, San Martín Cuchumatanes, Momostenango, Ixtahuacán, El Quiché and Totonicapán.

1821: Independence of Guatemala from Spain and entry into the Mexican Empire.

1823: Founding of the Central American Federation.

1826-29: Civil war between conservatives and liberals within the Federation.

1831-38: The liberal Mariano Gálvez becomes president; economic predominance of England replaces that of Spain.

1837-88: Mayan revolts in San Juan Ostuncalco, Jumay, Ixtahuacán, Verapaz, Sololá, Chimaltenango, Colzaj, Momostenango, Alta Verapaz and San Juan Ixcay.

1839: Withdrawal of Guatemala from the Central American Federation.

The inception of the Presbyterian Church's activity in Guatemala was shaped by conflict between the conservative and liberal Central American bourgeoisie of the nineteenth century.² After the liberation of Central America from Spanish colonial rule with the 1821 Declaration of Independence, this conflict became fundamental to the region, and remained so well into the twentieth century. Conservatives represented the interests of the former Spanish colonial bureaucracy, the nobility, the military and the Catholic Church; the liberals represented the efforts of the rising middle class, the merchants, and above all the modernizing, export-oriented large-scale agriculture. With the beginning of the Barrios government, the ground was laid

for liberal dominance which would last until the 1940s.

Cultivation of coffee - the economic backbone of the liberals - was intensified; the communal lands of the Mayas³ were nationalized and distributed to the Ladinos.⁴ The propertyless Mayas were then forced to work as wage-laborers and to serve in the military. "As a result, the social and legal position of the Indians deteriorated in comparison with the colonial period."⁵ The Roman Catholic Church sided clearly with the conservatives, which earned it the declared enmity of the liberals. Indicative of the church policy of the liberals was the introduction of religious freedom and civil marriage, the expropriation of church property, the secularization or expulsion of the religious orders, and even the expulsion of opposing bishops; the Constitution of 1879 officially prohibited all involvement of the Catholic Church in political affairs. The Catholic Church lost almost fully its previously significant political influence.

The liberal dictator Barrios had close ties to the US mercantile capitalist groups present in Guatemala. From these groups came the idea to invite a US-Protestant church, which would counteract Catholic interference in Liberal politics, to Guatemala.

1839-71: Conservative rule under Rafael Carrera, supported by the Catholic Church.

1856: Dallas-Calderón Treaty; Beginning of the predominance of the USA in Central America.

1871: Beginning of the so-called "Liberal Revolution".

1873-75: Presidency of Justo Rufino Barrios. He transfers church and Indian land to the Ladino (petty) bourgeoisie. Beginnings of coffee cultivation by the liberal bourgeoisie. Religious freedom; restriction of the Catholic Church.

1882: The Presbyterian Mission of the USA, the first historical Protestant church in Guatemala, begins its work.

1883: Compulsory military service for the Mayas.

1889: The Central American Mission is the first fundamentalist Protestant church to reach Guatemala.

*The details in all chronologies of the general situation in Guatemala come from the following works: Tom Barry and Deb Preusch, *The Central American Fact Book* (Albuquerque, NM, 1986); George Black et al., *Garrison Guatemala* (New York, NY, 1984); Centro de Estudios Euméricos Latinoamericanos, ed., *La Iglesia en Guatemala, El Salvador y Nicaragua. Análisis de enero de 1985 a abril 1986* (Mexico, no year); Agustín Estrada Monroy, *Datos para la historia de la Iglesia en Guatemala. Tomo III* (Guatemala, 1979); Jonathan L. Fried et al., ed., *Guatemala in Rebellion. Unfinished History* (New York, NY, 1983); Leo Gabriel, *Aufstand der Kulturen. Konflikt-Region Zentralamerika. Guatemala - El Salvador - Nicaragua* (Hamburg, 1987); Clifton L. Holland, *World Christianity. Central America and the Caribbean* (Monrovia, California, 1981); Informationsstelle Guatemala e.V., ed., *Guatemala. Der lange Weg zur Freiheit* (Wuppertal, Peter Hammer Verlag, 1982); Lutz Kliche and Hermann Schulz, eds., *Puerverfass Zentralamerika. Daten, Berichte, Dokumente* (Wuppertal, Peter Hammer Verlag, 1982); Hans-Jürgen Prien, *Die Geschichte des Christentums in Lateinamerika* (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1978); Pablo Richard and Guillermo Meléndez, eds., *La Iglesia de los pobres en América Central. Un análisis socio-político y teológico de la Iglesia centroamericana (1960-1982)* (San José, Costa Rica, DEI, 1982); Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker, ed., "Guatemala: Chronologie der politischen Gewalt, 1976-1983", in *Pogrom 104. Indianer in Mittelamerika*, (October 1983); Washington Office on Latin America, ed., "Guatemala. The Roots of Revolution", in *Special Update Latin America* (Washington, D.C., 1983).

By 1881 Barrios was trying to enforce reforms in the government, when Mrs. Frances Cleaves, wife of an American plantation owner and personal friend of the President and his family, wrote to the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presby-

terian Church on Barrios' request, to ask that someone be sent to start an evangelical church in Guatemala as a counter to clerical interference in government. The delays of the mail and the preparation irritated the President, and on a trip to New York he himself went to the Board offices and brought Mr. John Clark back with him in 1883.⁶

In accord with this beginning, Hill's mission focused first and above all on English-speakers, foreigners and a section of the liberal upper class. Hill founded a school (Colegio Americano) for children of the upper class, as well as other Presbyterian institutions. His social contacts, however, imposed too heavily on his budget, so that he ran into debt and had to abandon his mission. He was followed in 1887 by the real father of the Presbyterian mission in Guatemala, Edward Haymaker, whose traveling expenses, according to Reginald Wheeler, were also paid by the Guatemalan government.⁷ By 1891 he was in charge of two congregations in Guatemala City, joined by a third in 1895 in the bustling province city of Quetzaltenango. The founding of this congregation shows the close connection of the Presbyterian work with the political interests of the liberal bourgeoisie: the congregation was founded on the instigation of a few US-American and Guatemalan businessmen. Due to its obvious political connections, the Quetzaltenango congregation was oriented toward a very limited social group and remained correspondingly small; it was not formally constituted as a church congregation.

"The work did not flourish as hoped, because it was born from liberal enthusiasm and not from real religious conviction."⁸

In 1904 a congregation was formally constituted in Quetzaltenango under the new missionary McBath; however, its emphasis still lay on the upper class. In contrast, Haymaker concerned himself also with the urban middle and lower class, placing a strong emphasis on training and education. His work and that of a few further missionaries did not bear fruit as expected in vigorous church growth. Conflicts arose between Haymaker and the Mission

Invitation to the founding of the first Presbyterian congregation in Quetzaltenango*

Quetzaltenango, May 1895

Dear Sir,

For the purpose of achieving high social goals, a Protestant congregation is being founded in this city; the pastor of the congregation (Haymaker, author's note) is already among us.

The transcendental meaning of this step is certainly not beyond your illustrious judgment, and - so that our liberal theories might become actions - we will be gathering today at exactly seven P.M. in the private rooms of the esteemed Mr. José N. Rodas, to perform the aforementioned.

We would be pleased to have the honor to be allowed to count you among those present....

*Paul Burgess, ed., *Historia de la obra evangélica presbiteriana en Guatemala* (Guatemala, 1957).

Board, and he as well as the missionary William Gates submitted their resignations.⁹ Haymaker later returned to Guatemala and remained closely connected with the Presbyterian Church there.

In 1899 the first fundamentalist missionary society, the Central American Mission, also began working in Guatemala. This mission distinguished itself from the Presbyterian mission particularly through the teaching of "dispensationalism", a historical scheme outlined by Cyrus Scofield. Dispensationalism teaches that modern humanity stands in the last of several historical epochs, immediately before the Second Coming. The concept is strictly "premillennial", inasmuch as it expects a thousand-year reign of peace directly after the return of Christ from the heavens. Until this Second Coming, the world is destined to become worse and worse, sinking deeper and deeper into disaster.¹⁰

The Central American Mission addressed the urban and rural lower class with this doctrine through public preaching and visits to homes. Starting in 1903, the mission began to work in rural areas, in Jupita and especially in San Marcos.¹¹ This theological and social approach immediately registered a stronger growth than that granted to the work of the Presbyterians, with its close connection to the liberal bourgeoisie. As a result, by 1902 the Central American Mission found itself after only three years of work in a strong upswing, whereas the twenty-year-old Presbyterian Mission showed relatively poor quantitative results and stagnation. This is one of the roots of the powerful influence which premillennial dispensationalism and conversion-oriented preaching were to have on the Presbyterian Church.

The work of the Presbyterian Mission meanwhile continued to concentrate on its stongest point, training and education. Up to 1936, a total of thirty-nine Presbyterian missionaries had worked in Guatemala or were serving there. In this period the first two presbyteries were founded.¹² The most important steps in this period in the area of education were the foundation of several institutions: the large schools (colegios) "La Patria" (Fatherland) in Quetzaltenango and in Guatemala City (where the school was first called Norton Hall) in 1918, as well

CHRONOLOGY 1900-1929

1901: First contract with the United Fruit Company.

1904: Beginning of railroad construction. In 1912 all railroads are taken over by a company controlled by United Fruit.

1905-06: Mayan revolts in Totonicapán and Alta Verapaz.

1914-18: First World War: strengthening of US-American business in Guatemala.

1920: A democratic movement topples the dictator Estrada Cabrera.

1921: Overthrow of the new president Carlos Herrera through pressure from US President Coolidge; United Fruit expands. Founding of the first Catholic diocese in Quetzaltenango.

1922: Exile of the Catholic Archbishop; continuation of sharply anticlerical policy.

1924: Longshoremen strike against United Fruit.

1929: World economic crisis: coffee prices crash on the international market; severe crisis of Guatemala's economy.

as the vocational "industrial school" (colegio industrial) in Guatemala City (1919), which no longer exists today. In 1915 a bookstore was opened; printing played an important role in the Presbyterian Mission. For medical care, the Hospital Americano was opened in 1922; later the hospital also carried out field work in the country. This hospital was sold in 1963. The educational facilities and medical care provided by the Presbyterian Mission had an important function for the entire Protestant minority in Catholic Guatemala: for the Protestant communities (barely 1 percent of the total population in 1936),¹³ medical care or education in the confessionally restricted Catholic hospitals and schools was out of the question. Thus all other non-Catholic churches also benefited from the medical and educational work of the Presbyterian Mission. With regard to the Mayan population, the Mission had not yet begun any significant work.

The founding in 1935 of a Presbyterian seminary was an important event in the development of theological education in Guatemala - although this came six years after the Central American Mission had opened its Bible school in Guatemala City. When one realizes that the Central American Mission came to Guatemala two decades after the Presbyterian Mission, then this situation demonstrates their significant lead in theological education and the importance of evangelism and conversion to the Central American Mission. Their Instituto Bíblico, later Seminario Bíblico Centroamericano (SETECA), is still considered today to be the most influential theological training center for the Protestant churches of Guatemala. Dispensationalism and a rigid fundamentalism thus became daily tools for many pastors of other churches, including Presbyterians.

2. 1930 to 1944: Economic Crisis and Approach to Fundamentalism

CHRONOLOGY 1931-1944

1931-44: Dictatorship of Jorge Ubico. Continuation of Mayan forced labor through the "vagrancy laws", with the immediate support of the USA. Relaxation of anticlericalism.

1933: Massive popular protests, violently repressed.

1935: Founding of the diocese Verapaz (Cobán).

1936: Accreditation of a Papal Nuncio

1937: The Assemblies of God are the first Pentecostal Church to come to Guatemala.

1943: The first Maryknoll missionaries in Guatemala.

1944: Demonstration against Ubico; the military kills approximately two hundred people. Transfer of the government to a military junta as a result of public pressure. Overthrow of the dictatorship through a coalition of the urban middle class and a section of the military. Mayan revolt in Patzún.

In the early thirties, the effects of the world economic crisis descended on Central American society. In the wake of the Depression of 1929, coffee prices fell on the world market and the liberal economies of Central America, dependent on coffee exports, responded by dismissing massive numbers of workers. This led to severe social conflicts. In Guatemala the dictator Jorge Ubico, who came to power in 1931,

responded to social protest with a wave of violence. In 1933 he ordered the murder of over one hundred students, workers and members of the opposition. In 1944 Ubico enacted a law which allowed large landowners to go unpunished when they acted criminally against individuals who stole food or firewood from their estates.¹⁴ In other Central American countries (such as El Salvador, where following a peasants' revolt the military murdered two percent of the total population), this crisis led to a growth spurt in the Protestant church. For the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala, however, there is no sign of a growth spurt fueled by the crisis.¹⁵ This can be explained mainly by the fact that the Presbyterian mission had not yet reached the chief victims of the mass unemployment, but instead continued to be oriented toward the urban liberal bourgeoisie.

The victims of the crisis were above all the Mayas, and the work of Presbyterian Mission had indeed - with very few exceptions - not yet reached them.¹⁶ The first systematic work among the Mayas began in 1941: the Burgesses, a missionary couple, founded in this year the Quiché Bible Institute (Instituto Bíblico Quiché) near Quetzaltenango, and the missionary couple Peck began building the Mam Center (Centro Mam) in San Juan Ostuncalco, also not far from Quetzaltenango. The Mam Center housed a Bible school, gave literacy and agricultural courses, and carried out evangelization. In 1949 a medical clinic was annexed to the Mam Center. Both Bible institutes exist today, but the medical clinic at the Mam Center has been shut down for financial reasons following the departure of the last missionary in 1978. Dora Burgess and the Pecks translated the New Testament into the native languages respective to their missionary territories during their work with the Mayas. They and the translators of the Central American Mission accomplished a pioneering work which was to form the basis of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. This work was seen - at least from the perspective of the Mission Board in New York (from the missionaries themselves less so) - as a contribution to the Ladinization of the Mayas. The former secretary of the Board, Reginald Wheeler, saw the mission among the Mayas in the context of a general integration and modernization. In 1950 he wrote:

There is a gradual constant "upward" filtration of Indians who move over into the status of Ladinos. Sometimes it seems to involve little more than a change of clothes. This process will undoubtedly accelerate with the years as modernization takes place.¹⁷

Today this approach is critically evaluated in the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala: "The goal was the integration of the Indígenas into another culture. Recently, this philosophy has been justifiably called into question."¹⁸ Nonetheless, the issue of the respect for Mayan culture in the Presbyterian Church today continues to be problematic, as is the participation of the Mayas in the government of the church.

Through work with the Ladino population, the church's area of activity was widened, and between 1936 and 1950 three new presbyteries were founded.¹⁹ With the spread to new territories, coordination of missionary activities with other churches became expedient. In 1936, eight Protestant missions were active in Guatemala, all belonging to currents of either historical or fundamentalist Protestantism.²⁰ The missions had begun their work in various regions of the country; with time, however, the necessity of dividing up the territories became clear. On this basis, the Interdenominational Synod of Guatemala, including the five most important missions, was founded in 1936. This synod performed important functions in the clarification of relations between the churches, and also provided an important contribution to the recognition of the Protestant Christians, who otherwise stood outside of Guatemalan society. The International Congress for Evangelical Work in Central America in the Spring of 1941 furnished important support for this synod.²¹ John D. Mott, the Chairman of the International Missionary Council, and Stanley Rycroft, the Executive Secretary of the Committee on Cooperation in Latin America, came to the Congress from the United States. From the whole of Central America, 120 delegates from churches participating in the Synod attended. The congress had as a result enough weight to draw public attention: the Guatemalan newspapers gave the convention front-page coverage. Dr. Mott was received by the President (Jorge Ubico), the Foreign Minister and the Rector of the National University; he also had the opportunity to speak before a group of influential businessmen.²² The plan for a united church in Guatemala developed in the following years from this congress:

There was then an attempt to join the churches together into a single Guatemalan church. (...) Some people in the church did not want that. In the Presbyterian Church they were a minority, but an influential one. When the Southern Baptists came to Guatemala (1946; author's note), they would have naturally also had to participate in such a unification. But they fought against it. This gave support to the (anti-unification) minority, and after a while the Presbyterians came out with their own Synod. That collided with the other

matter, and the plan fell apart. (...) The unification plan was put aside and an Evangelical Alliance²³ was formed from what should have been a united Guatemalan church.²⁴

The Presbyterian Synod was founded in May 1950. The missionary church had in this way its own synod at its disposal before being released into national independence. In theology, the marked approach of the Presbyterian Church toward the fundamentalist position in the context of the Interdenominational Synod is clear - while at the same time in the USA the rift between the historical and fundamentalist churches rapidly widened. This was accompanied by the progressive weakening of Calvinistic features in the theology and practice of the Presbyterian missionary church. An important source of the current identity crisis of the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala lies in this movement toward the positions of fundamentalism and dispensationalism; many leading members of the church complain of this.

The Catholic Church could not win much ground during the entire period up to the fifties, although Ubico loosened the anticlerical policy of the liberals somewhat in the forties.²⁵ Its presence among the Guatemalan people was limited to the cities and was directed there chiefly to the conservative section of the upper class. In the provinces there were practically no priests. In 1950 in the extensive and inaccessible Department of Huehuetenango, 176,000 people were served by two priests.²⁶ The papal yearbook for 1953 gives for the diocese Sololá a ratio of 61,064 persons to each cleric, counting priests and members of religious orders.²⁷ The Catholic Church had become more or less meaningless to the general population. These statistics also make clear the necessity of a lay pastorate, a course later taken by the Catholic Church. The Catholic hierarchy, on the other hand, succeeded in recovering its political influence in the 1950s through a skillful alliance policy with military groups and the reactionary bourgeoisie.

3. 1945 to 1970: Radical Changes in Church and Society

After the overthrow of the dictator Ubico by a coalition of the military and the new, rising bourgeoisie and following the elections in 1944, Guatemala was governed by the presidents Juan José Arévalo and Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán. Both men sought to work against the flagrant injustices of the liberal period. Their reform policies found tremendous resonance among the poor masses and were supported by these people with strong commitment. The custom of speaking of this period as one of revo-

CHRONOLOGY 1945-69

1945: Juan José Arévalo is elected president. Ubico's "vagrancy law" is annulled; freedom of speech and freedom of the press, as well as free elections, are guaranteed. Academic freedom through independence of the university. Reduction of the influx of foreign aid for the Catholic Church.

1947: New labor laws guarantee the freedom to organize, the right to strike, etc.

1949: Land-leasing laws force large landowners to lease out fallow land. Excommunication of all members of the Communist Party.

1950: Catholic "Eucharistic Year"; protest of the archbishop against the government. Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán is elected president with 63% of the vote.

1951: Legalization of the Communist Guatemalan Worker's Party (PGT). Founding of three Catholic dioceses; opening of the shrine of Christ of Esquipulas; Eucharistic Congress condemns the "communist government".

1952: Agricultural reform law passed.

1953: Confiscation of the capital of the United Fruit Railroad Company as restitution for tax evasion. Distribution of 162,000 hectares (65,561 acres) of unused land from United Fruit to small farmers with restitution for United Fruit. Evangelistic campaign of the Pentecostal preacher T.L. Osborne from Tulsa, Oklahoma. Archbishop Rossel y Arrellano proclaims the processional year of the shrine of Christ of Esquipulas. Pact of Tegucigalpa between the Catholic Church and the conspirators of the coup. Founding of the Christian Democratic Party. The CIA begins preparations for a coup against Arbenz under the initiative of its Director Allan Dulles, former president of United Fruit, and Secretary of State John F. Dulles, previously attorney of the company.

1954: USA puts through a resolution of the Organization of American States against Guatemala for alleged "communist aggression"; President Eisenhower officially authorizes the CIA action. Pastoral letter of the Catholic bishops "on the advance of communism in Guatemala". Troops of Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas invade Guatemala from Honduras; air attacks from US-American planes on Guatemala City, the capital. President Arbenz resigns. Castillo carries out a counter-reform: the distributed lands are confiscated and handed back to the large landowners; trade unions are crushed; membership lists are used as lists of "subversives"; "Committees for National Defense against Communism" persecute and murder opposition members; well over 1000 victims of political persecution. The archbishop holds prayers for the "victims of communism" and the new "heroes".

1955: Petroleum legislation gives mining and exploitation rights to US firms.

1956: Major protest demonstrations against Castillo Armas. New constitution strengthens the Catholic Church.

1957: USA begins training and equipping the dreaded "Justice Police". Procession marking the 75th anniversary of the Protestant Mission in Guatemala. Castillo Armas is murdered by a right-wing radical.

lution (the rhetoric of both presidents contributed a great deal to this tendency) obscures the fact that both men were candidates of the modernizing bourgeoisie. They stood against Marxism, but also against the system of exploitation of the liberal epoch. They followed a policy of national interest against the United Fruit Company, which was nigh all-powerful in Guatemala, as well as a policy of national integration with regard to the indigenous population.²⁸ Above all, agricultural reforms - effective for both policies - were to be carried out, humane labor legislation was to be enacted, a social security system was planned, and the participation of the Mayas in the administration was promoted.²⁹ The steps certainly would not have done away with the capitalist structure of Guatemalan society; rather they would have limited the over-exploitation of the indigenous workers and their land. These reforms received a wave of support from the rural lower class, but also brought the entire conservative bourgeoisie and a large portion of liberal bourgeoisie against Arévalo and especially Arbenz. In the early fifties, the discontent among the bourgeoisie and the military was forged into a military conspiracy against the government of Jacobo Arbenz.

The Catholic Church concluded the "Pact of Tegucigalpa" with the conspirators who would later carry out the military coup. In it, the church bargained for the partial restitution of its rights and privileges in

1958: Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes becomes president.

1959: Tax credits, import incentives, etc., for investors.

1960: A conspiracy of reform-oriented military officers is uncovered. Some conspirators seek refuge in the mountains in the Southwest; earliest roots of the guerrilla movement. Strong impetus for industrialization and the founding of a common Central American market. Mercenary training for invasion of Cuba.

1961: PGT adopts resolution in favor of armed resistance.

1962: Protest demonstrations and founding of the first guerrilla army (FAR). Evangelization campaign from In Depth Evangelism. Catholic lay apostolate emerges.

1963: Military coup of Colonel Peralta Azurdia; Constitution annulled. Start of the institutionalization of military rule. Catholic Church celebrates a thanksgiving service for the military.

1964: USA increases military aid and sets up a telephone communications center, which will later serve to coordinate death squads. Mario Casariego becomes archbishop and continues the right-wing oriented policy of the church hierarchy. The USA supports the formation of the Central American Defense Council (CONDECA). Growth of Catholic social reform work in rural areas.

1965: Further strengthening of international investments. Murder of the head of the US military mission. State of emergency. Heavy guerrilla activity in the eastern part of the country.

1966: The civilian Julio C. Méndez Montenegro becomes president. Brutal and sweeping counter-rebellion warfare under Colonel Carlos Arana Osorio under the direction of the US military; founding of the so-called death squads by the army and the government; terror and repression, especially in the eastern part of the country; c. 8000 peasants are victims of the war.

1967: Collapse of the broader guerrilla warfare. Despite this, increasing activity of the death squads. The archbishop calls for obedience to the government in a pastoral letter and denounces all groups which call themselves "Christian" and not "Catholic" as potential enemies of the regime. A statement of the entire Bishops' Conference appeals for integrative development in view of the unjust division of wealth.

1968: Guerrillas kill the US ambassador and two co-workers. Death squads kidnap Archbishop Casariego in order to blame the guerrillas and force the replacement of the civilian president with a military government; the plan fails. Repeat of the In Depth Evangelism campaign.

1969: Guerrillas kill the West German ambassador. Foundation of a diocesan priests' federation, which has among its goals the "integral development of the people".

the case of a coup. The church hierarchy celebrated masses against the "communist" Arbenz, organized pilgrimages and processions to the shrine of Christ of Esquipulas, even organized a eucharistic congress - all with the goal of withdrawing all social legitimacy from Arbenz and labeling him a "godless communist." Shortly before the military coup against Arbenz, the Conference of Bishops published a pastoral letter "On the advance of communism in Guatemala" that indirectly called all Catholics to insurrection against the government.³⁰

The Protestant churches were not enmeshed with the oligarchy to the same extent as the Catholic Church; nevertheless, the governments of Arévalo and Arbenz were regarded with suspicion, because the accusations of communism against them evoked fears inherent in US-American fundamentalism since its birth. With a few exceptions, members of Protestant churches did not take important posts in the government or administration during this period. (One of these exceptions was the attorney Virgilio Zapata Mendía, who served on the Supreme Court.)³¹ According to a Protestant eyewitness of the time,³² more than a few from the ranks of the Protestant churches sympathized with the protest processions of the Catholic archbishop

Rossel y Arrellano. The Latin America Institute (a school said to be closely linked with the Central American Mission) held a parade in honor of the conspirator Castillo Armas after he seized power. Among the rural lower

class, the situation appeared somewhat differently; the sympathy of the peasants for land reform often combined with Protestant anticlericalism, so that in some places members of Protestant churches joined Jacobo Arbenz's party. This subjected them later to persecution from members of the Catholic and ultra-right-wing Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (MLN), a party which arose from the coup of Colonel Castillo Armas and was responsible for the creation of the terrorist "death squads" in the sixties.

Colonel Castillo Armas seized power through a military coup in 1954, after Arbenz had proclaimed new land reform legislation and expropriated 162,000 hectares (65,560 acres) of fallow land from the United Fruit Company. This led to a combined action of United Fruit and the government of the USA: in Honduras and Nicaragua, an insurgent army under Castillo Armas was assembled and equipped. The army marched into Guatemala in 1954, accompanied by North American bombing raids on the capital and an intense propaganda campaign broadcast from US embassy installations in Guatemala City. Arbenz resigned and Castillo, with the help of the US embassy, became president. He returned to the large farmers the land which the agricultural reform had distributed to the peasants. The socio-political effect of this coup was decisive: the trade unions and peasants' organizations were dissolved, and many of those in the opposition were persecuted by semi-official "Committees for National Defense against Communism."

The Catholic Church was able to improve its situation, although it did not regain its previously high social and political position. In the constitution of 1956 the church's position was strengthened, but politics did not again become an instrument of clerical power. Rather, the Catholic Church was used by the ultra right-wing military on the basis of their shared anticommunist interest. This found expression, for example, in the fact that a Thanksgiving mass was read as the already conservative government of the civilian Ydígoras Fuentes fell victim to a military coup in 1963. This coup established the hegemony of the military up to this day. The anticommunism of the Catholic hierarchy is also the background for the vigorous use of missionaries in the programs of Catholic Action (Acción Católica) in the fifties: the "communism" in the country was to be checked by helping the peasants to improve their living situation through charitable programs. From this action - against its intention however - the "base communities", which helped to formulate and publicly represent the demands of the peasants for a life fit for human beings, originated in the course of the sixties and seventies.

The 1950s and 60s were a time of marked economic and social changes brought about by the restructuring of agricultural production. The first phase began with the cotton boom of the fifties, which led to an expansion of large-scale production in the southern coastal lowlands and the expulsion or proletarianization of the peasants living there. Further changes in production followed: the traditional products of the liberal era, coffee and bananas, were joined by sugar and livestock, in addition to cotton. In the sixties the argochemical and agromechanical revolution together with the rising demand for agricultural export goods on the world market led to an expansion of land under cultivation and a reduced demand for labor. This resulted in new migrations of workers and resettlement. The flight of the poor, especially the Mayan population, was intensified; the poor were pushed into more and more barren regions, where their already small parcels of land shrank further through division by inheritance. In the cities, especially in the capital, a modest industrialization started. This was admittedly not in a position to absorb the labor force which had begun to migrate to the cities with the growing flight from the land, so that a small industrial proletariat and a marginalized sector appeared simultaneously. Through inflation of the government administration and improved educational opportunities, a new urban middle class of civil servants and professional people (*profesionales*) arose.

At the time of the military coup against the civilian government of Ydígoras Fuentes in 1963, the military succeeded in introducing itself into Guatemalan politics as an independent social group, defined by its possession of the means of production. It was able to exploit its position of political power, maintained through force of arms, in order to improve the economic position of its (high-ranking) members. The military is no longer a political instrument: rather, the military shapes Guatemalan politics. In the course of the 1960s opposition to the military regime formed in the east of the country, especially in the Departments of Zacapa and Chiquimula. The roots of the Guatemalan guerilla movement lie in this region. This movement was, in the sixties, not anchored deeply enough in the population, and resistance in the eastern departments was correspondingly wiped out by brutal campaigns against the guerillas and the civilian population. The military had with the fall of Jacobo Arbenz firmly established the old model for the solution of social conflicts: violence instead of reform. This became clear in the military extermination campaign of the 1960s; it has remained so to this day. Thus the fifties and sixties brought to Guatemala far-reaching economic changes and at the same time firmly anchored authoritarian political structures.

The fifties and sixties were also a dynamic period of radical changes for the Protestant churches in Guatemala. This fact is shown by the strong growth of Protestant churches throughout Central America beginning (with slight differences) around the end of the 1950s. The Pentecostal churches contributed the most to this growth. The first missionary work by a US-American Pentecostal mission in Guatemala began in 1937 with the Assemblies of God. Through their rapid growth, in part at the cost of the historical and fundamentalist churches, the Pentecostal churches have continually increased their share of the total Protestant population. Especially during the crisis of the 1970s, the proportion of Pentecostal churches in Guatemalan Protestantism increased rapidly. Already in the 1950s, however, an awareness of the Pentecostal churches as possible competition for the other Protestant churches arose. The fact that the Pentecostal churches did not abide by the division of missionary territories established by the Interdenominational Synod, but rather evangelized where they saw fit to do so, was particularly disturbing. This practice reflected their rejection of the religious legitimacy of the non-Pentecostal churches, which felt threatened by the Pentecostals at an early stage. In 1953, near the end of the Arbenz government, the Pentecostal healing evangelist T.L. Osborne staged an evangelism campaign which gave the Pentecostal churches a strong impetus,³³ at the same time increasing their visibility in the public image of the Protestant churches. In the Presbyterian Church, the sudden and massive appearance of the Pentecostals triggered discussion: "The churches divided themselves over the assessment of this movement. This was quite certainly the spark which set off a sweeping fire of changes in the churches. Even those who were opposed had to accept certain influences on worship services, music and the role of the laity."³⁴

The Pentecostal influence was to make itself felt especially in the churches of the lower class. This influence was strengthened further beginning in 1963 with the founding of the Pentecostal radio station "Voz Evangélica de América" (Evangelical Voice of America). Today the presence of the Pentecostal churches is considered widely to be a serious problem by the Presbyterian Church.

In addition to the Pentecostal influence, the theological dominance of the Central American Mission was consolidated in the fifties in a way which is still important today: in 1950 the Mission founded the "Radio Cultural TGN," which disseminates the pure teaching of the Central American Mission and has won an opinion-forming influence over almost all Protestant churches. With programming oriented to the preaching needs of pastors, the Central American Mission helps with preparation of sermons and

instills in this way its theological ideas in pastors and church members slowly but steadily. In particular, the Mission had (and still has) an especially large influence on the poor and poorly educated pastors of the lower class. Through the radio ministry of the Central American Mission, a theological rift between the middle and lower class of the Presbyterian Church has been made visible and widened further: the lower class (in other words, the majority of the church members and pastors) hold a dispensationalist theology and await soon a Second Coming; the bourgeois sections of the church tend more toward a millennialism (i.e. they harbor no definite immediate expectation of the Second Coming) and retain a number of Presbyterian or Calvinist elements in their theology and piety.

The Protestant churches brought about a breakthrough in public relations in the 1950s with large publicity campaigns and a public display of Protestantism. In 1957 the Protestant churches celebrated the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Protestant mission in Guatemala.³⁵ For the first time in the history of the Protestant Mission, a public parade through the streets of the capital was carried out. The Catholic archbishop attempted to obtain a prohibition of the event from Colonel Castillo Armas, but did not succeed. Castillo Armas forbade instead the Catholic counter-demonstration. What interest he followed in doing this cannot be further discussed here; it is clear, however, that this background to the parade indicated not only public regard for the Protestant movement, but also the respect of those in power. In 1962 and 1963, the evangelism campaign "In Depth Evangelism" achieved widespread impact. These campaigns brought a broad mobilization and a deeper self-confidence to the Protestant churches, as well as a powerful impulse for church growth through the preparation and evaluation of the campaign by church members and new converts. The Presbyterian Church participated actively in this campaign. The "In Depth" program was repeated in 1968, again with great success.

Education remained an important priority in the work of the Presbyterian Church in these decades. In 1955 the conference house Monte Sión was bought; today it is a convalescent home for children. The Hospital Americano functioned until 1963, when its maintenance finally became too expensive as a result of the separation of the national church from the mission in 1962. The programs of the Synod in the fifties focused on evangelization, Christian and secular education, and social aid. Beyond this, two new presbyteries were founded in this period, among them the first independent Mayan presbytery.³⁶

For the Presbyterian Church, the fifties and sixties were years of extraordinary importance. The process which was to lead to the founda-

tion in 1962 of a national Guatemalan church, the Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala (IENPG), was carefully introduced and implemented in the fifties.³⁷ The formation of the Interdenominational Synod in 1936 and the decision of the Mission Board in the United States to stop paying pastors' salaries had already prepared the way for this step. The founding of the Presbyterian Synod in 1950 and the appointment of a committee made up of missionaries and Guatemalans for the preparation of the "integration" were further important steps. The United Presbyterian Church had sought since the mid-fifties to transform its missions into extensively independent national churches, so that its missionaries would be placed under church direction as "fraternal workers."³⁸ Guatemala had, unlike Chile and Cuba, good prerequisites for the integration: through the initiative of the United Presbyterian Church an independent national church already existed, insofar as there was already a separate synod and the church was not dependent on a synod in the USA. To clarify the relations between the missions and the Mission Board, and to prepare for the integration, the Board invited the representatives of fifteen mission churches to Lake Mohonk, New York in 1956.³⁹ At the conference the answers to five questions, which the Board had previously sent to the mission churches, were to be discussed. The answers of the Guatemalan churches - certainly not without the influence of the incumbent missionaries - will be briefly presented here, since they make the spirit of the integration clear. The Guatemalan representatives - two years after the overthrow of the Arbenz government - emphasized the following aspects of their situation and their needs:

1. Ideological conflicts in society a) with a Catholicism which is prepared at any time to strike against Protestantism, and b) with communism.
2. The crisis of pastors without churches and churches without pastors, and the phenomenon of the lay preacher as an expression of the lack of financial support for pastors.
3. The need of money for church construction, for fellowships, for medical clinics, for the theological seminary, for the Executive Secretary (Secretario Ejecutivo) of the Synod, and for pastors' pensions.
4. The need for new technical personnel capable of working in agricultural development. It was clearly stated that commu-

nism, which had threatened the country, could be halted only when the church addressed both the body and the soul.

5. The transfer of the church institutions into the hands of the Synod was discussed and it was concluded that the Synod should in the near future take the place of the Mission.⁴⁰

These central factors - the financial base and institutional functioning of the Church as well as the strict rejection of Catholicism and the fear of communism - would be encountered frequently. After preparatory discussions and the successful work of the committee in Guatemala, the integration and foundation of the Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala followed in 1962.

The conservative slant of the new Presbyterian Church in the sense of the statement cited above led in later years to conflict with the United Presbyterian Church, USA, especially in the question of the approach to Catholicism. The Executive Secretary of the Synod, Adán Mazariegos, complained in a conversation⁴¹ that the Latin American representative of the United Presbyterian Church, Benjamin Gutiérrez, occasionally visited the archbishop's palace during his visits to Guatemala. This criticism expressed the sentiments of the majority of the church government.⁴² The topic of Protestant-Catholic ecumenical relations was - along with the question of the position of the fraternal workers in the church - the object of repeated consultations of both churches. In May 1980 these consultations produced a new definition of the relations between the Protestant and Catholic churches, which now allows both churches maximum freedom in their contact with one another.⁴³

In the sixties and seventies conflicts arose between the church leadership and the fraternal workers not unlike those which occurred in the Catholic Church between the church hierarchy and the base communities or missionaries: in Lake Mohonk it was anticommunist sentiment which had given the initiative for social work. This initiative was put into practice by the Presbyterian Church in the program for rural communal development "Agape": the missionaries who began the program in 1956 - Donald and Ana Sibley - were at that time extremely conservative.⁴⁴ In the course of their work with the Mayan population their political views changed fundamentally; this change is parallel to that of many Catholic missionaries of the Acción Católica. Just as in the Catholic Church, this development was to intensify the inner conflicts of the Presbyterian Church in the course of the seventies.

STATISTICS ON THE SOCIAL SITUATION

Ethnic Composition

ca. 54% Mayas (Indigenas)
ca. 43% Mestizos (Ladinos)
ca. 3% Whites (Criollos)

Distribution of Income (1978)

Percent of the Population		Share of all Income
Upper	5%	59%
Lower	50%	7%

Distribution of Land (1979)

Percent of the Population		Share of Productive Land
Upper	12%	85%
Middle	56%	13%
Lower	32%	2%

Poverty

	Percentage of the Population
Poverty	31.8%
Extreme Poverty	31.6%

In 1980 the most basic necessary foodstuffs cost 0.68 quetzales (1 quetzal = 1 US\$) per person per day. The minimum wage of 3.20 q./day is adequate (purely arithmetically) for the basic nourishment for 4.5 people - with housing, clothing and transportation excluded. Most workers earn much less than the minimum wage. 82% of all children suffer malnutrition.

Life Expectancy

56 years in the cities; 41 in rural areas. Of all children, 9% die before the age of two, and 20% before their fourth birthday.

Medical Care

One doctor per 8334 inhabitants; roughly two-thirds of all doctors practice in the capital.

Literacy

65% illiteracy (urban: 35%; rural: 80%).

SOURCES: Dieter Boris and Renate Rausch, *Zentralamerika. Guatemala - Nicaragua - Honduras - Costa Rica - El Salvador*. (Cologne, 1983), p. 71; Tildy Hanhart et al., ed., *Guatemalas unaufhaltsamer Widerstand durch Jahrhunderte der Unterdrückung*. (Schwelm, 1981), p. 5; Luisa Frank and Philip Wheaton, *Indian Guatemala: Path to Liberation. The Role of Christians in the Indian Process*. (Washington, D.C., 1984), p. 52; Comisión Económica para América Latina, *Satisfacción de las necesidades básicas de la población del istmo centroamericano*. Research Report, November 23, 1983, p. 11.

4. 1970 to 1985: Social Crisis and Church Growth

In the seventies and early eighties social tensions intensified dramatically, venting themselves in an explosive outbreak of violence. Over the centuries a deeply unjust social system had formed in Guatemala, which at the beginning of the eighties appeared as follows: situated at the base of the social pyramid are the Mayas. They are subject to racial discrimination from the Ladinos (also called Mestizos) as well as the whites and belong almost exclusively to the lower class, forming the majority of the total population. A narrow middle class consists mainly of Ladinos. The tip of the social pyramid is occupied by a small group of whites, mainly of Spanish descent. These people divide among themselves the arable land and mineral resources of Guatemala and amass the wealth of the land to their extreme private gain: it is not uncommon in these circles for a single family to make five, ten, or more million dollars (US) of pure profit per year from their estates. In contrast, the wages paid by employers to the agricultural and factory workers do not cover even the simplest necessities; most of the families do not even earn the already meager minimum wage. A large number of people are unemployed or underemployed. The division of income corresponds with the division of land. Especially for the Indian small peasants, the situation is becoming worse; they are being driven into less and less fertile regions, and their tiny parcels of land become through division by inheritance smaller and smaller.⁴⁵ The small peasants and landless are forced to work in large firms for starvation wages. A Mayan Presbyterian described the Guatemalan situation from his perspective:

This country is divided between those who have everything and those who have nothing. Expressed in figures, it's really shocking: one percent - twenty to thirty big families - have hoarded up everything. The rest have nothing, to the point that ten to fifteen Indígena families share a parcel of land that gets smaller and smaller as it is further divided among the families. And before we knew it, the entire Franja Transversal del Norte⁴⁶ was suddenly in the hands of the military - they don't even know how much they have! Or in the larger strips of land on the southern coast, the best estates are in the hands of a few people. One of the landowners once said he didn't come from the Retalhuleu department: Retalhuleu belonged to him.

(...) And they are never satisfied - they always want more.

(...) And those who suffer most are the Indígenas.⁴⁷

Over half of the Guatemalan people live in poverty,⁴⁸ i.e., they are not in a position to satisfy even their most basic needs for food, clothing and shelter. The consequences are malnutrition and disease, especially of children. A member of the administration of the Presbyterian Church illustrated the situation with this example:

Doctors say that a person needs about 16 to 18 percent hemoglobin in his blood in order to be healthy; with 9 percent his life is in danger. In Guatemala there are many people with only 2 percent hemoglobin; the average among the poor is about 7 percent. You can check that in any hospital.⁴⁹

The life expectancy for the poor is correspondingly low. Economic discrimination is accompanied by cultural disadvantages: due to insufficient educational opportunities, the illiteracy rate, especially in the country, is very high.

The social structure of the Presbyterian Church is very much like the structure of the society as a whole: in its early stages it was closely bound to the old liberal bourgeoisie and to foreign investors (the upper class or at least the rising middle class), but today the picture has changed. The liberal bourgeoisie no longer exists in the old sense; it has in part merged into the group of large landowners and industrialists, and in part changed into an urban middle class with administrative posts or stagnating small or middle-scale businesses. From this middle class the Presbyterian Church has retained its members. The church administration belongs mainly to the middle class, but the church's position in Guatemalan society is ambiguous: the majority of the church members belongs to the lower class. Rev. Edgardo García, a member of the church government, describes the social structure of the Presbyterian Church:

Taking the entire country into account, one must say that 70 percent of our members are very poor; very, very poor. And about 25 percent belong to the middle class and are professional people, etc. About 5 percent own means of production. Within this overall picture, the relations between Ladinos and Indígenas further polarizes the church. (...) Even in the capital most of members are poor people. When a pastor today earns two hundred Quetzales⁵⁰ a month, that is a great deal for the poor congregations, because the majority

CHRONOLOGY 1970-1986

1970-74: Presidency of Colonel Arana Osorios. State of emergency: curfews, torture, murder. More than 10,000 people are victims of government and semi-official terror during this period. Increase in foreign investment. Economic establishment of the higher military as a part of the ruling class. Strengthening of the Catholic base communities, the "delegates of the Word" and the Mayan pastorate.

1971: International campaign leads to a lifting of the state of emergency in November.

1972: The government buys an expensive and unprofitable railroad which had been owned (on paper) by a US-American firm; further increase of foreign influence over the economy.

1973: Strikes by teachers and civil servants, protest demonstrations. First national congress of the Federation of Religious Orders in Guatemala, with attention to the national situation and the prophetic duty of the Church. Beginning of the charismatic movement in Guatemala.

1974: General Efraín Ríos Montt, candidate of the Christian Democrats, wins the election, the official candidate General Kjell Laugerud García is named president; violent protests. Demonstrations provoked by the rising cost of living. Laugerud allows labor unions, peasants, students, etc., more freedom to organize; use of terror declines. Gospel Outreach is the first neo-Pentecostal mission to come to Guatemala.

1975: Renewed guerilla activities; founding of the Guerilla Army of the Poor (EGP) with the support of the Mayan population in the western highlands.

1976: Earthquake: 25,000 dead, 70,000 wounded, over 1,000,000 homeless. Sharp rise in the number of Catholic and Protestant relief organizations and missions. The Bishops' Conference, acting without the archbishop, issues a pastoral letter criticizing "exploitation" and "institutionalized violence". First military actions in the Northwest. International attention forces a reduction of the repression. Formation of the Committees for Trade Union Unity (CNUU) from the solidarity committee for the striking and hard-pressed Coca-Cola workers.

1977: Increase of selective repression, especially against labor unions and students. A protest march by mineworkers from Ixtahuacán and sugar workers from the southern coast is greeted by about 100,000 demonstrators in the capital. The Guatemalan government rejects US aid under Carter because of its tie to human rights conditions; Israel takes over the support.

1978: Strike by civil servants. General Romeo Lucas García becomes president with over 60% of the vote. Murder becomes government policy (Amnesty International); the army massacres over 100 peasants who had demanded their land rights in Panzós; protest demonstration of over 100,000 people. General strike against increase in public transportation fares; the police arrest 1500 people, wound 400 and kill 40 others. Formation of the Committee for Peasants' Unity (CUC).

1979: Formation of the Democratic Front Against Repression (FDCR) and a new guerilla group: the Organization of the People in Arms (ORPA). Construction of military bases and the beginning of organized military terror in El Quiché.

of the members earn only about sixty Quetzales (a month). If these people didn't have their chickens and some other small income on the side, they would have all died long ago. From this comes, incidentally, the problem of how our church should support its pastors. (...) Not to speak of the education of the pastors: we have a study which shows that 70 percent of our Presbyterian pastors have only a primary school education, and the rest a specialized high school education (bachillerato). None of us at that time, except for one Doctor of Theology, who had received his degree from the Fuller School of World Missions, had a university education (*licenciatura*) in theology.⁵¹

The presence of this social structure creates a potential for conflict in the Presbyterian Church similar to that which dominates Guatemalan society as a whole.

The social contradictions in Guatemala have become more and more strongly polarized and noticeable in the last twenty years. The upper class, however, rejects categorically any reform of this social structure. As a result, the history of the country since 1970 has been determined by social struggles and political and military repression. The essential features of the political situation of these years go back to the

1980: Outbreak of the economic crisis in Guatemala: drop in export income and investments; inflation. Military terror in the cities and in the country: two of every three bodies in a morgue in the capital show signs of torture. 27 instructors and 50 students of the university, and 100 union members murdered. Murder of 12 priests and 190 catechists; the bishopric El Quiché is closed and the "church in exile" is founded; the bishops condemn a violent persecution of the church; deterioration of relations between the church and the upper class. Peaceful occupation of the Spanish embassy by 39 Quiché Indians; they are burned to death in the embassy by the army. Human Rights organizations in Geneva condemn Guatemala. Coffee and sugar workers strike. Guatemalan right-wing groups support Reagan's presidential campaign with \$2,000,000 in donations. The guerilla movement gains strength.

1981: Founding of the People's Front of 31 July (FP31) as an underground mass organization. The USA reinstates military aid. In a single two-month period, 517 murders and 150 abductions are reported; murder of 49 journalists in 2 years; approximately 1500 peasants are massacred by the army in Chimaltenango alone; villages and cooperatives are attacked and bombed, the inhabitants murdered; many thousands of victims, mainly women, children and elderly people. The United Nations acknowledges 40,000 Guatemalan refugees in Mexico. The guerillas, active in 21 of 22 departments, intensify their actions: the occupy estates, murder or kidnap influential businessmen, attack military bases and economic targets. They occupy for a short period a province capital. Further deterioration of the economy.

1982: Unification of the guerilla movements (URNG).

3/1982 - 8/1983: General Efraín Ríos Montt comes to power through a coup; he is a member of the neo-Pentecostal church El Verbo (Gospel Outreach); no participation in the regime by the right-wing Catholic clergy. Campaign against corruption in the government. Combination of human rights rhetoric with an end to violence in the cities and rationalized mass murder in the countryside. Victims numbered 9000 in the first 5 months alone. Methodical extermination of the population of entire regions, accompanied by civilian programs such as resettlement in "strategic hamlets", distribution of food, forced organization of the population into "civil patrols" and the "psychological operations" of the military, news blackout for military incidents, uncontrolled special courts; total of approximately 15,000 murders, 1,000,000 refugees in Guatemala, over 100,000 in Mexico. International propaganda campaign for the government; increase in US aid. Further economic decline. Large rallies mark the one-hundredth anniversary of the Protestant mission in Guatemala. Catholic bishops speak out against the massacres, the Pope visits Guatemala; Archbishop Casariego dies; the liberal Msgr. Próspero Penados del Barrio becomes his successor.

8/1983 - 1/1986: Coup by General Oscar Mejía Víctores with the tacit support of the USA. Continuation of the "scorched earth" strategy in the countryside, renewed strengthening of the death squads in the cities; the guerillas are pushed back; further massacres. The Bishops' Conference criticizes the violence, particularly of the civil patrols, in a pastoral letter and demands the right to a decent life for the people. Wide-scale military violence slowly declines; more emphasis on selective violence and civil-military programs such as the "strategic hamlets";

structures established by the military coup of 1963. In the second half of the 1960s, during the government of the civilian Julio Méndez Montenegro and under the leadership of Colonel Arana Osorio, the military had drowned a rebellion the eastern part of Guatemala in blood. By exploiting the political necessity of combating the rebellion, the military further consolidated its positions. A wave of terror spread across the entire land, practiced by the military and the death squads (secret organizations, paid by rich Guatemalan families, working in close coordination with the military), who sought to solve political problems with torture and murder.

In 1970 Colonel Arana Osorio became president. He imposed a one-year state of emergency in which curfews, the occupation of the independent university, torture and political murder overshadowed life in Guatemala. During this period members of several Protestant churches, including the Presbyterian, participated in a protest action. A participant recounted:

Arana Osorio had promised to "pacify" the country. He had already "pacified" the eastern part of the country through killing, killing, and more killing. As president he did the same. He arranged an eleven-month state of emergency without any guarantee of civil rights. Near the end of the state of emergency,

consolidation of the power of the military through occupation of key positions in the administration with "interinstitutional coordination positions"; guarantee of exemption from punishment for the military after the change in government. Founding of the Group for Mutual Aid (GAM) for information in the cases of the "disappeared". Sharp outbreak of protests against rise in public transportation fares. Economic disaster, currency collapse, inflation and strong tensions between regime and businesses. Announcement of elections. Before the elections, a pastoral letter from the Catholic Bishops' Conference complains of political pressure on the population. Elections. Over 40,000 dead since 1978.

1986: The Christian Democrat Vinicio Cerezo becomes president. International loans stabilize the economy slightly; no structural reform. Continuation of the military program of the predecessors; exemption from punishment and formidable influence for the military. No investigations into cases of disappearance. Revival of popular organizations begins; strikes, open discussions. Christian peasants' organization guided by the Catholic Father Giron with demands for land.

a group of clergymen of different denominations - Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians and Episcopalians; altogether twelve people - met. We organized a press conference in order to ask the government to lift the state of emergency and bring to court those who had broken the law. (...)

Following this, the government expelled from the country the two foreigners of our group. One was the Episcopal bishop Frey, the other a priest named Morán. And we Guatemalans

were taken to the presidential palace to be called to order. They told us that as clergymen we were not allowed to do such things. We were to pray for the soul and leave the material things to them. The Catholic Church then issued an announcement to make clear that they had nothing to do with the matter. Whoever had participated had done so on their own responsibility. The Evangelical Alliance did the same.⁵²

Due to further domestic and international protest, the regime abandoned this hard course in the following years. The causes for the revolts in the eastern part of the country were admittedly not eliminated: poverty, exploitation, and the cynicism of those in power still dominated, particularly in the countryside and in the suburbs. The earthquake of 1976 affected mainly the huts of the poor, drastically bringing the social contradictions to view and intensifying them at the same time. In the course of the seventies, however, resistance of social interest groups such as labor unions, students' and peasants' associations as well as a new guerilla movement could slowly begin to organize again.⁵³

The first guerilla activities in Guatemala extend back to the early sixties. Following the failure of a coup by left-oriented officers in 1960, the officers withdrew into the underground and founded, in memory of the date of the failed coup, the Movement 13 November (MR-13). This and two other groups joined together in 1962 to form the Rebellion Forces (Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes, FAR). Together with the communist Guatemalan Workers' Party (Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo, PGT), which

had been forced underground, the FAR began an armed struggle in the eastern region of the country, especially in the Izabal and Zacapa departments. But the guerillas did not succeed in anchoring themselves in the predominantly Ladino, small-farmer region. In addition, the guerillas were weakened considerably by internal conflicts. In the years between 1965 and 1967 they were finally exterminated by a minutely-planned and extremely brutal campaign of the Guatemalan military, under the assistance of US Ranger troops. The remaining fighters of the FAR withdrew into the western highlands.

In this region, mainly inhabited by Mayas, a guerrilla movement of an entirely new character developed from the social, political and church organizations of the peasants, the industrial workers and the students. In 1975 the Guerilla Army of the Poor (Ejército Guerillero de los Pobres, EGP), which had been founded in 1970, came into public view for the first time with a military action; in 1979 the Organization of the People in Arms (ORPA) did the same. Both have at their disposal a broad basis in the Mayan population of the western highlands as well as organizations such as the farm workers' movement CUC (Comité de Unidad Campesina), the labor union coordination CNUS (Comité Nacional de Unidad Sindical), or the base communities of the churches. As the military conflict reached its boiling-point in 1982, the EGP and the ORPA, together with the reactivated FAR and PGT merged into a new organization, the National Revolutionary Union of Guatemala (URNG). The new guerillas no longer saw themselves as a small cadre of troops which would bring about the revolution through carefully-directed independent actions ("focus theory"), but rather as the leadership of a broader people's movement. They aid the peasants with the organization of their social and political interests and with self-defense against the attacks of the large landowners and the military. Their firm basis in the population gives the guerillas high military strike power and formidable endurance. The corresponding reaction of the military is to direct their operations against the whole Mayan population with increasing severity.

The social transformations of the seventies were accompanied by the birth of the base communities of the church, especially in the rural areas. These communities, in the majority Catholic, were given impulse by the Bishops' Conference of Medellín, 1968, but were sustained above all by the confrontation of material poverty with the common reading of the Scriptures. This practice was also taken up by Protestant Christians, and confessional barriers fell rapidly. Later it was possible for the Committee for Peasant Freedom (CUC), which organizes the political struggles of the oppressed peasants, and other groups to develop from these Christian

peasant groups. In the cities Christian groups which addressed the social and political outrages and attached no meaning to confessional barriers also formed, among others the union Justicia y Paz and the newspapers "Cristo Compañero" and "Diálogo," which were led by the Protestant theologian Julia Esquivel. A Presbyterian pastor recounted the mood then:

After the earthquake the organizations of the people grew strongly and were very united. We were united in CNUS, the Committee for Trade Union Unity and also in a front against the oppression which was considerably more widely based.⁵⁴

The march of the mine workers from Ixtahuacán in the northwest of the country to the capital in 1977 formed the high point of a long series of protest demonstrations:

The march of the mine workers, 300 kilometers long, that was a national event. Nine radio stations were continually on the air to report about it. It was an action of the common people, and a huge number participated. In every village, in every school, in every parish they visited, they were greeted with tamales, corn wine (chicha) or soda pop, with medicine, with coats,... really, with everything. And I think there were also Protestants among them. (...) The march struck sparks in the middle class also: I remember in the colony where I lived, how the girls made lemonade and sandwiches late into the night and waited for the marchers. And as they came, the girls sprayed them with water, because it was so hot then. I was walking on the sidewalk in front of my house, and the tears began to run down my face. (...) As they arrived in the city, members of Christian base communities came out from all sides; but I can't say for certain, if the Protestant communities also participated.... I think they probably didn't.⁵⁵

The larger part of the Protestant churches, especially in the urban middle class, remained outside of this movement or was even hostile to it. Among the middle and upper classes, it was the work of Catholic charismatic and neo-Pentecostal groups which began to expand in the mid-seventies. The interests of these social classes in the context of the contemporary social conflicts were affirmed by the charismatic and neo-

Pentecostal groups. A strong impulse against the social mobilization of the lower class is clearly recognizable among the neo-Pentecostal groups.

The military reacted to the protests as usual: by intensifying repression. The result was a major massacre in the small town of Panzós, in the Alta Verapaz department on May 29, 1978. The army murdered over one hundred Mayas of the Kekchí people - men, women and children who were gathered in the marketplace of the town in order to demand their land rights. The massacre provoked a large mass demonstration in the capital, countered by the dictatorship of General Romeo Lucas García who began a program of open terror. Armed violence against those opposed to the regime increased sharply; attacks now took place openly in broad daylight. Increasingly, socially and politically committed Christians also numbered among the victims. From the Catholic side there were officially confirmed reports indicating that in the diocese El Quiché in 1980 alone, over one hundred pastoral workers and ten priests were murdered by the military. The activity of the guerillas increased simultaneously. They could count on broad support from the rural population and brought wide areas of the country under their control by the early 1980s. The military apparatus of Lucas García had little effect against the guerillas, but the regime attempted through arbitrary terror - also in the cities - to hold its position. Not only those actively opposed to the regime were forced into exile; the arbitrary terror also produced an atmosphere of general uncertainty. No one's life was safe when, for example, the assassination of a university professor in broad daylight from a car of the death squads also resulted in the murder of the group of students standing around him.

In March 1982 the candidate Lucas García won the presidential election through massive fraud. But a group of officers staged a coup and appointed General Efraín Ríos Montt as the new president, the first Protestant president of the country. Ríos Montt immediately altered the tactics used to combat the guerilla insurgency: he calmed the situation in the cities, inasmuch as he checked the open violence of the military, the police and the death squads. In the cities one could once again walk the streets after 6 p.m. He concentrated the struggle against the insurgency in the rural areas, where he proceeded even more ruthlessly. The journalist and former director of the division for public relations in the Department of the Interior, Elias Barahona, exposed in 1980 the existence of a 420-page strategy paper from the USA, written for the Guatemalan army, which foresaw the full physical annihilation of the opposition and its support in the population.⁵⁶ Under the government of Ríos Montt this strategy was put into action through a cool and systematically executed campaign of annihilation, which was directed equally against the civilian population and

the military troops of the guerillas. The military tactic was to choke off the guerillas, "to take the fish out of the water in which it swims" (Ríos Montt). With this goal a large number of Indian villages were destroyed together with their inhabitants.

We kill people, we dismember women and children. The problem is that every one there is a *guerillero*. (...) If this situation continues, we'll have to drop napalm on these villages.⁵⁷

Civilian victims of military action
in the Guatemalan highlands (1978-84)

Persons living in the highlands before 1978	2,580,000
Fled from the highlands:	1,225,600
Killed (confirmed only):	20,000
Missing (bombing victims, kidnapped):	54,500
Persons still living in the highlands:	1,300,000

SOURCE: Luisa Frank and Philip Wheaton, *Indian Guatemala: Path to Liberation. The Role of Christians in the Indian Process* (Washington, D.C., 1984), p. 92.

This is exactly what happened. The number of victims of the military action in the Guatemalan highland under Lucas García and Ríos Montt - even when conservative estimates are used - can only be described as genocide. A large number of the survivors of this operation fled into inaccessible mountain and jungle regions, but were persecuted even there by the military with bombings of their cornfields and helicopter strafings. The military then concentrated all the people whom they could get a hold of - following the model of the US-American "Operation Phoenix" in the Vietnam War - in new, purposefully designed overseasable camps and "strategic hamlets." In these institutions - they still exist today - the resistance of the Mayas was to be broken through continuous surveillance, the mixing of ethnic groups, and the restructuring of their agricultural production. The ability to support the guerillas with food or otherwise was to be taken from the population by giving them food in exchange for unpaid work, as cheap labor for the military and large landowners. The dictator Ríos Montt enjoyed the active support of an organization of his own church, El Verbo/Gospel Outreach, particularly in this last phase of the military counter-insurgency program. El Verbo/Gospel Outreach worked to obtain sympathy, money, and supplies in the USA.

Ríos Montt was a neo-Pentecostal, and his Protestant sympathizers soon began to interpret his presidency as a form of divine rule in Guatemala. In many Protestant churches the confessional attachment of the new head of state awakened great hopes for the political situation in general, as well as for the position of the Protestants as a minority growing in strength in Guatemalan society. The new self-confidence of the Protes-

Chronology of Political Violence under the Governments of Lucas García, Ríos Montt and Mejía Victores (Selected Examples, 1982-85) Pogrom ...

1982

LUCAS GARCÍA

March 14-16: With the support of an army helicopter, soldiers encircle the cooperative La Unión on a market day in the district Selva Reina near Icañ in El Quiché. Those who attempt to flee are shot. The soldiers separate the men from the women and children in a warehouse. On the following day the men were hung by their hands from trees after being tortured; the women were raped. On the sixteenth the massacre begins. The men are killed with knives and machetes. Of the victims, 197 are known by name. Other sources speak of 300 victims.

RIOS MONTT

March 23: In the villages Parraxtút, El Pajarito and Pichiquil in El Quiché and Huehuetenango units of the army demolish over 400 and destroy the harvest. In these attacks over 500 peasants are killed.

March 24-27: Soldiers destroy the village Las Pacayas as well as the settlements of Quixál, Chijucayas and Cisram near San Cristóbal with a bombing raid and machine-gun fire from helicopters. There are 100 victims.

April 3-5: In the villages Cuá, Amachél, Chél and Mangal near Chajul in El Quiché, the entire population is murdered by government troops. There are no exact details about the number of victims. Chél is destroyed in the process.

April 15: Military in civilian dress massacre approximately 20 peasants from Cantón Semejá near the Chichicastenango in El Quiché by tying them to the supporting posts of their huts and burning them alive. An army patrol decapitates 9 peasants of the Chorrecal settlement near Santa Cruz in El Quiché, among them a nine-year girl. In Agua Caliente, in the district of San José Poaquil in Chimaltenango, 23 peasants are killed by government troops. Those who seek to flee to the mountains are shot from helicopters. In Rio Negro in Baja Verapaz, the army murders over 100 people, the majority are children and their mothers.

May 7: Paramilitary commandos attack at night the house of a family in San Pedro Jocopilas in El Quiché, shoot all 4 inhabitants with submachine guns and dismember the victims with machetes. The victims are known by name.

May 8-9: Kaibiles, a special unit of the army, attack the village of Chamaxú in Huehuetenango and set the houses on fire; 13 people are burned alive. The victims are known by name.

May 17-18: The army massacres 43 campesinos (peasants) in San Juan Cotzal in Saquillá near San Tomás, Chichicastenango, El Quiché. Among the victims are pregnant women as well as 23 children. Army and paramilitary units massacre 53 Mam Indians known by name in Piedras Blancas near Ixcán, Huehuetenango. The village is totally destroyed.

June 1: Over 200 soldiers attack the village of Pambach near San Cristóbal, Alta Verapaz, shortly before dawn. They massacre 50 people and burn the village to the ground. The soldiers pour gasoline on one of the victims and set him alight. They rape 3 girls before killing them, and beat a 15-year old boy to death because he refuses to reveal where his father is staying. 125 men and 25 women are kidnapped. There is no information as to their whereabouts.

tants, who had grown in the meantime to 21 percent of the total population, was reflected in the celebrations of the centennial of the Protestant Mission in Guatemala, held in 1982 during the rule of Ríos Montt.⁵⁸ Even without considering his regime, the anniversary was already seen in the seventies as an important date for the Protestant churches in Guatemala. Preparations, which most of the Protestant churches joined with enthusiasm, had begun ten years earlier. An interdenominational committee had been set up in order to coordinate a massive evangelization campaign in preparation for the anniversary. For the Presbyterian Church, which had begun the Protestant mission in Guatemala, the anniversary had special meaning. The church established its own committee and recommended that the presbyteries do the same. From these committees the central concern of the church for the 1970s was organized: quantitative growth in light of the one-hundredth anniversary. Dr. Mardoqueo Muñoz commented on the seventies:⁵⁹

In contrast to the sixties, with declining growth, the seventies presented a much better perspective. We worked with the one-hundredth anniversary in 1982 with the work of the centennial committee and set for ourselves the goal of doubling

June 8: A troop of 30 soldiers burn 9 peasants alive near San Pedro Carchá, Alta Verapaz.

End of June: Army units and civilian patrols murder 80 people, mainly women and children, in the villages Las Pacayas, El Rancho, and Najitabaj near San Cristóbal, Alta Verapaz.

About 300 soldiers attack the village of Tactic, Alta Verapaz, at night and abduct all the men of the village. In the following days 70 of them are found dead; their bodies show signs of torture.

July 5: The army murders the entire population of the settlement Balchajul with machine guns.

July 16-19: More than 350 inhabitants of the village of San Francisco Nentón, Huehuetenango are murdered by the army. On the sixteenth, the military surrounds the village and opens mortar and machine-gun fire on it. Afterwards, they enter the village and shoot the residents in their homes, and then set fire to them. Those who attempt to flee are dismembered and killed with machetes. Only 12 survive.

November 23: After a bombing attack, the army invades the village of Montecristo near Tajamalco, San Marcos and tortures the inhabitants.

December 1-5: The villages Xix, Bicutz and Ucal are bombed by helicopter and strafed with machine-gun fire. The village of Bipeac Balam is attacked with mortar fire. In Sumal Chiquito, army units murder all the inhabitants. These villages all lie in Nebaj, El Quiché.

December 22: Massacre of the population of Parraxtút, ordered by the commander of the military base in Chijul near Cunén, El Quiché. The massacre is carried out by a civilian patrol recruited by force: 350 Mayas are tortured and killed.

1983

March 6: As units of the army and civilian patrols comb through several villages near Rabinal, Baja Verapaz, they discover that the entire population has fled into the mountains. After 3 days hunger drives 2 families back. They are shot by the army as "subversives". Among the 8 murdered are 3 women and 3 children.

1985

MEJIA VICTORES

January 21-22: 500 soldiers encircle the village of Xeatzán Bajo near Patzún, Chimaltenango, set up their headquarters in the school and dig several pits. The military representatives of the village round up 10 peasants from a list. The soldiers hang the peasants from the ceiling of the school, rip out their eyes and tongues, cut off their testicles, and finally burn their still-living bodies...

The chronology contains a few examples taken from Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker, ed., "Guatemala. Chronologie der politischen Gewalt 1976-83", in *Program 104, Indianer in Mittelamerika* (October, 1983); Comité pro Justicia y Paz de Guatemala, *33mUn Pueblo que resiste y espera* 823m. (March, 1985), p.5. The compiled information of the Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker (Society for Endangered Peoples) is based on numerous sources: newspapers and magazines from Central America, Mexico, the USA and Canada; press reports and information from human rights, religious and other organizations such as Amnesty International, Council on Hemispheric Affairs (USA), Iglesia Guatemalteca en el Exilio (Costa Rica), Washington Office on Latin America (USA), and others; and special reports from Amnesty International, Comité pro Justicia y Paz de Guatemala, United States Congress: hearings before the Sub-Committees on International Organizations (USA) and others.

the church in ten years. Two non-church factors coincided with the decade of our work: the earthquake was with all its tragedy after all also a growth factor for the church. (...) The increase of political violence was likewise a factor which contributed to the growth of the church. In any case we had at the end of the decade between 1972 and 1982 a growth of not merely 100 percent - as planned - , but rather 125 percent.⁶⁰ (...) Concerning the earthquake, it was a natural phenomenon which terrified everyone. And it is only natural that people begin in difficult circumstances to seek God. That is normal. (...) Through this, the people themselves started to seek out churches; this came almost entirely from the initiative of the people, who sought an answer. And concerning the political violence, it is the same pattern. Under persecution and with similar problems, the people start once again to search for God, especially the Indigenas.⁶¹

The areas with the strongest church growth are indeed the young Mayan presbyteries: Kekchí (founded 1978) and Mam (founded 1980). This is admittedly based not only on the violence suffered; it is also connected with the specific practical and

theological orientation of these presbyteries.⁶² As a whole, the Presbyterian Church continues to stand under the strong influence of dispensationalism. This situation was now to be countered by the creation of a Presbyterian identity by the leadership of the church. Dr. Muñoz described the problem:

In many respects, in the course of its history the church has been shaped more and more by a theology of evangelism. This led to a certain neglect of the development of the teaching of the church. The church had retained specific liturgical forms, because it was directed by North American missionaries who brought their standard liturgy with them, but the focus was mainly on liturgy and not doctrine. The doctrine was purely evangelical. Then the Central American Church (Iglesia Centroamericana) developed from the Central American Mission (...) with an aggressive emphasis on the doctrine of the last days, actually the dispensational doctrine. And because the Central American Church has its own radio station, they have an excellent medium of communication which has spread this dispensationalism. It is today very strong, also among the Pentecostals.

The Presbyterian Church has not approached this problem offensively. (...) as a result, we still have to deal with it today. (...) Only in the eighties have we begun to remedy the matter by teaching the fundamental subjects (of Presbyterianism), so that everyone at least knows what the five main points of Calvinism are. Just recently, we have drawn up new teaching material: the Westminster Confession has been converted into pedagogically designed lessons for Sunday school,⁶³ in order to be taught in all the churches of the Synod. This is now obligatory. (...) We are really trying for the first time to create our identity in our teaching. (...) We are returning to the actual theological model of the Reformed Church. (...) Later the *Institutio* of Calvin is also to be converted into Sunday School lessons.⁶⁴

In the midst of the overwhelming presence of dispensationalist preaching in radio, television, literature and theological education, this step appears as a confirmation of the individual features of the Presbyterian

Church. According to Rev. Edgardo García, one of the co-authors of the Sunday School version of the Confession:

It is an entirely new movement in the church, to finally return to what we can call the doctrine of the church. Proof of this is the new version of the creed, which had never been studied in this way before. Even with its weaknesses, this new version is an attempt to return to a Presbyterian doctrine which has been completely lost to us, because we have never done more than badly parrot foreign books and sermons.⁶⁵

The work on the Sunday School version of the Westminster Confession was completed in January 1986.

Guatemala's political development was marked in the years from 1983 to 1986 by ruthless war against the insurgency. Ríos Montt's program, with its cool and calculated military brutality, was from a military perspective a success. But his Central American policy was too open to new directions and too independent of the United States. This factor, together with severe conflict with sectors of the Guatemalan economy (and probably his extremely controversial religious fanaticism as well), led to a coup against Ríos Montt in August 1983. General Mejía Victores, a dyed-in-the-wool Catholic, replaced his Protestant colleague. The program of war against the insurgency continued with the same efficiency and brutality as before. The hopes of an admittedly large number of fundamentalist and Pentecostalist groups were disappointed by the new coup. With the recommendation of the USA, and due to a severe deterioration of the economy and international pressure against the military regime, General Mejía Victores saw himself forced to arrange elections for the Fall of 1985, in order to elect a civilian government. Four parties with roughly equal chances participated in the election. The left end of the spectrum was formed by the Christian Democrats, who emerged as the winners of the election. For the Social Democrats, equal participation was impossible; due to threats, the party was unable to call its leadership back from exile. For the parties left of the Social Democrats, even formal presence in the election was denied. A party of the Protestant candidate Jorge Serrano Elias also participated in this election. He and his neo-Liberal program represented, in a political spectrum with the Christian Democrats on the left, the liberal-economic right wing. The election was won by the Christian Democrat Vinicio Cerezo. But even after the civilian government took office, the military kept the upper hand: officers responsible for torture and murder en-

joyed general amnesty, and the administration was supervised by a military control system, the "interinstitutional coordinators" (*coordinadoras interinstitucionales*). Wherever the guerillas were still active and sympathy for them from the civilian population was recognizable, the massacres continued.

5. Pentecostal Churches, Political Conflict and the New Self-assurance of the Mayas: Challenges for Presbyterian Identity Today

The crisis of theological identity of the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala is placed by several of its leading members above all in the context of the conflict with the eschatological dogma of dispensationalism. Historical development clearly shows that dispensationalism was able to penetrate the Presbyterian Church as the religion of the lower class in church led by the liberal bourgeoisie and later the middle class. Seen in this light, theological discussions about dispensationalism and premillennialism appear as the tip of an iceberg of debate over church practice. In this context, three areas have been emphasized as especially problematic in recent decades:

- the influence of Pentecostal churches and neo-Pentecostal groups on the Presbyterian Church as well as the migration of members to these churches;
- the political and social situation of the country, with which the church is confronted. This situation calls vehemently for a definition of the form of witnessing Christ in the world and gives rise to serious tensions;
- the awakening ethnic self-confidence of the Mayas in the Presbyterian Church. This authentically Guatemalan movement toward a new church identity leads to sharp inner-church conflicts.

A more detailed consideration of these three conflict-ridden areas will give sharper contours to the problem of a theological identity for the Presbyterian Church.

"...those are disguised guerillas!" - A Journalist's Report*

"Damn the guerillas!" - Out of Cajixay!" flared the banner suspended in the middle of the village between two trees. While the Indian villagers listened silently to the exhortations of the officer accompanying us, claiming that guerillas had murdered fifteen peasants and wounded sixteen others here on April 22, 1982, I approached an older peasant sitting in the last row.

"Who killed the people in your village?" I asked him. He couldn't or didn't want to answer. I thought of the banner, and tried again: "Who here can write?"

To my surprise, the old man replied in broken Spanish: "We are poor people. We don't know how to write."

"And where did the writing on the banner come from?"

"We don't know", answered the old man softly and glanced fearfully at uniformed men who were already watching us closely.

"Previously the guerillas controlled everything here, but now the population has full trust in the army", explained the officer accompanying us as we arrive half-an-hour later in the small town of Patzúl.

On a stretch of ground surrounding the dwellings of the peasants lay two bodies under blood-soaked cloths. An Indian woman knelt in front of them weeping, her hands folded in prayer. Behind her, a dozen or so soldiers marched back and forth between the living and the dead. On the other side of the square, the villagers had assembled, now and again their silence broken by the wailing of women. Everyone was looking toward the village school; on its veranda, ten corpses lay side by side, like animals killed in a hunt, heads nearly all split by machete blows; the throat of one was slit open, and others were shot in the neck.

While other journalists gathered around the officer to hear his story about guerillas disguised as soldiers, I walked up to three peasants who sat apart from the rest.

"At around six in the morning soldiers came and surrounded the village. 'Come out, we're on patrol', they shouted. Then they took the people out of their huts. As they were lined up in front of the school, the soldiers began hacking at them with machetes and shooting those on the ground", reported one of them. "Were they actually soldiers or disguised guerillas?" I asked. The answer came without hesitation: "They were soldiers from Chajúl; I know them, because I've seen them here before. Only this time they wore different hats."

*Leo Gabriel, *Aufstand der Kulturen, Konflikt-Region Zentralamerika. Guatemala - El Salvador - Nicaragua* (Hamburg, 1987), p. 68.

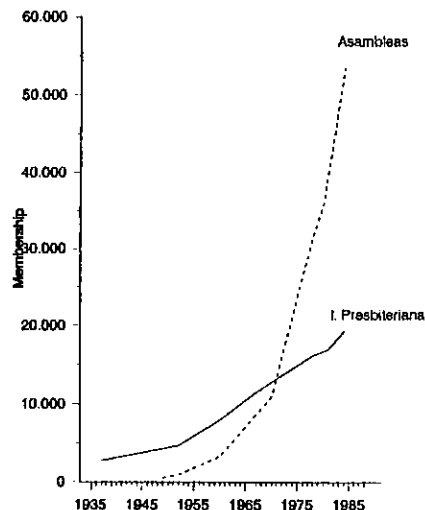
CHAPTER 3

PENTECOSTAL AND NEO-PENTECOSTAL INFLUENCE
ON THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH:
INNER CONFLICTS AND THE MIGRATION OF MEMBERS

*...A Christian is like a lamb,
always looking for the greenest grass.*

The vigorous growth of Pentecostal churches¹ in Guatemala in the past two decades is considered by many of its members to be a threat to the Presbyterian Church, especially by the church administration. This growth stems in part from the migration of Presbyterians to Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches; in addition, the adoption of religious practices from these churches into Presbyterian worship is altering the traditions of the church.

Growth of the Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala and the Asambleas de Dios in Guatemala (Total membership, 1935-85)



SOURCES: Kenneth G. Grubb et al., eds., *World Christian Handbook* (London, 1949); 2nd ed. (London, 1952); 3rd ed. (Nashville, TN/New York, NY, 1988, Clifton L. Holland, *World Christianity. Central America and the Caribbean* (Monrovia, CA, 1981); Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, ed., *Apuntes para la historia* (Guatemala, 1982); Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, Secretaría del Sínodo, "Cuadro de Estadística Año 1984", Guatemala City, April 30, 1985 (Statistical Report); Asambleas de Dios, "Cuadro estadístico de las Asambleas de Dios en Guatemala en el año 1984", Guatemala, January 1985 (Internal Memorandum); Virgilio Zapata A., *Historia de la Iglesia Evangélica en Guatemala* (Guatemala, 1982).

The activity of the traditional Pentecostal churches affects the lower social strata within the Presbyterian Church. There it is closely linked with premillennialism, an unfortunate inheritance which the Presbyterian Church has received from the Central American Mission. Pentecostalism intensifies this premillennialism; furthermore, these churches practice a form of worship which obliterates the last traces of Presbyterian liturgy. In the capital and in several provincial cities, neo-Pentecostal (or as they are also called, "charismatic") churches attempt to lure away the financially stronger members of the Presbyterian congregations. These churches, active in Guatemala since the 1970s, seem at first glance to be similar to the traditional Pentecostal churches. Actually, they differ significantly in their message and in their practices, which are tailored to the upper class.

When discussing the influence of Pentecostal churches on the Presbyterian Church an important exception must be recognized: in the Mayan presbyteries, Pentecostal churches are not a serious problem.

Among the Indians the Pentecostal influence, in other words the clapping, and especially the situation wherein everyone prays loudly and all at once (during the worship service), could be stopped.²

Among the Kekchi Indians, according to Dr. Mardoqueo Muñoz,³ the Pentecostal churches are actually growing more slowly than the Presbyterian Church. As will be seen, this is in part a result of the perspective of the evangelical work in the native presbyteries. The Mayan presbyteries are therefore not representative of the Pentecostal threat experienced by the Presbyterian churches.⁴ In order to examine the Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal challenge more closely, this chapter focuses on the situation among Ladino presbyteries.

1. The Traditional Pentecostal Churches and the Presbyterian Rural and Urban Lower Class Communities

When I came here about fifteen years ago, our congregation had eighty members. But then the congregation split: thirty members left and fifty stayed. After that, a person who had become an elder wanted to introduce Pentecostal doctrines into our church, although we are Presbyterians. We didn't allow him to do that. Then he simply said; "How many of you want to clap your hands while singing and receive the Holy Spirit...?" And other such things. Many members left with

him. Now we number only thirty-five; but we are true Presbyterians, because we protect our teaching. (...) ⁵ In the first dispute, it was mainly the young people who left. They opened up a little church - "Christ is Coming!" - right around the corner. The people from the second split moved to the other corner, a little ways up the street from our church. Their chapel is called "Heaven's Gate". Because of this, we don't have any more preaching points (*campos blancos*): one group is here, another there, another somewhere else, and there is nothing left for us. ⁶

This example, from a poor quarter of Guatemala City, is illustrative. The Presbyterian Church struggles with omnipresent Pentecostal influence among the lower classes on two different fronts: either religious services and doctrine, under Pentecostal influence, become unrecognizable, or members emigrate to other churches.

In the country there are many very poor Presbyterian pastors who follow the Pentecostal model simply due to their poverty. The worship services there are Pentecostal, insofar as they clap while singing and everyone prays loudly at the same time. This is very widespread. ⁷

An elder from a congregation of the Pacifico presbytery in the Retalhuleu Department described the emigration in an interview:

The Pentecostals get their members in part from the "drop-outs" ⁸ of other churches. When they go out evangelizing, they talk with the people. Someone might say, "I'm actually a Presbyterian, but I don't go to church anymore." "Why not?" asks the Pentecostalist: "Let's pray about it." And from that moment on they are "on duty", every day, visiting the people, who then feel obligated. And then the Pentecostals have a new member. But they don't let go: they immerse the new members in a flood of activities. (...) If we hold an evangelizing campaign together (as we did once before), and five people convert, then a Pentecostalist is with them immediately, and tomorrow morning as well, and takes them along to his church. (...) If five hundred people convert at a joint function, afterwards five are with us and fifty with the Pentecostals.

Q: Would a Presbyterian even make such an effort? The Presbyterian Church doesn't have the people for it.

A: That's right. That's why we say that the Presbyterians have got to become more dynamic. (...) The Pentecostals don't need a committee to regulate everything first. (...) A further advantage of the Pentecostals is that they simply appoint some brother to lead a congregation... And once he has begun, he has to make sure that he gets by and makes his money: in other words, that his church grows, because the life of the church is the livelihood of its pastor. It's not the same as in our church, where the pastors are paid regularly. ⁹

The proselytic zeal of the Pentecostal movement is indeed one of its most important features. The members find a compensation for the daily hardships they suffer in a mass of religious activities and in their own commitment to the cause. Moreover, the fact that a pastor is almost always present in the congregation guarantees that these activities do not need to be carried out with individual responsibility, but rather are firmly embedded in an authoritarian system. This is an important factor in connection with the living conditions of the lower class, which are marked by submission and alienation.

In contrast, Presbyterians are faced with a shortage of pastors, because many congregations are not in a position to guarantee a monthly salary for a pastor. Another church council member from the Pacifico presbytery who is also mayor of the municipality, ¹⁰ explained that from the ten Presbyterian congregations in the region which he administers not a single one could support a pastor. The system of presbyterial authority admittedly has the advantage that the business of the congregation can be dealt with by the church council; these members can also visit the sick, and they usually provide economic support for the congregation. ¹¹ In this way the church council members (who are generally people with a certain amount of power in their locality as it is, and therefore more active in shaping daily politics than fully oppressed people), are more responsible for the practice of the church. This in turn increases their influence, but ordinary members are hardly motivated to evangelical action as a result. And even when a community has a pastor, this does not imply that the missionary dynamic found in the Pentecostal churches will develop, because the Pentecostal dynamic is closely connected with the authoritarian structure and compensatory function of Pentecostal religion.

Finally, the Pentecostal religion is much more effective in giving a religious interpretation to the specific social situation of the lower class. A member of the Presbyterian Church from the Pacifico presbytery bases his explanation of the migration to the Pentecostals on subjective religious needs:

Many brothers have gone over to the Pentecostals. I have an uncle who converted from the Presbyterian Church. Today he is pastor of a Pentecostal church. He told me how it had happened. He said that a Christian is like a sheep. And little lambs always looks for the greenest grass. The greener the grass, he said, the tastier it is. And so he always felt hungry in the Presbyterian Church. He began to pray and read the Bible, for a long while, until he realized that he didn't find much satisfaction in the church. Also, other brothers pressured him, until he was finally curious enough to visit a few Pentecostal churches. And there he felt great enthusiasm and stayed. This is what he told me, and I think that this experience has repeated itself with many brothers. They do not find much satisfaction in the Presbyterian Church.(...) and so they go to a Pentecostal church. There they have maybe a bit more freedom when singing hymns, and that is a motivation.¹²

From the perspective of a member of the Pentecostal Asambleas de Dios (Assemblies of God):

I don't like the traditional practices of the other churches. The Presbyterians, for example, are very cold: there's no feeling there. I've been there once, because my father goes to a Presbyterian church. But I feel depressed when I'm with them.¹³

The joyful clapping and the loud simultaneous praying, the compensatory elements of Pentecostal worship, play an important role for the people. In this sense the Presbyterian congregations in the rural villages and, to some extent, in the poorer suburbs, stand in a sort of no-man's land: they do not really practice a Pentecostal form of worship, but neither do they have a defined Presbyterian worship service. Rev. Edgardo García, who worked on the new Sunday School catechism and is there-

fore very concerned with the question of liturgy and doctrine, described the worship services in the poor rural congregations:

The music there is very traditional rural music (*música ranchera*). Either they have never heard of our hymnal, or they hate it. Often, a single element of the Presbyterian liturgy is still practiced - it may be the last Presbyterian element that these congregations still have: when the donations are being collected everyone is quiet, and a little music is played. When the deacons are finished with the collection, everyone stands and sings "O Father, Eternal God...". But in the country they sing this so badly that more and more congregations are doing away with it as well, simply because it is so boring."¹⁴

Here one can grasp the identity problem of the Presbyterian Church. Attempts to solve the problem (which in the end is also the question of finding a strategy with which the Presbyterian Church can stop the emigration of its members to the Pentecostal churches) have thus far centered on either blocking out the Pentecostal churches or incorporating their practices:

The Pacifico, Norte and Central presbyteries have an especially large number of problems with Pentecostal influence. The Pacifico presbytery is extremely strict in regards to the liturgy, and they have practically thrown out people who began to clap or pray loudly during the service. The Suchitapéquez presbytery in contrast made an arrangement with them: if the church council allows it, then the congregation can clap, etc.¹⁵

With this decision, the Suchitapéquez presbytery took the real power of the church council into account.

In most of the small churches, the people who can donate the most money also become the elders or governing elders. They remain so, because no one can take their positions away. New church council members can't be installed unless people who can also donate as much convert. (...) In addition, the pastors often don't dare to contradict the church

council members... because their salaries are dependent on the donations of the council members.¹⁶

It may seem that integration is the better solution to the problem because it involves less conflict. A look at the statistics, however, shows that church membership in the Suchitepéquez presbytery has decreased by almost 9%, while the Pacifico presbytery has grown by about 10 percent.¹⁷ This difference cannot be explained solely by the response to Pentecostal influence; a large number of other unknown factors have also played a role. Despite this, the impression remains that permissiveness in the liturgical question only helps to eliminate the last vestiges of the Presbyterian liturgy, thus contributing to the dissolution of the Presbyterian congregation. If the church council is allowed to decide on questions of liturgy, it is quite possible to imagine that a council - already far enough removed from Presbyterian doctrine and practice - could tend to strengthen its local position of power by founding its own sect; or that by using the opportunity of the slightest conflict with a higher church authority, would emigrate to an established Pentecostal church together with its already-Pentecostal congregation.

Admittedly, one cannot stop with the question of whether Pentecostal influence should be integrated or resisted. The actual problem lies deeper. It is clear that the Ladino presbyteries have an average growth rate of 0.4 percent; despite a strong emphasis on evangelization, they have not made any progress. When new members were actually found, old ones had already left for other churches, especially for Pentecostal churches. What is the special religious message offered by the Pentecostal churches?¹⁸

A first step in answering this question is indicated by a church member in the Pacifico presbytery:

The churches which have grown the most among us are the Pentecostal churches, because they give the people an answer to their personal problems. The answer is *healing*. "Come closer, come to us! Come and you will be healed! It can happen today! And if you don't recover today, try again tomorrow!" The whole time they preach that they can heal people: "Come to us! We will pray to God that He will heal you - that He will make you healthy! You won't suffer any more! Come and see for yourself!" And the people *do* feel sick. They are sick, but *spiritually*: maybe a wife, for example, because she is treated badly by her husband, because

of the economic and social problems, because her husband is a drunkard and a womanizer and who knows what else. Then the wife and mother and the whole family want to see what the Pentecostals are all about. And the Pentecostals do have something to offer - healing! "So-and-so here will be healed!" "See for yourself!" is what they say. And finally they "believe", although what moves the people is nothing more than this idea of healing and the idea that the conversion promises to bring them something.¹⁹

Although it still understates the problem, this description reflects the options available to the poor in a difficult social situation. The living conditions of the majority of the poor are catastrophic and - what weighs even heavier - they are without hope of improvement. The Pentecostal churches offer their members an illusory escape from the distress of a daily life without hope. In the Ladino presbyteries their success cannot be disputed.

2. Neo-Pentecostal Influences in the Middle Class²⁰

The activities of the neo-Pentecostal movement affect exclusively the Presbyterian churches of the (upper) middle class. The emigration of members and the inter-church disputes and divisions do not occur as frequently as in connection with the traditional Pentecostal churches, but they have great importance for the church government, because they affect members of the middle and upper class, thereby endangering the traditional power base of the Presbyterian Church.

The majority of the church government and the pastors see the charismatic movement as a threat, especially to the traditional Presbyterian worship service. Consequently, we now put a high value on the questions of how our worship service should be conducted, what our traditions are, and what our true doctrines are.²¹

In 1983 and 1984, problems with neo-Pentecostalism arose in two presbyteries. The Sinai congregation in Retalhuleu, the prosperous capital city of the economically strong department of the same name, was divided in the first months of 1984. This congregation is one of the wealthiest of the strictly anti-Pentecostal Pacifico presbytery. Anti-Pentecostal resolution on one side and Pentecostal determination on the other had already led to

intense and even violent conflict in 1982. The increasing number of changes in the form of the worship service resulted in a letter of complaint, signed by an elder and 35 other members, which was sent to the Pacifico presbytery: this elder was subsequently disciplined by the Sinai church council.²² At the beginning of 1984 the church split into two groups and a Synodal mediating commission was called in. The events leading up to the split are particularly interesting: Retalhuleu is economically very strong because it is the center of one of Guatemala's most important agrobusiness regions. As a result there is, in addition to the few wealthy families of the upper class, also a middle class of prosperous professional families. According to a church member in this presbytery,²³ these well-to-do people were in recent years the target of the missionary activities of "Campus Crusade for Christ"; some also became members of the Sinai congregation.²⁴ These new members (together with established members of the congregation from the higher social strata) formed a prestigious and financially powerful group within the church. From this group contact was established with the neo-Pentecostal Betania Church in Quetzaltenango; the pastor there, Efraín Avelar, was invited to Retalhuleu to preach. When the open break in the Sinai congregation came in 1984, these members left the congregation and made possible the opening of a branch of a major neo-Pentecostal church on the outskirts of Retalhuleu.

The second case of neo-Pentecostal influence in the Presbyterian Church affected the Central presbytery and ended after prolonged negotiations with the secession of five congregations (some in part, some entirely), that became official on May 17, 1984.²⁵ In each case the congregations belonged to the middle class. This conflict is especially important not only due to its sociological background: it was also the subject of intense discussion because the group which sought to found a Presbyterian-neo-Pentecostal presbytery took the active role in raising the issue. Here is an excerpt from the program of the group:

Driven by a sense of true spiritual responsibility, we have come to the conclusion that the founding of a new presbytery within the boundaries of the honorable Central presbytery would be very useful to the church. We do not want to divide our church's organization on the local or national level; instead we would like to continue to move in the Presbyterian spirit, but also to grant our church new freedom in the area of liturgical practice. Therefore we see no alternative but to found a new presbytery. (...)

If a negative church policy is pursued, as is the case in other churches, we will arrive at spiritual chaos; our church will break up and amorphous groups without legal existence will form, which will bring our whole Gospel into permanent disrepute and cause a decline in the growth of the Presbyterian work in Guatemala. We believe that a positive policy, as we suggest, will bring optimal results, in the sense that our church will grow even further, and, more magnificently, that many more souls will come and lay themselves at the feet of our Lord, which is the fundamental purpose of our church.²⁶

* Rev. Edmundo Madrid, along with a few others, stood at the center of the conflict. The case of Rev. Madrid, pastor of the Centroamérica congregation in the capital, illustrates the basis of the conflict.

Edmundo Madrid became, following a period of membership in the Society of Friends (Quakers), pastor in the Centroamérica congregation directly after his ordination as Presbyterian pastor on April 29, 1973.²⁷ He described his own neo-Pentecostal transformation:

When I took over the church, (...) it had 27 members; two years later we had 57 (...) In the first year we baptized 12 people, in the second year 13; this corresponds with the norm for the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala. (...)

I was very unhappy. Then the Presbyterian Church sent me to a course on church growth at Wheaton College. The course was led by Peter Wagner and Donald MacGarvan from Fuller Seminary. I was influenced by Peter Wagner, who took away many of my prejudices against the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the Pentecostals. (...)

After the course I returned to Guatemala by plane from Miami. It was a Sunday. We had been in the air for about ten minutes when something seized me: at that moment I didn't know what it was. But I did understand that God had done something very powerful. I shook violently for forty or fifty minutes, and then I felt a new energy entering my body. I didn't speak in tongues at that time - I was after all in a plane, in a public place - and I repressed it all. (...)

When I returned to my church, my style of preaching changed - contrary to my planning. I wasn't even aware that my preaching had changed; but it had, abruptly. Miracles occurred in our church, people possessed by demons fell on

the ground as we sang, without the slightest provocation from us. The church, however, had noticed that I had changed after my return. And I myself still didn't know what baptism with the Holy Spirit was. As a very good Presbyterian, which in my opinion I was, I fought against the term "spiritual baptism". (...) A year later I had baptized 172 people. (...) I didn't begin to speak in tongues until later.

By chance I came again to the USA six months later to a charismatic convention, without knowing where I was going. I had been invited to a convention of the Holy Spirit, but I hadn't been told that it would be a charismatic convention, attended by Roman Catholics and every possible variety of Protestant. If I had known that, I probably wouldn't have gone. But there I met another Guatemalan pastor and we prayed together. And that was where I began to speak in tongues. At that time the church was already inflamed. (...) And all this worked like a ferment in the Presbyterian Church. Many frustrated pastors whose churches were not growing saw how our church grew. And that aroused a lot of hate, a lot of anger, in other people. I believe, honestly said, that there is a lot of hate there anyway, very fleshly hate. Then they began to attack us with tirades of hate and with malicious gossip, rumors and threats. I have never answered even a single attack. But I told them: "I haven't done anything. I have never visited a Pentecostal church, and I never asked the Lord to baptize me with the Holy Spirit, because I didn't even know the correct term for it." (...)

We have opened one new congregation per year. All this went on within the Presbyterian Church. We didn't recognize the independence of these new congregations, however, so that the presbytery couldn't install pastors who would then attack us.²⁸

The Centroamérica church did indeed grow strongly under pastor Edmundo Madrid. In 1982 it was the largest congregation of the entire Presbyterian Church, with 1017 full members (as compared with an average of about 130 full members per organized congregation in the entire Presbyterian Church and 202 members per congregation in the Central presbytery).²⁹ It is hardly to be believed that this growth aroused the envy and malice of the Synod and the Central presbytery, as Rev. Madrid has reported, particularly not in the wake of the centennial of the Protestant

churches in Guatemala. Growth is seen by the church government rather as a sign of quality. Rev. Madrid's own work concentrated more on doctrinal questions; it was important to him to spread the neo-Pentecostal message in the whole Presbyterian Church, far beyond his own congregation, in order to enlarge his base of support. He promoted neo-Pentecostal positions with tenacious friendliness and translated several sections of a paper associated with the 182nd General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church, USA, on the subject of neo-Pentecostalism. It states:

(Recommendations) For lay people without neo-Pentecostal experience: (...) If some members of your congregation become neo-Pentecostal, simply accept the fact! If this happens for their edification, be thankful to God! (...) If your pastor is neo-Pentecostal, accept this calmly and with love. Discuss the matter with him and help him to be sensitive to the spiritual needs of the whole congregation ...

(Recommendations) For presbyteries: If a presbytery has to assume its responsibilities and deal with neo-Pentecostalism administratively, we urge strongly to compile not only statistical data, but also interpretive information. It is also necessary to be informed firsthand about neo-Pentecostalism, its meaning for its followers, and its meaning for the mission of the individual congregation.

(Recommendations) For consistories: (...) it is the consistory that should decide if neo-Pentecostal practices are appropriate for a congregation or not.³⁰

In this conflict, the Central presbytery and the Synod were especially concerned with the question of the formal authority of the church; specifically, they were interested in the discussion concerning a new, neo-Pentecostal presbytery. Beyond this, the issue of neo-Pentecostal worship services as a violation of the traditional Presbyterian liturgical ordinances was also important. Isaac Ramirez, four-time president of the Synod, brought another aspect into discussion:

Before he came to us, Madrid had already divided the Church of the Friends against itself. He named his previous group there "Holiness" (*Santidad*); it still exists today in Chiquimula (...) He then offered this group to the Presbyterian

Church as a congregation, while I was president of the Synod. We declined his offer, because the Presbyterian Church does not work with splinter groups. (...) Later he applied for a position as pastor in the Presbyterian Church. We examined him and then accepted him. (...)

After he returned from this conference in the USA, he began to work outside the norms of the presbytery and won for his cause a few pastors.(...) One should know that he returned from the USA with instructions (consigna) and that he also received money from there. (...) In the Divino Salvador Church, a sister who is the leader of the Presbyterian Women's Union sometimes travels to the USA. There someone asked her: "What's wrong with brother Madrid? We've been sending him money for ten years, and we still don't see anything charismatic from him." (...) Madrid himself offered three hundred Questzales³¹ a month to any pastor who was willing to work with him.³²

Needless to say, these details were not mentioned in the public debate; it revolved, as indicated above, mainly around the question of the separate presbytery and remained predominantly formal:

Madrid and the other pastors produced a document stating that they wanted to open a charismatic presbytery. (...) The Central presbytery would have been divided into a charismatic church and another church, in which we were to remain. But the church constitution and other statutes say that our doctrine may not be changed. (...) It is also not permissible to form a separate presbytery for doctrinal reasons.³³

Rev. Madrid was not happy with the formalism of the discussion. He criticized this fact vigorously and then summarized the few arguments with theological content as follows:

What they mainly say is that we are not Presbyterians, and they show great loyalty to the concept "Presbyterian". In addition, they often use the text: "Let everything be done *decently* and in *order*" (I Cor. 14:40) with the emphasis on order: therefore, respect and order. And we say: certainly, but *everything* also has to be done. The text says, *everything* must be done. For them, "decently" means that one doesn't

speak or move around in church and that one goes to church only to meditate. But for us, the worship service is spontaneous. (...) We have never entered into a discussion about the work of the Holy Spirit: during the meetings we didn't want to discuss the subject, because the atmosphere there was so filled with hate.³⁴

The positions of the Synod and the Central presbytery are indeed marked, as far as the author can verify, by intransigence and formalistic argument. The question of the new presbytery was discussed exclusively formally, in reference to the church constitution. There is no sign of any theological discussion about the consequences of such a plan. The interest in maintaining the status quo with its established positions of power and authority seems to have directed the discussion. The Synod also handled the liturgical question purely formally. If liturgical practices are discussed without also discussing the accompanying interpretation of the Holy Spirit, however, the most important questions do not come into view. And in fact, the Central presbytery and the Synod³⁵ have referred almost exclusively to the aspect of order in their discussion of the Pentecostal liturgy. On the other hand, it is also clear that, within this context, the Synod did not take the easy way out. This is indicated clearly by the hard work of the mediating commissions, together with the continuous and lasting willingness for discussion by all the commissions involved.

CHAPTER 4

THE POLARIZATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AS A RESULT
OF THE SOCIAL CONFLICTS OF THE LAST DECADE

*First what's good for the church, then everything else.
If we talk, they will kill us. We can't tell the truth.*

1. Justice, Flight from the World and Calvinism: Three Positions on Social and Political Ethics in the Presbyterian Church

For church leaders, the seventies and early eighties were years of success with regard to the quantitative growth of the church. There was however, already a growing sense that violence and poverty were not without influence on these positive statistics. The question of the position of the Presbyterian Church in these conflicts forced itself into discussions. From among sharply varying positions within the church, the viewpoint of those Presbyterian Christians who entered into open conflict with their political and social surroundings will be discussed first.

In 1976, as the social protest actions of the seventies reached their peak, the Christian organization Justicia y Paz (Justice and Peace) was founded by the Protestant theologian Julia Esquivel and a group of Catholic priests. A pastor, who together with four Presbyterian colleagues belonged to the outer circle of this group, recounted his involvement:

In the beginning I did not have very much contact with them. But in 1978 they held an assembly to introduce themselves to the public. In this assembly we were the only five Protestants, all Presbyterians, among three or four hundred Catholic priests and people in religious orders. And then, the assembly fell at the same time as the massacre in Panzós, and I remember quite well what an immense and terrible impact it had. The very first person to spread word of the massacre was a monk who knew about the assembly, came to us and reported. No one spoke any longer about the original program; instead we all tried to find ways to get more information and to help, and public relations work was organized on all possible levels. Later a large demonstration, in which Jus-

ticia y Paz participated, was organized in cooperation with other groups.¹

Following this, the organization Justicia y Paz was increasingly isolated and attacked by the government. Today many of its members are in exile. Nor have the Presbyterian pastors been spared from persecution, flight and exile in the course of the following years.

Q: How did the official Presbyterian Church react to your work with Justicia y Paz?

A: We didn't let them know about our involvement. They don't even know today that we participated then.²

The position of the church government in the question of political responsibility in general was made clear by Adán Mazariégos, executive secretary of the church, who stated that the most important task of a church is its growth, and not politics: "First what's good for the church, then everything else."³ This statement reflects the concern for the continued existence of the church as an institution, as well as the fact that the Protestant churches in Guatemala have not in any way been able to escape from their minority role: the memory of abuse at the hands of the Catholic majority is still fresh among the older members. A large number of members in the non-Indian lower classes share this position fully. For many of them, conversion means flight from the world; it is hardly plausible for them to once again put themselves at the mercy of the world through political or social action. The premillennialism spread by the fundamentalist churches subtly enters at this point as interpreter of the social situation. Here a short excerpt from an interview with an elder from a very poor community of Ladino peasants situated between the large plantations of the coastal lowlands:

Q: There is a whole range of difficult problems in the world today such as hunger, violence, war... Do you think that the church can do something against these problems?

A: Yes, God can do anything. God has the power, but only when we seek Him, when we pray to Him. Prayer can accomplish everything. But if we don't pray, then the church becomes cold, and then we don't have anything at all. God gives us bread, he says in the Scriptures. He doesn't let his people die of hunger. But he also says in Psalm 91: "You will see the wages of the godless." That means that they will

still have to suffer later on, because they do not have God. If we seek God, he will help us; but if he sees the rebellion of the people, he will send us his wrath. What will God do then? He will carry his church away, so that it doesn't behave like the disobedient people of Israel, who were punished so severely. And the Scriptures have already prophesied hunger: it says in the Word of God that famines and earthquakes will come. And the Word of God will be fulfilled. Struggles and temptations will come, but we will resist until He returns. The Word of God says: whoever holds out until the end, he will be saved and will rule.⁴

It becomes clear that membership in the church is meaningful precisely *because* it offers an escape from the hopeless social situation by promising a resolution and a just reward with the Second Coming. In this important way, premillennial flight from the world makes the Presbyterian Church very similar to the Pentecostal churches. This does not necessarily mean that the material problems of the church members remain completely ignored. The congregation of the elder interviewed above maintains a small fund for special emergencies of the church members. The problems, however, lose their social context and are reduced to the private sphere: necessarily, their causes leave the sight of the believers, and social and political action becomes impossible. A member of a Presbyterian congregation in a small town in the coastal lowlands explained the problem further:

We are against the price increases for basic foods, we are against starvation wages. But we don't protest, because our church is still a young church, and besides it is made up of very simple people from the middle and lower classes; people who in any case are not involved in political conflicts, like students or professionals with a college education. We haven't come that far yet. (...) Our people aren't used to demonstrating and protesting, our people aren't used to rebelling against all these things. (...)

He criticized this fact and continued:

It would be necessary, let's say, for the people with higher intellectual capabilities to come to the church; people who have the courage to talk with the authorities, suggest solu-

tions and really do something against the situation we live in. But (...) we hardly have any people who were born in the church, grew up in it and were educated by it. The majority are people from outside who have simply lived in their village and now want to flee from their social and moral problems, from the world, and save themselves in the church. The church is full of such people. And naturally, they don't want to interfere, because they still bear the wounds from being whipped, and if they show their back, they will only be beaten more. For them, that is the sinful world: political involvement, protest against high living costs, protest against poverty - that is the world of sin for many people. What is missing is the theology; what's missing is that something is said from the pulpit. But the majority of the pastors come from the same class - with regard to their salaries. All of this plays a role in our social composition; when it changes, then the church will change. But at the moment the church has no perspective; it proposes no solutions.⁵

For this person, an attempt at a solution would have been available if Protestant churches together had committed themselves to supporting the neo-Liberal presidential candidate Jorge Serrano Elias in the 1985 elections. However, it is clear that the conditions among some segments of the church limit the possibilities for political action by the church. If the reasons for conversion to the Presbyterian Church given by this person are correct, then the doubling of the church membership in the last decade leads to the conclusion that the political preaching called for would not find many listeners among Presbyterians. The newly-won members would probably leave the church en masse, just as they came en masse. Social and political involvement would indeed be against the interest of the church in its continued survival and growth. Such conclusions are, with regard to the whole of the Presbyterian Church, admittedly somewhat rash. We will see that in the Mayan regions - where the church is growing the most strongly - the problem is quite different.

A truly Calvinist view of the social question is also not common in the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala. This is explained by Rev. Edgardo García with regard to the social structure of the church:

The majority of our members belong to the lower class. This explains why the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala is not truly Calvinist. If we were to try to become truly Calvinist - in

a North American sense, in a Scottish or Dutch sense - we wouldn't be able to keep these people.⁶

When Calvinist positions with regard to social issues are held, then it is in the churches of the middle class. After the expulsion of the neo-Pentecostal groups, four congregations with middle-class orientation remain in the capital city. There are also a few such congregations in the capital cities of the provinces. Isaac Ramírez, who is an elder of the Divino Salvador congregation and active for decades on the synodal level of the Presbyterian Church, formulated the following answer to the social question:

Q: In Guatemala there are a multitude of social problems such as poverty, violence, etc. Does the church bear responsibility for these problems?

A: Well, the Bible says that there is no remedy for such troubles, unless man's heart changes. And the mistake of the Protestant churches, if I may generalize, is that they have paid more attention to social and political issues than to the renewal of man. The Bible, however, says: I have never seen a just person who did not receive help; nor did his descendants ever have to beg for bread.⁷

According to Isaac Ramírez, the missionaries of the United Presbyterian Church left a very harmful inheritance by making the church dependent on financial donations, thus undermining the initiative of the Guatemalan Christians.

Many church leaders are still only after money for (social) projects; they want to make their living by proposing projects. We do not agree with this, because the preaching of the Word of God should come first. Certainly, the Lord has commanded us to give food to the hungry. He said: give to the hungry to eat and the thirsty to drink. But first they have to be given the Word of God. Here, however, the situation is backwards and with it we arrive at nothing, absolutely nothing! Look, once I also had nothing to eat. Everything came from the fact that the Lord transformed me. He gave me a house, he gave me work. He gives me everything. That is the foundation for the faithful. But if we wait until the project money from the USA comes...?

Let's talk politics: We have to bring the facts before the eyes of the religious people. What happened with Cuba? What happened with Nicaragua? What happened in all those countries that were supported for years by the USA? We have a saying here: If you raise crows, they'll only scratch your eyes out! No, what we have to do is orient the people, teach them to work, teach them to earn their own living, and before this, give them the Word of God. Look, it's shameful when the child of a Protestant Christian sings religious songs on the bus, and then holds out his hand to beg for alms. Where's the Bible then?

Q: It looks as though these believers really don't have anything.

A: And why don't they have anything? Openly said, because they don't trust in God. I'm telling you this from my own personal experience. As I've already told you, we once had nothing to eat, no house, nothing. This all came after I turned to the Lord and the Lord saw me as... Although He actually should have punished me sternly, because I wasn't a convert, but after all the son of Protestant parents. It's one thing to live in a Protestant environment, and it's another thing to have the Gospel in your heart.⁸

Clearly, such a position can hardly reconcile the life and the religion of the poor members of the church with the causes of their poverty: particularly not among the Indian members, whose daily bread is extremely hard work, starvation wages, military threats and condescending treatment from the Ladino population. The direct connection between success and faith reflects personal success and a confidence in one's own capabilities. It is known that similar positions have become the starting point for self-determined and fruitful developments for many national churches. We will now turn to the relation between the church and fraternal workers in the seventies and eighties.

2. The "Fraternal Workers" and the New Openness to the Social Question

In 1962 mission and church were integrated in Guatemala: the Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala (IENPG) was founded and the position of the missionaries redefined. In the course of the sixties

and seventies the role of the missionaries in the church also changed extensively with regard to Guatemala's social and political conflicts.

Integration brought a larger number of Guatemalans into the active work (of the church). Through integration, the IENPG itself could assume more responsibility; it had the opportunity to become more mature. This maturity is reflected in its decision-making and in the planning and realization of its work on a broader basis. It is also visible in the institutional leadership of the committees in charge. This maturity is also made clear by the national missionary activity, which has been able to reach new fields in the cities as well as in the villages and remote rural regions. A few other things still need to be improved, such as administration and evangelism.

Problems and negative reactions resulting from the trauma of integration were to be expected. In the last twenty years these challenges have helped the IENPG whenever they have been seen as a learning process and not as an injury.⁹

With the Guatemalan Christians' assumption of the responsibilities of the church, the foreign missionaries, now called *obreros fraternales* (fraternal workers), were placed directly under the control of the Executive Committee of the church and assigned to special areas of activity;* in addition, they lost their voting rights in the church committees, although a certain informal influence admittedly remained.¹⁰ Integration did not lead to decisive changes. The national leaders and the older missionaries had already known one another for many years and were more or less in agreement on political matters.

At first, the conservative line of the Presbyterian Church did not change. Only through later developments did the relationship between the missionaries and the church leaders begin to shift and show signs of conflict. This occurred in a way quite opposite to that typically observed in conflicts between national churches and missionaries; in Guatemala, the missionaries assumed the role of the innovators and renewers, admittedly

*NB: From 1973 on, the mission policy of the United Presbyterian Church worldwide changed radically. All missionaries were called "fraternal workers", and were all under the direction of the churches that received them.

not without going through their own process of change. The missionary couple Donald and Ana Sibley were extremely conservative when they began their service in Guatemala in 1959, according to the Latin American representative sent by the United Presbyterian Church of the USA. Later, in the course of their work with the indigenous people in the social program "Agape", their position changed markedly.¹¹ Dr. Ross Kinsler, a fraternal worker in Guatemala from 1963-1977 (primarily as a theology professor in the seminary of the Presbyterian Church), described his own process of change:

Where do we actually stand? Well, each person's story is different. I myself graduated from Wheaton College, a fundamentalist theological school in the USA. From there I went to Princeton, which at that time was also very conservative, with the exception of John Mackay and Richard Shaull, who were very open - later, Shaull became even more radical. After that I went to Edinburgh to study New Testament. There I received my doctorate in New Testament Studies. And when I came to Guatemala, I was - with regard to my understanding of the history and social situation in Central America - very naïve. We have to be aware of the following: In 1954, the USA overthrew the government of Jacobo Arbenz, exactly as they are trying to do today in Nicaragua. They picked out a colonel, Castillo Armas, raised a small army in Honduras, sent small planes to terrify the population, and the whole thing was arranged by the US embassy in the Guatemalan capital. At that time I heard nothing of this whole story, although it is so well-documented in the literature. In 1954 I was a university student, majoring in history, and I heard nothing about any of this. As I read about all of this, around 1965, the process of change began for me. I read the history from another perspective. I began to understand that anti-communism is only a mask for imperialism, and that the roots of the problem lie in the socio-economic structure. All of this was new for me. And the biblical reflection about this came about slowly at first, step by step. Many of my missionary colleagues, however, have never gone through this process. From the Sibleys to the present day, probably almost all have gone through the process, but the oldest missionaries not at all.¹² And from our colleagues in the Presbyterian Church, a few have experienced this process,

others have completely blocked themselves off from it. The tradition was not to touch political affairs, because they were "dirty," because they were "corrupting" and because it was not the duty of the church to be concerned with such things.¹³

The changed social and political views of this group of national and foreign workers in the church did not remain without consequences for the theological training in the Presbyterian Seminary in San Felipe, Retalhuleu. The starting points mentioned were deepened through a training method developed by Kinsler ("Theological Education by Extension") which connects the instruction with the living conditions of the students. In this way the social situation gained influence over theological reflection. In the context of the educational opportunities for pastors in Guatemala, the beginning liberalization in the Presbyterian Seminary in the sixties had an almost revolutionary effect. Until this time, the situation was determined by the influential Bible School of the fundamentalist and dispensationalist Central American Mission, and by its pressure on the Presbyterian Church. Several Presbyterian pastors have also been trained in this school; in addition, the influence of the Central American Mission through its radio station was considerable. The training in the Presbyterian Seminary itself was also strictly conservative and pietist.¹⁴

In this context of anti-liberalism, anti-communism, anti-Catholicism and opposition to social work, problems naturally arose when we looked at the history of Christianity from a somewhat different perspective. I gave a course on the history of Protestantism. We studied the Reformers, and afterward we examined critically the fundamentalism of the direct successors of Calvin; we studied the Westminster Confession as the product of a legalistic period, etc. That was considered to be the questioning of holy things. And as we came to the social Gospel movement and modern theology, that was for some a bit too sensitive. The students, however, were very open, and some of the leaders of the Synod also participated in these courses. Not all were closed off to this work; but there was a strong tendency against it. For example, it was seen as dangerous if we worked with historical-critical methods in teaching the Bible. Another thing which I heard: in a presbytery complaints were voiced that we taught pastoral psychology. "They should study the Bible instead,"

as they said in some presbyteries. But later, we gave courses on pastoral psychology to the pastors of these very same presbyteries. Things established themselves little by little. An effort to introduce a modernist or even Marxist line (as was said by some) was never present. Years later, in the seventies, Nelly de Jacobs gave a course on Latin American theology. The currents of liberation theology were naturally handled in the course. Because of this, people wanted to expel Ms. Jacobs from the seminary and cancel the course.¹⁵

The conflicts between reform-oriented and conservative forces in the context of theological education first broke violently into flame when the consideration of authentic Latin American theology and above all liberation theology began. The key phrase "liberation theology" had developed in Protestant circles in Guatemala into a battle cry of political polarization. In this context, the phrase referred more to a social and political practice by Christians working for a radical change in the social structure than to theological reflection as such. It was interpreted and applied correspondingly broadly. Dr. Muñoz assessed the period described by Dr. Kinsler critically:

Following the strong influence of dispensationalist theology in the early years, we had in the sixties a new determination of what should be understood as Presbyterian theology. People began to reform the curriculum of the theological seminaries and to experiment with theological education through extension. That created another problem; now all the attention was directed to the form. In particular, people began to introduce studies with an inductive character.... Conflicts broke out over the models, residence requirement versus extension, and much time was wasted with strife. The doctrine suffered the most in all this.

Finally, now, in the eighties, we are emphasizing the fundamental things. We feel it is important that everyone knows the five fundamental points of Calvinism... Now, for the first time, we are creating our identity through our doctrine.¹⁶

On the subject of the social and political implications of the change, Dr. Muñoz spoke as follows:

We have to understand the following: in the seventies, especially under Jimmy Carter, the policy of the USA went somewhat astray. And so, the United Presbyterian Church began to lay special emphasis on social service and on the concern for social conditions. This naturally carried over into the division for aid programs, and the director of the program began to attach a special value to social services. The church in Guatemala in this decade, however, had a very strong concentration on evangelical work. And then some brothers began to stress that we must show concern over the problem of political violence, i.e., that the church should say something about it. Dr. Kinsler was most involved in this position. He emphasized more than anyone else that it was necessary to be concerned with social problems. He even preached about it. And when he preached about it, he stressed that the church should participate in politics, that it should speak out on politics. (...) Let's say, he held a pronounced position in this area, perhaps because he was instructor in the seminary and through this academic freedom he felt free to reflect on this problematic. Nevertheless, this reflection deepened with time; he began to identify himself with the position of concern for social conditions - in the beginning perhaps with this and not so much with liberation theology. Just like Thomas Gyori,¹⁷ he also showed himself concerned with the problems of the labor unions, such as with the Coca-Cola workers' strike.¹⁸ He began to write letters and speak out against the behavior of the management of the company. And he was also committed in the area of social activities of the church. Thomas was more of an activist; the source of reflection was Ross Kinsler, who in recent times no longer hides his sympathy for liberation theology, but instead proclaims it openly. He shows himself openly as one of the liberation theologians. There were others as well. Thorpe, however, was not so.¹⁹ Thorpe is without a doubt one of the conservative missionaries whom we call "the old guard".²⁰

Dr. Ross Kinsler was forced to leave Guatemala for political reasons in 1977, according to Adán Mazariegos.²¹ Isaac Ramírez commented on the incident:

Kinsler went because the Synod didn't want him any more; the Synod no longer employed him. The same goes for Donald Sibley. Thomas Gyori also went. He had a dispute with me in the general meeting of the Synod about the affair of liberation theology, because he wrote letters against the Guatemalan government and for the Coca-Cola labor union....²²

Q: But the government had many leaders of this union killed and dealt with the union unscrupulously....

A: That's right. But in accordance with the status of the church as a judicial person and in accordance with our creed, neither foreigners nor Guatemalans who work with the church may interfere in politics, especially not in the politics of the government. I told him then: "You are compromising the church and violating the church constitution."²³

The active and politically conscious fraternal workers have had to leave the country in the years of growing open political persecution of those opposed to the regime. They share the fate of some Guatemalan pastors who were caught in the wheels of the military apparatus and had to leave the country or go underground.

3. Political Paths in the Eighties

In the late seventies the positions within the church were also polarized by the political situation. Those who wanted to ensure the continuation of the institution and its quantitative growth had to make more compromises; those who wanted to live as Christians in social and political dimensions came into greater and greater difficulties.

The concept "liberation theology" and the practice brought into connection with it came under increasingly strong pressure: the scope of practice for social change grew ever smaller, and the definition of the term "liberation theology" increasingly shrank to mean "cooperation with the guerrillas". In this context it is important to know that the regime of Lucas García succeeded through a clever public relations trick in connecting, in the public opinion, liberation theology (and the critical Christian groups related to it) directly with the guerrillas. In the summer of 1981 the Jesuit Louis Pellecer F. was imprisoned: three months later he gave a press conference and brought liberation theology and the guerrilla movement into close connection.²⁴ From then on, the official interpretation of liberation

theology was fixed. Anyone not agreeing with this definition earned the reputation of being in connection with the guerrillas. This situation did not remain without significance within the Presbyterian Church. With regard to the discussion over the transformation of a section of the church and the following political developments, Dr. Muñoz explained:

I would like to put things in context for once: liberation theology received a questionable connotation under Lucas García, when the priest Pellecer Faena was imprisoned. He then gave a press conference - it was all public - and said that, in his case, he began with liberation theology and through it came to the guerrillas. He claimed that he himself didn't know how, but that's how it was. And that he actually was among the guerrillas is also known. As a result it was clear throughout the whole country that liberation theology had to do with the guerrillas. That was the problem of liberation theology in Guatemala. Because of the press conference given by this man it was practically the same thing to talk about liberation theology as to talk about the guerrillas.²⁵

This manipulation of language threatened the very existence of socially committed Christians. Under General Lucas García the situation in Guatemala became unbearable. The violence in the cities and in the country increased by leaps and bounds; the massacre of the peasants who had demanded their land rights at Panzós stands for many others which were to follow. The activities of the guerrillas in the countryside also increased. Many peasants saw in the guerrillas their last hope. In the government's perspective the difference between the guerrilla insurgents and the Indian population blurred even further. The rural population as a whole became the target of indiscriminate military action. The social work of the Presbyterian Church which had been established also continued in the conflict zones. Dr. Muñoz refers in his dissertation to the situation in the region of the Kekchí Indians:

As the church's work was established and four social programs already existed, financial support came from the Christian Reformed Church, USA. Unfortunately, the persons who directed the assistance to the Kekchís identified themselves strongly with liberation theology and began to spread leftist ideas in the communities. At this time political violence was at its worst, and the guerrillas had intensified their

PROTESTANT VICTIMS OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Names of some murdered or kidnapped pastors

Marco Antonio Cacao Muñoz	July 1980
Roberto Ortiz Morales	August 7, 1980
Nicolás Albano López	November 1980
Raúl Albano Martínez	November 1980
Santos Jiménez Martínez	November 1980
Jerónimo Don Chiomo	November 19, 1980
John Toyer (Mennonite missionary)	September 13, 1981
Félix Moxón Cutá	July 1981
Rodolfo Alvarado	August 9, 1985
Nicolás Chuy Cúmes	May 15, 1986

(Source: Iglesia Guatemalteca en el Exilio, *The Church of Guatemala. Lessons of History. Quarterly Bulletin*, Managua, Nicaragua, May, 1987.)

Santos Jiménez Martínez

Santos Jiménez Martínez was pastor in a small congregation of the Pentecostal Príncipe de Paz Church in a remote part of the coastal lowlands, situated between large cotton plantations in the Santo Domingo region, Suchitepéquez. The inhabitants of the settlement La Esperanza were without exception small farmworkers and peasants with tiny plots of land, which the neighboring landowners tried to take away from them; such people made up Martínez's congregation. The right to land was for these people identical with the right to live. The landowners tried to expel these people by terrorizing them, using various methods; among others, the settlement was sprayed with defoliant from the air, so that even the farm animals died. Santos Jiménez was illiterate; the Bible was read to him by a friend and brother. He preached prophetically because he and his congregation knew that God wants life and not death. And life, for them, meant the freedom to farm a small piece of land. The defense of this freedom required organization. The village stood behind Santos Jiménez, and the peasants together tried, among other things in cooperation with the Autonomous Labor Union Association (FASQUA), to defend their land rights. One evening, after Santos had celebrated a worship service, armed men appeared from the darkness of the fields and shot him. Santos Jiménez Martínez died amongst his congregation.

The director of the Central congregation of the Príncipe de Paz Church, Rev. Josué Muñoz, denies that Santos Jiménez was a pastor of the church.

(Sources: Conversations of the author with two eyewitnesses of the work of Santos Jiménez, 1985-86; Telephone conversation with Rev. Josué Muñoz, February 27, 1986.)

Zacualpa

July 1981: Soldiers kill more than thirty-five members of a Protestant church in El Quiché. The most serious incident occurred in Zacualpa during the burial of a boy who had died of an illness, several church members were stopped by soldiers who claimed that the boy had been a guerrilla. The soldiers took six men prisoners; they were later found dead.

(Source: Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker, ed., *Guatemala: Chronologie der politischen Gewalt. 1976-1983*, Program 104, *Indianer in Mittelamerika*, October 1983, p. V.)

attacks in the entire country. The struggle had become generalized. The Kekchí brethren, under the influence of the ideas mentioned, then began to identify themselves with the leftist movement, to such an extent that it ended with the disappearance of several Presbyterian Kekchí pastors. Two leaders and many members of the church disappeared.²⁶ Two Presbyterian congregations, Bella Vista and Rio Blanco, disappeared completely.²⁷

It should, however, be made clear in correction that neither of the disappeared communities were in contact with workers from the social service: in both of these remote areas, the social service had not yet reached the congregations, according to a former worker; the planning at that time was to include these areas three years later.²⁸ Describing the congregations in which social services had been active, the former social worker and missionary James Dekker wrote:

As they learned to read the Bible and work together, they began to think about their lives. (...) The congregations began to produce leaders for the entire villages. Men and women found the Bible open, and in it they found that the God they worshipped is a personal God. (...) This solidarity led us to re-

Nicolás

1982: Soldiers had forced the pastor of the Iglesia de Dios Pentecostés in Cotzal, El Quiché to betray the support network of the guerrillas to them in 1981. If he had not done this, the army would have carried out its threat to shoot one person from his village each day. Nicolás betrayed the network. This resulted in a large number of military operations, massacres, etc. and contributed to the superiority of the military in the area. For this, Nicolás was shot by the guerrillas in 1982.

(Source: Conversation between the author and the journalist Paul Goeptert, who was staying in Cotzal at the time; Goeptert draws on additional information from Paul Townsend of the Summer Institute of Linguistics.)

The Celebration of the Protestant Centennial

In many villages in Chimaltenango, El Quiché and Huehuetenango, the brethren do not meet in the churches to sing praise to God anymore, for fear of being massacred; and many church buildings are even used as military bases.

Whole communities flee into the mountains and forest to save their lives. Many servants of the Lord have sacrificed their lives, and others have been kidnapped while practicing their pastoral duties, e.g., Santos Jiménez, Alberto Morales, Lucas Guarchaj, Diego Pérez, Policiano López, Ricardo Pop, Alfonso Macz, Raúl Martínez, Faustino Villanueva, Pedro Caal and others whose names we do not know. These brothers come from churches such as the Central American Mission, Principe de Paz, Elim, the Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church, Iglesia de Dios, etc.

The height of the current situation is that some of them were killed under the rule of Ríos Montt, the man who said he was sent by God to save the Guatemalan people... The plans of the powerful of this world are the plans of death (Ps. 146: 3-4; Jn. 16: 1-4).

(Source: Comité Evangélico por la paz en Guatemala, "A nuestros amados hermanos en la fe, en la celebración del centenario de la predicación del Evangelio en Guatemala", Pamphlet, Guatemala, 1982.)

Chupol

The Protestants living in Chupol were gathered in the Methodist chapel on March 30, 1982. Then the army came. Several soldiers came into the chapel, others stayed outside. Those who came in started to question the people about what they were doing. The people answered: "We are Protestants, we are praising our God." That's what they said. But the soldiers said to them: "We can't be sure what you are doing! Maybe you're all guerrillas." Because it was true that they were praising God, the people didn't answer anymore. Then the soldiers threw grenades into the church and the people died. Only one woman escaped; her name is Tomasa Tiniguar. Thirty-six people died: men, women and children... Tomasa told us this.

(Source: Testimony of Catalina Ren Morales from Chupol, Chichicastenango, El Quiché, in Comité pro Justicia y Paz: "15 Días," Information Report, September 14, 1982.)

quest a small support from the Presbyterian Church and the Christian Reformed Church, in order to improve the health, literacy and agriculture programs, which the Kekchís built up with their own initiative. (...) When they received a little money - it was really very little! - the harvests began to multiply. It was a very inexpensive and at the same time very successful development. (...)

Then the supposed owners of the land appeared. (...) and began to intimidate and threaten the leaders of the community. (...) A few disappeared without a trace, others were beaten. (...) Instead of giving up, as they would have earlier, the people brought their complaints before the Synod of the Presbyterian Church. (...) The church took the problem seriously and appointed a committee of five people to help the Kekchís to get justice. (...) It turned out that the land was public. (...) But then everything fell apart. The committee suffered problems. An indigenous pastor was kidnapped by the military. The members of the committee protected him as he succeeded in fleeing. The secret police searched the house of one of the committee members. Four of the five members had to go underground and later into exile. The two Indian

Clemente Diaz Aguilar

When I was imprisoned, on a Saturday in January 1983, everything was taken away from me, (...) and then I was handed over to the torturers. In the long hours of torture they questioned me over and over about pastors from some churches in the capital (they had a list with about forty names on it). They also questioned me about what I believed about liberation theology, and about the liberation of the people of Israel according to the Book of Exodus, about the role of Christ as liberator and not as savior, about the discussion on John the Baptist, etc. After they had inflicted much physical and psychological damage on me, I quickly lost all sense of time and place. Then the torturers took a little rest, because it had tired them out to do so much to me, and I recognized several of them again: two of them are a singing duo from one of these churches (El Verbo or Elim, both neo-Pentecostal; author's note); another is a leading local personality; six other Guatemalans I didn't know; there were also two big, blond men there. I asked the first two to recognize me, because I knew them also. Then they asked me a few questions about my imprisonment, my full name, my church and my activities. As they then realized that I wasn't the person they were looking for, they asked me for forgiveness for this treatment and said: "Brother, we're Christians too, and we ask you to forgive us for this treatment; we just act on the orders of our superiors... and, as you know, we are fighting against communism, which is the devil himself. If you tell anyone outside that you were imprisoned, then say that you were treated well; if not, we'll see you here again, and things will go somewhat differently." I could barely get to my feet; they had knocked out two of my teeth and broken a rib, and I had large wounds on my hands and in my muscles. They showed me the most gruesome and terrible instruments which they use for the second phase of the torture. They had turned on extremely loud, horrible music and a television with films of torture and death; I heard the screams from other people that went through the marrow of my bones; I saw three others in the building who lay motionless on the ground. That is a Hell controlled by the Devil and his demons.

(Source: excerpt from Mario Carillo Ortiz, "La Iglesia Evangélica en Guatemala. Testimonio del Rev. Mario Carillo Ortiz, Pastor evangélico de Guatemala," *Polémica* San José, Costa Rica, 9 (1983), p. 54. On the following page Carillo gives the names of several Guatemalan pastors who have collaborated closely with the military.)

Pedro Caalix, Kekchí-Maya Presbyterian pastor

I was very happy with my brothers and with the work we shared. One day, as I was on my way to work, the soldiers seized me; then they beat me and gave me nothing to eat for six days. Then they treated me very badly and didn't let me out. They thought that I was a subversive, as the guerrillas are often called. They beat me, tied my hands together and hung me up by them; I was bleeding all over my body and I thought I would die from all the abuse. Then I prayed to God with my whole spirit and my whole heart... But they didn't stop mistreating me. They stuck wires in my throat and beat me all over my body. They said to me: "That is an order from General Ríos Montt, and we should go ahead and kill everyone we want to kill!" They say that they come to save us, but they actually come to kill and to fill the people with fear and terror. As I lay half-dead on the ground, my whole body smeared with blood, unable to move my

pastors, Ricardo and Alfonso, have since disappeared.²⁹

Dekker himself was one of the committee members who was sought by the secret police. He escaped only because of a mistake. Presbyterian Christians are resisting the oppression, and their resistance is founded in their faith. At the same time in other Presbyterian churches, there are members in a entirely different situation.

There were other Protestants who held high positions in the government; some of them are members of the central congregation of the Presbyterian Church. One of them, for example, was director of the National Bank.³⁰

The contradictions which also shape politics entered the church in this way. The dictatorship showed itself open to some cooperation with representatives of certain social groups. At the invitation of the dictator, influential functionaries of the Presbyterian Church took over the coordination of the committees created by the regime for social matters. This may be explained by a combination of the reasons for involvement mentioned above; perhaps it was also seen as an attempt to change the tyrannical regime of Lucas García from within. The activity clearly has not remained without

hands anymore, I asked God with my whole heart for the strength to bear all this and flee from there. And then I experienced a miracle. (...) For God, nothing is impossible: the soldiers slept soundly - and I fled... fled through bushes and thorns, I ran, because I thought they were following me. I prayed the whole way, until I came to a mountain where no one could find me. Then I went through the mountains, without food or water, unclothed and hungry. For six days I was in the wilderness, and on the eighth day I arrived at home, but I was very afraid and didn't sleep in my own house. The church had not stopped thinking of me. The whole village had prayed for me. One of my Catholic brothers shared very much in my fate: he was very sad and cried with me, because we love one another very much, as God wants us to. When the congregation saw me, they all shared my feelings, and I was still trembling with fear and terror. My wife was not at home, she had gone to her parents with the children and had cried bitterly. (...) Earlier I hadn't believed a lot of what people say. But now I have experienced it with my own body. I am witness to the mass slaughter. (...)

(Source: Testimony of Pedro Caalix, Kekchi-Maya Presbyterian pastor, in: *Confraternidad Evangélica de Guatemala, "En comunión,"* Information Report, June 1986 (Guatemala), pp. 21f.)

Quetzaltenango, El Petén and Sololá

The newspaper *La Palabra* (January 1, 1985) reported that the body of the sixty-year-old pastor Javier López Castro was found in Coatepeque, Quetzaltenango. Rev. López was kidnapped, tortured, strangled and then shot.

La Palabra (February 2, 1985) reported on the kidnapping, murder or harassment of several Protestant pastors in different parts of the country, especially in El Petén, where they were accused of being members of underground movements... It was reported that several bodies were found there; other pastors returned alive but tortured, and have since left the Department.

The daily newspaper *Prensa Libre* (March 1-3, 1985) reported on the murder of a member of a Protestant church who was also a civil-military liaison, Lorenzo Petzey Chavajay, in San Pedro La Laguna, Sololá. According to his wife, as the group of murderers entered the house, he recognized one of them as a superior officer of the military and greeted him by rank. The victim was kidnapped and found dead the next day.

(Source: *Confraternidad Evangélica de Guatemala, "En comunión,"* Information Report, May 1986 (Guatemala), pp. 21f.)

A Series of Murders

From the end of 1985 to May 1986, attacks, in particular kidnapping and murder, were carried out on Protestant pastors in various parts of Guatemala. The offenders are unknown, but it is not unlikely that the attacks can be linked to the death squad ESA (Anticomunist Secret Army). This organization is once again active, after a four-year pause around the time of the assumption of office of the Christian Democrat President Cerezo. By request of the Protestant Christians from Chimaltenango, who were most affected by the attacks, the AEG (Evangelical Alliance in Guatemala) protested through its chairman Guillermo Galindo to the government and requested an investigation of the cases.

contradiction for the church, as Ana Sibley and others report.³¹

Under Ríos Montt, the polarization in the church did not change significantly. Already under Lucas García, a whole series of politically and socially committed workers in the Presbyterian Church were forced to leave the country, so that their representation in the leadership of the church became weaker. The fact that the military dictator Ríos Montt was Protestant - the first Protestant president in Guatemala's history - gave many Christians, especially those influenced by fundamentalism, hope that something in the country would change. Ríos Montt therefore enjoyed a great deal of trust from the leaders and members of Guatemala's Protestant churches. He was seen by many as the "man of the center", who as a Christian would lead to improvement in the government.

After Mejía Victores's coup against Ríos Montt in the summer of 1983, and in view of the fact that the overall situation had changed very little through Ríos Montt's rule, these groups blamed the failure mainly on "his surroundings" and on the decrepit administration.³² Ríos Montt himself belonged to the neo-Pentecostal church El Verbo and surrounded himself with trusted members of his church as his closest advisors. A number of prominent Protestants, especially from the circle of the Central American Mission and other fundamentalist churches,

(Source: *Confraternidad Evangélica de Guatemala, "En comunión,"* Information Report, May-June 1983, December 1985, February 1986, May 1986; Guatemalan daily newspapers from February - May 1986.)

Sebastián Morales

On June 2, 1987, at around 9:30 in the evening, brother Sebastián Morales was murdered by several shots from "unknown persons." He was the deacon of a church of the Central American Mission on an estate on the southern coast. On the night of his murder, Sebastián Morales had preached on the topic of unity, with an emphasis on justice. His text was Exodus 1:7,13f: "... then the Egyptians forced the Israelites to slave labor and made their lives bitter with hard work with mortar and bricks and with every kind of work in the fields, nothing but work, to which they were kept by violence." He called on the congregation to live in the faith of the Bible, to defend the defenseless and to speak out against the unjust and the violent. Sebastián left the church around 9 P.M. He was single and had no family on the estate. As he reached his hut two armed persons, a man and a woman, came up to him. After a short interrogation they shot him down with a rifle and left his body lying in front of the hut.

A man in this congregation is a civil-military liaison. A few weeks before the murder of Sebastián Morales, he had warned the congregation and asked them to be careful in their behavior. On the morning following the murder the body was picked up by the authorities. No one asked for it back, not even his church.

(Source: *Confraternidad Evangélica de Guatemala, Comité pro Justicia y Paz de Guatemala, (Aareus, Switzerland),* August 28, 1987; German Newsletter.)

put themselves at his disposal as advisors and helpers, led by the director of the Protestant school Instituto Evangélico América Latina, Virgilio Zapata.³³

Ríos Montt could also count on the sympathy of the Presbyterian Church. With the end of Lucas García's regime through Montt's military coup, the hope for social and political peace seems to have grown stronger. Adán Mazariegos stayed on: looking back, he said that the oppression under Lucas García had affected the church somewhat, but that with Ríos Montt peace had entered the country.³⁴

Under the government of Ríos Montt, a large number of Protestant Christians were murdered by the military. The persecution of socially committed Christians did not pass over the Presbyterian Church. A pastor who was imprisoned by the secret police of Ríos Montt's government related:

(We have to look back a bit.) Around 1974 the basis of our population, the Indígenas, began to sympathize with the revolution. And it was also then that a few brothers and I learned that the army marched through the villages and killed people, saying that it was the communists. And from then until 1986 the massacres have continued. And this is also the reason for the appearance of this new vision of pastoral work: not simply to preach, not only to baptize and pray for the sick, but also to go with the people. And so a new idea arose - not from books and not from a seminary, but instead from contact with the brethren themselves. We have tried to orient our work to these needs. There were children who had lost their parents; we had to find work for them, give them a place to stay, food, etc. (...) When someone is addressed

once by this reality, he can no longer give an empty ornamental sermon. (...) It's no longer the feeling: I have a pastoral responsibility to preach, so that the brethren get to know the Bible; instead, the message is directly connected with the experiences of the community. Then they noticed, naturally, that we always speak about the brethren who have to suffer. We said: "Let us pray for the brothers who are at the mercy of the bullets in the villages." But also: "Let us pray that the Lord brings justice to those who commit this sin." That changes the sense of the message... We emphasized both things: it is necessary to pray, but also to attack the causes of the sin. So, it came about that we worked and the community took part.

All this led to a situation in which a few colleagues and I were described as having a "socialist attitude". And being a "socialist" is a terrible sin because it is the same as "communist," i.e., the same as "subversive," and a subversive is a person who attempts something against the government which is in power at the moment. And so it came about that one day, without knowing what my sin was, I was kidnapped from my pastor's house at around four in the afternoon. There were nine men in civilian clothes; but under their jackets they had submachine guns and sawed-off shotguns. They said: "Don't move! We have orders to bring you in dead or alive. If you run away, we'll kill your wife, your daughter and everyone else in the house." At first they held me prisoner in a small room, where they gave me nothing but water and tortured me, in order to make me talk - as they said - about "the communist leaders in my church." Now, torture is a pretty hard experience which strikes you where you are the weakest. They worked with electroshocks and with the "hood."³⁵ And they beat me in the stomach to find out who the "subversives who spread their terror in the church" are. Rios Montt was supposed to have said that there were filthy subversives among the pastors and that they had to be exterminated, whether they were pastors or not.

The bad thing was the demon in them, that turned them into communists. Well, he actually said that in a press conference in radio and television. Someone asked him: "Is it true that you kill Indians?" And he answered: "I don't kill the Indi-

ans. I kill the communist demons. I send the Indians to heaven, nothing more." The sentence went around the world. (...) At any rate, they transferred me to a police jail and put me in front of a special court.

In the police prison he was together with fourteen other prisoners who were sentenced, one after the other, to death and then shot. On the day before the visit of the Pope to Guatemala, seven of them were executed.

We had no rights at all. If they said: "you will be shot," then "you would be shot. Nothing could be done. My family and my friends got lawyers for me, but this was also useless. The only thing remaining for me in this situation was to bind myself strongly to my hope in God; this faith, which gives hope, binds us not only to God, but also gives the strength to resist. Among my fellow prisoners there were many Christians, and we simply carried on... Then the seven cell comrades were to be executed and I went to say goodbye to them. And because I am a pastor, they asked me to give them a final word from God. I simply couldn't do it. I was as though struck dead. I simply couldn't understand that we had to part and that this would be the last time that I would see them. Then they wanted me to pray with them, and I couldn't do that either. Finally I told them that I would read to them from the Psalms. They said that I should not be afraid, their faith was always on the Christ about which I had preached through the months in prison; on a Christ who gives us life, although our body must die. It was really only a step to cross over into life. That's how it was, as I went out with them.... I felt very honored by God, that he had given me this experience.³⁶

The execution of this pastor was announced twice. Both times it was postponed. Finally he was, as they said, set free together with other prisoners due to lack of evidence.³⁷

The experience, which in this case led to prison and torture, is not an isolated case in Guatemala, or in the Presbyterian Church. Especially for the Indian population, very similar experiences of resistance and repression in the faith are not rare. From a number of different sources and personal experiences the author knows of existing church groups and

communities which have lived through similar experiences and come to similar conclusions, spread throughout the entire country. They could be described as the Guatemalan form of base communities. We speak of "groups" or "circles," because they often have no fixed church structure and bring together people from very different churches, also Catholics; this development could be described as practical ecumenicism. The doctrinal differences lose importance in light of the shared experiences. Such groups can also consist of informal associations of pastors, as a pastor reports for the period under Lucas García:

We were a group of people on the national level. There were also a few Presbyterian pastors. There were people from Príncipe de Paz³⁸ and from the Asambleas de Dios.³⁹ There were even Catholics. We were around 250 people, mostly young pastors. From different denominations, certainly, but with the same idea of being a pastor and Christian in Guatemala today.⁴⁰

The author met with rural groups of simple Christians, in which Presbyterian and Pentecostal farmworkers and small farmers read and discussed the Bible together:

Here we talk about the Bible, but in my church we don't.⁴¹ There someone reads something, we listen, and whoever has listened remembers it. And that's it... (It is the pastors who talk.) We aren't allowed to talk, only listen. In contrast, the brethren here give you time, and you can say whatever ideas you have at the moment. Everyone brings their ideas, and we have the freedom to talk... It's a joy to be able to discuss. In church, maybe I want to say something but I'm not allowed. That makes me sad. Because only the pastor talks. They keep us like this...⁴²

(... the man held both hands firmly over his mouth.)

Q: And what do you think the reasons are for the poverty and violence? Where do they stem from?

A: The poverty? From the big rich people, right? They're the only ones who hoard up everything. The violence? We can't say anything. If we talk, they will kill us. We can't speak the truth. When someone speaks out a bit against injustice, they attack him. That's also why we have no peace... We can't talk, but God can. Therefore we wait until His will is done.⁴³

Another peasant from the same circle:

Everything we see we owe to God: the sun, the moon, the stars - everything; everything which we see, He has made it. And why? So that it serves me and so that it serves you. Hallelujah! That is why many people say to me: You are the pure..., the pure... Gospel. You are a pure Hallelujah, a pure Protestant, the pure communism, they say.

Q: Why do they say that?

A: 'Well, for example: if you say to me "communist" - what do I do then?

I say to you: "Why do you say communism? What do you understand by that? You believe in God, don't you?"

"Certainly," you say to me then.

"Then tell me: the sun which is rising now, who does it belong to?"

You say to me then: "It belongs to God."

"And this sun, does it only shine on you? This sun," I say to you, "shines on you and on me."

And then you call me a communist.

"The wind which blows by us, who made it?" I say to you then. "Is it only for you? It's for you, for me and for us all!"

And then you tell me that I am a communist.

"And another one!" I say to you: "The water which flows: only for you? For you, for me and for us all!"

What do you say to me then?

The land that God made: for you, for me, for us all. That is communism. And so you don't believe in God, in God the father, namely because you speak against him. Hallelujah.⁴⁴

Those who suffer under the oppression of the dominating social conditions and under the persecution of those in power, become themselves sensitized to evidence of power and oppression in the church as well. The tortured pastor reflected:

Plain and simple, in the church itself there are two parties: the one serves the system; the other serves God and is aware that God has called us to serve and not to be served.⁴⁵

Political polarization is in fact difficult to overlook. The sharp intensification of the political conflict at the beginning of the 1980s, probably coupled with fear and self-interest, led to the collaboration of Presbyterian pastors with the military regime by denouncing their fellow pastors, among other things. The author has investigated the accusation briefly. From an interview over the period under Lucas García and Ríos Montt:

Q: I have in the meantime heard and read from two different sources that pastors of the Presbyterian Church are supposed to have drawn up lists of colleagues they considered to be "subversive" and passed them on to the military. Is that true?

A: Yes. They have not only delivered lists, they have also collaborated by observing the movements of the suspects. I know two of them personally. Of these two men, pastors, one is a Presbyterian. He made a list. He worked, as we say, in an honorary capacity for the national security service.

Q: They didn't pay him anything for it?

A: No. (...) This man belongs, according to his status, to the middle class. (...) He was afraid of communism, that communism would come and take everything away from him. I think this is the reason why he collaborated with the military. He gave them every information - fresh information. He did it on account of the overstrained social structure, which will soon collapse completely.⁴⁶

Social and political conflicts in no way remain outside the church. It must confront this crisis, which forces the church to negotiate between social and political responsibility and its interest in quantitative growth and institutional continuity. Rev. Baudillo Recinos, the treasurer of the Synod, spoke on the question of social and political responsibility:

The church should cover the fields of preaching, doctrine, social care and social service. It should, with the possibilities available, contribute to the welfare and development of the country, and therefore carry out development programs, not only in the sense of education and health, but also on the path to an integrated development. (...) We have certainly always tried to maintain the division between Church and State. This means that the Church as an institution does not participate in politics. That is fixed in the records. In case a

pastor wanted to go into politics, he would have to resign his church office. (...) so that the church would not become entangled in political matters.⁴⁷

Dr. Muñoz introduced the difference between social service and social action into his depiction of the position of the church:

A: We assume that we have a responsibility for the society. But we place very little importance on outer forms. (...) The most important for us is the conviction, the principle. The principle finds response in the society. If a woman cuts her hair short or not, who is insulted by that?⁴⁸ But if someone lies, steals, blackmails or takes bribes, that is a real problem. Correspondingly, we emphasize moral principles.

In the area of social responsibility, we distinguish between social action and social service... Social service is our responsibility for service to the community. Social action, in contrast, is directed to the structures of the society.

Q: Let's talk about both of them then.

A: We discuss social responsibility more in the sense of social service. As an example I would like to mention our work with the Kekchis. They have a high illiteracy rate. We tackled that by introducing a literacy program, and it was in Kekchí and not in Spanish. Agricultural programs were introduced in order to increase the yields of their farming. We are concerned with introducing crop rotation so that agricultural production is not fixed on traditional products, so that we will still have an alternative when corn no longer grows. Then there are programs in which land is distributed. The Presbyterian Church itself has bought estates and divided them among the brethren.⁴⁹

Rev. Mazariegos clarified that the purchase of land was carried out in the Agape social program and that the land was given over to the Indian communities, independent of the religious affiliation of their members.⁵⁰ Dr. Muñoz continued:

There is also another program for preventative medicine. This applies to the Kekchí region. There are also such programs for the Quiché, they have for example a clinic and their own program for social development. This is what we

understand as social service. Social action on the other hand usually amounts to an attack on the social structures or the power structures. It is more to be identified with the field of politics. The church keeps a certain distance from this kind of activity, which in this field is more identified with liberation theology. Liberation theology is more oriented to the political field; and in the heat of discussion over structures it changes into, let's say, a theology of violence. As a result the church does not participate in the field of social action.

The interview centered on further social conflicts in recent years and then came to the more fundamental question of the political viewpoint of the church leadership:

Q: All of what we have talked about seems to me to have to do with a factor which I remember from your dissertation. There you wrote, if I recall correctly,⁵¹ that the Presbyterian Church brings with it, from its own history, a world-view typical of the upper class, as well as a corresponding practice.

A: What I meant was that the church arrived here with categories of the middle class. Therefore, why don't we act? It is not that we have no convictions. We have come to the conclusion... take as an example our work with the Kekchí: programs have been carried out, and the answers to the needs of the people have been found, without the necessity of resorting to social action. That is, let's say, the concrete and categorical answer. (...)

Last December there was a problem in the congregation from Semococh. The owner of the estate absolutely did not want the congregation on his land any longer. What would we have done with social action? We would have fought against the owner of the farm. But instead the church bought another estate, in Chisé, and then the brethren were simply resettled. And there they are. (...) The church has found, at least in our congregations,⁵² the answers to the land question, the agricultural problems and the inadequate education, in our approach to social service.⁵³

The examples given by Dr. Muñoz for the activities of the church in the area of social problems all come from indigenous presbyteries. This is in part based on the fact that our interview partner works closely with the

Kekchí presbytery. It also shows quite accurately, however, that by far the largest number of social programs are drawn up and carried out by the indigenous presbyteries. This reflects the fact that it is not possible for the indigenous population to decide freely if they want to devote themselves to social problems or not: their abject living conditions leave them no choice but to either become active or resign themselves - and the latter means losing hope and faith. The church government has extensive freedom to set its priorities and refrain from political expression. In any case, the leadership of the church does not represent in its social composition those who suffer the most in Guatemala's social situation. It has the freedom to remain silent; the freedom to speak is relative to the risks connected with speaking out. Nevertheless, it has not always been possible for the church government to keep so far removed from politics that it had been able to make progress with social service alone.

In a second interview with Dr. Muñoz the question of the political discourse of the church came into discussion, in connection with the above-mentioned press conference of the Lucas García regime with the Jesuit Father Pellecer:

The documents from CLAI (Council of Latin American Churches) which lead in the direction of social action, were also treated as subversive writings.⁵⁴ A pastor was imprisoned because he had writings of the CLAI. (...)

Q: And what position has the Presbyterian Church taken with regard to generalized violence? Was there an official church position at all?

A: No, there was no official position. The problem lies in the fact that there were two extreme sides. And officially, certainly we said something, but through protest in special cases. But there was no official position on the problem as such.

Q: Can you remember such cases?

A: Not precisely and exactly. There were some cases which had to do with the church directly. And we had to call on the government. For example, as brother Alfonso Tot was imprisoned the church had to say something about it, since he was one of its pastors. (...) And above all: he was imprisoned on account of the documents from CLAI. We had to make clear what these documents had to say.

Q: You said earlier that at the time of the generalized violence there were two extremes and that the Presbyterian

Church could therefore not take a position. Can you explain this to me more exactly?

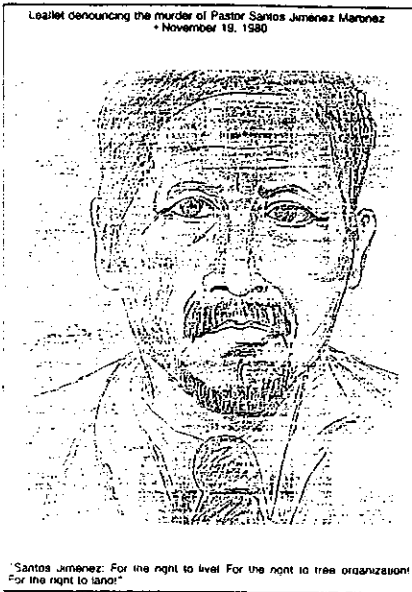
A: What I mean is: when there are two extremes, that means that expressions of opinion are assigned to one extreme or the other.

Q: One extreme was the...

A: ... the right, let us say, and so the government; and the other extreme was the left. We are talking about extremes in this sense. And so every expression of opinion was drawn into one or the other of these two positions. And for the church it was not the time to take a position.⁵⁵

In the case of both of the disappeared pastors Alfonso Macz and Ricardo Pop and of the missionary Dekker, who was persecuted by the secret police, the church did not express itself publicly. Both of the Mayan pastors were suspected of cooperating with the guerrillas. While the

church leadership had sufficient freedom to avoid the violent social, political, and military conflicts, in order to concentrate above all on quantitative growth, the indigenous presbyteries were confronted much more strongly with social and political oppression and conflict. As a result, their readiness to take a political stand was greater. On December 20, 1978, the Catholic Father Karl Stetter, who had worked in a remote region of Ixcán with Catholic cooperatives, was expelled from the country. In response, over fifty Catholic and Protestant organizations sent a letter of protest to the government. One of the bodies signing the letter was the Maya-Quiché presbytery in Quetzaltenango.⁵⁶



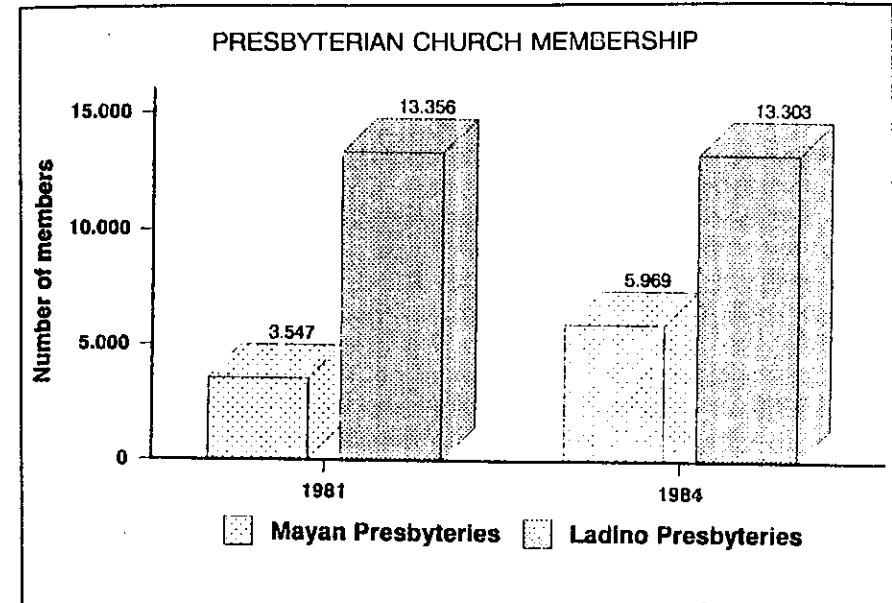
CHAPTER 5

THE INDIAN PRESBYTERIES: A CHURCH IDENTITY DRAWN FROM THE THEOLOGICAL PRACTICE OF THE PEOPLE

The Holy Spirit takes away the fear and intimidation and we feel free to talk about our situation before God.

1. Origin and Missionary Dynamic of the Mayan Presbyteries

Formally, three indigenous presbyteries existed in 1985: Maya-Quiché, Mam and Kekchí. For several years a group of Presbyterian Cakchiquel have been working on social problems and in "shaping attitudes from a Christian perspective", and the founding of a presbytery there is imminent. Among the Kanjobal such an initiative also exists.¹ The



Sources: Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, ed., *Apuntes para la historia* (Guatemala, 1982); Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, Secretaría del Sinodo, ed., *Cuadro de Estadística Año 1984* (Statistical Report, Guatemala, 1985). El Petén was not included in the calculations because it was not a full presbytery at the time.

membership growth of these presbyteries makes them the dynamic pole of the church; without them the Presbyterian Church would stagnate or shrink. Their growth rate shows an upward spurt around the year 1980.² This jump is with certainty due to the founding of the two Mayan presbyteries; a breakdown of the membership statistics of the Presbyterian Church into Mayan and Ladino clearly shows the difference in growth in the early eighties.³ Also, the number of young congregations without their own pastor or an established congregational structure is much higher in the Mayan presbyteries: according to "church growth theory" this is an important indicator of the missionary dynamic of a church.⁴ The Mayan presbyteries, however, do not place any special value on missionary or evangelical activity. This evangelization is stressed by the Ladino presbyteries, although no special success has been granted to them.⁵ In contrast, the Mayan presbyteries emphasize social and communal work with the entire population. This reorientation of the content of church work in the Mayan presbyteries is a decisive qualitative leap for the Presbyterian Church, which has led to repeated conflict since the formation of the Quiché presbytery.

The oldest of the Mayan presbyteries is Maya-Quiché. It was founded on May 5, 1959. Much later the presbyteries Kekchí (December 2, 1978) and Mam (May 15, 1980) followed. In all three, the problem of the relations between the Mayan and Ladino population plays a role, although in different ways. The portrayal of the formation of the Maya-Quiché presbytery in the centennial commemorative publication of the presbytery⁶ makes at least the communication problems between Ladinos and Mayas recognizable: the indigenous leadership was not present, the Mayan population could not be reached, and the Synod could not report its plans.⁷ The idea of Mayan leadership as a mere "transmission belt" for the intentions of the Ladino-directed Synod proved itself in the long run to be a political illusion. Such an intention cannot be realized: the differences between Ladinos and Mayas are too large and the wounds inflicted by discrimination within the church are too deep. A Mayan pastor told of the founding of the Maya-Quiché presbytery:

The entire activity of the church with us Indígenas was the product of another culture (that of the missionaries and the Ladinos); until 1960, when the first break with the non-Indígenas came in the Maya-Quiché region. That means, they noticed that some things which were done and considered normal were actually not Christian at all. So, for example, the non-Indígenas felt superior to us. Maybe they didn't

say that, but that's how they acted. The non-Indígenas were in charge of all matters of the church. The Indígenas were simply invited to the synods to do the manual work: they had to prepare the meals, fetch water and sweep. That was the difference between indigenous and non-indigenous pastors. And with sleeping also: the non-indigenous pastors slept in beds and the indigenous pastors on the floor. A big difference. And with the women it was even worse. (...) Well, the Quichés began to express their dissatisfaction, until an indigenous presbytery was founded - with all the initial difficulties. The Ladinos left us alone with the problems. It functions in the same way as with the missionaries: when the missionaries are there, there's money; when they leave, the support also goes.⁸

For the Mayan Presbyterians the most important aspect of the founding of a new presbytery is their assumption of the leadership themselves. In the Mam presbytery it is established that only those belonging to the Mam people are allowed to assume leadership functions.⁹ In 1960, a commission from the USA had examined the Presbyterian work in the Mam region. This consisted at that time of a small social center, a clinic and a single church. Already at that time the evaluation was: "absence of identification of the church

Presbytery	Program Concentration	Finances
Indígena		
Mam	Social work, lay training	very poor
Kekchí	Evangelization, social work	very poor
Maya-Quiché	Social work	poor
Ladino		
Sur-Occidente	Evangelization	middle
Norte	Evangelization	middle
Pacífico	Evangelization	
Suchitupéquez	Christian education	poor
	Evangelization	
Central	Christian education, centennial*	middle
Occidente	Evangelization, centennial*	very good
	Evangelization, centennial*	good

* "Centennial" indicates a commission appointed to prepare for the celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala.

(Source: Self-descriptions of the presbyteries in Iglesia Evangélica Nacional del Presbiteriano de Guatemala, ed., *Apuntes para la historia*, pp. 250ff.)

with the population, because the church is neither really Ladino nor really indigenous."¹⁰ The foundation of a Mayan presbytery was prepared by a mixed committee of Mayas, Ladinos and missionaries starting in 1976. Since May 15, 1980, the work of the church has been fully under indigenous direction.

This is not quite so in the Kekchí presbytery.¹¹ The roots of its formation reach back to the year 1962. The Central church of the capital had conducted missionary work in the region of the Kekchí; this resulted with time in a small number of "preaching points". With five churches - two more than the Mam presbytery - the Kekchí presbytery was formally founded on December 2, 1978. The Ladino Central church is however, an

associate member of the Kekchi presbytery. This arrangement leads to violent criticism from many different sides:

One cannot speak of a truly indigenous presbytery because it is administered by the Central church. With regard to the finances, the Central church supports a presbytery there, when actually it should be exactly the opposite.¹²

In this case Ladino domination is still felt by the Mayas - but they also see a capability to learn:

They thought they knew everything better and had to show us everything, even how to celebrate a worship service or how to collect the offerings. In other words, they wanted to direct us and they thought that they knew everything and that we knew nothing (...) But at a certain point they realized that they weren't acting properly, and it happened as I have often thought to myself: namely that when a missionary or a pastor wants to do missionary work in a community, he first has to be evangelized from the community. I think that is what happened.¹³

This is admittedly not yet a guarantee for lasting authentic indigenous work in the presbytery. The strong position of the Central church in the development and implementation of programs and the formation of a leading group within the presbytery conceals the danger of acculturizing (ladinizing) the indigenous leaders, thereby in the long run drawing racial conflict into the Mayan presbytery itself.¹⁴ Perhaps the Kekchi's desire (which has been known since about 1986) to organize themselves into three presbyteries can be understood as an attempt to avoid the domination of the Ladino Central church.¹⁵

2. Christ and the Mayan Social Experience: The Theology of the Mayan Presbyterians¹⁶

When we speak of the social situation of the Mayas in the last ten years we must keep in mind that the situation is, in its fundamental structures, unchanged for the last three hundred years: the Mayas form the lowest level of Guatemalan society in every aspect except the cultural. They were militarily conquered by the Spanish and from then on kept un-

der constant military control; their rebellions, through the course of Guatemalan history, have been bloodily suppressed again and again.

Politically, they have never had rights in the direction of Guatemalan state matters and they do not have them today: much more than half of the Guatemalan population is Indian, but they have no parliamentary representation.¹⁷ Economically, the Mayas find themselves on the lowest rung of Guatemalan society. They are being driven further and further into the mountain regions, away from the fertile lands they once cultivated. Their lands become ever smaller through division by inheritance, and wage labor in the country is paid with starvation wages: the minimum wage of 3.20 quetzales (US\$1-2) per day is seldom paid to the workers. Culturally they suffer from the aggressive racism of the white upper class and the Ladino middle class, which is used to justify economical and political oppression. At the same time, the Mayan culture has remained over centuries of oppression a source of group identity; the cultural and social community - which had always been very important - has become even more meaningful for the Mayas under the conditions described here. This distinguishes them from the poorer Ladinos, who are to a similar extent victims of economic and political oppression.

In the years from 1975 to 1985, all the conflicts mentioned here broke out violently. The militarily organized resistance of the guerrillas found strong support from the Mayan population, especially in the seventies and early eighties. Military action against the Mayan population was correspondingly hard. The social situation worsened further with the general economic crisis. In the decade from 1975 to 1985, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse have galloped over Guatemala's Mayan people. This situation has been seized by the Mayan presbyteries as a challenge for Christian theology and church practice.

The theology and activity of the church change to the extent that theological considerations corre-

Severe Massacres In El Quiché, 1980

Place	Number of Victims
Chacalte	112
Chajul	high, unknown (bombing) entire village
Chel	56
Chimel	120
Chiche	56
Chuabaj	50
Chucalibal	46
Chupol	38
Chinique	55
Cocob	69
Cuarto Pueblo	200
El Mangal	150
Itzaabal	24
Juá arid Amachel	150
Macalbatz	54
Parajito	250
Panasmic	30
Pichichil	250
Potrero Viejo	100
Pueblo Nuevo	200
San Antonio Simaché	100
Saquilla II	85 and 44 (twice)
Santa Cruz	43 and 36 (twice)
Xoljujub	50
Xeslic Choacaman	67
Ximabaxut	40

Source: "Massacres: Guatemala, 1978-1984". Photocopied manuscript, obtainable through NISGUA, Washington, D.C., cited in Luisa Frank and Philip Wheaton, *Indian Guatemala: Path to Liberation*. (Washington, D.C.) 1984.

spond to the concrete living situation of the people, and with the conviction that the situation can only be changed in the community of all those affected. In one of the presbyteries, for example, a social program is being carried out. The subjects, victims of the war, are active in the running of this program, and shared work includes shared reflection:

(...) we also want to understand why the poor person here is poor.

Q: And what interpretation do you give to this fact?

A: It's not new; everyone here has already understood it, except those who don't want to understand. The interpretation is based on the unjust division of land; it is an economic problem, a problem of the structures. (...)

Q: Is this interpretation shared by the members of the presbyteries, or are there heated discussions about it?

A: No, we've reached the point where we see it that way. It wasn't difficult to understand. Economic analysis was not necessary, our lives themselves have taught us: How is it possible that my father has only two *ar* (240 sq. yards) of land and can't buy any more, and that we five brothers must then share it? And we can't buy any more either because everything is already owned. It has gone so far that people from the south coast have wandered to where the Kekchi live to buy land. There they fall into the hands of people who have long had two or three title deeds for one and the same piece of land from good friends in the administration. (...) The matter is clear: here there are a few people who have everything in their hands. The government is at their service, the law, everything...

Q: What response does all of this find in the congregations?

A: It is difficult to talk about it completely publicly in the congregations. Even when it is true that everything is quite visible, I couldn't openly say, for example, what I am telling you now in any congregation, because it would be interpreted in ways I've heard many times before. In our Synod, a presbytery said: "The Indígenas are leftists and communists, because they talk about the 'rights of the Indígenas'. And when the Indígenas begin talking about their rights, then it's because they are already communists and because they already believe in liberation theology. (...)" We simply can't preach openly. Naturally, that doesn't mean that we don't

talk about the situation at all. We talk about it. (...) But preaching is risky.

Q: What are the risks?

A: Purely legally, we have freedom of thought. In practice it's not true. Anyone who says something other than the established line, well, he will be... What I can say here, I would also like to be able to discuss openly with all of my brothers. And not only because it must be said, but also because I find in the Bible that we have to talk about justice and the Kingdom of God. If you read the parables, the Lord says: "and so will be the Kingdom of God", and then you understand. If I talk about the parables of the Kingdom of God in a context like Guatemala and interpret them, the first thing they will say is that I am a communist...

Q: And how is it in the congregations themselves? Can you speak openly with the brethren?

A: Yes. When one person talks with another, he also thinks and discusses. We can study together (in small groups), also in families. But an open situation has its risks. There is, however, more than one congregation practising Bible study.

Q: How many congregations with such practice do you know of?

A: Personally I know three.¹⁸

Deliberation and dialogue within the community are factors of great importance in the culture of the Mayas. The individual has traditionally defined his or her identity in terms of the community, principally the family and the village. Decisions are not made individually, but rather in the framework of these social relationships, to which they are responsible. So, too, the church of the Mayan Presbyterians is a community in which individual Christians are bound together; it is more than the sum of the individuals who belong to it.¹⁹ It is expected that individuals are responsible in the community of brothers and sisters. They also find in and through the community spiritual and material solidarity in a variety of ways. It is baptism and not conversion that marks the formal entrance into the community; at the same time baptism is the witness of membership to the outer community.²⁰ In the Lord's Supper, "the new kinship bonds wherein all are equal and accepted by God as children in his family, the church, and as... brothers/sisters in the kingdom of God" are renewed within the community.²¹ Through their membership in this new community the Mayan Presbyterians are interconnected with the community of the whole church

beyond the circumstances of their village. Within the village they distance themselves from others who, for example, practice the traditional indigenous religion. But this distancing is not so strong that the responsibility to village community would be completely shattered. Thus the social practice and the theology of the Mayan Presbyterians is shaped by the membership to both the inner circle of the church and the outer circle of the indigenous community. James Dekker, former fraternal worker of the church, reports from the congregations from the Kekchí region:²²

In accord with their strong sense of solidarity within the community, the whole scattered settlement (*aldea*) and the Christian congregation were the same size. Each congregation saw itself as a part of the people of God. The conversion made their members into a Christian family and they reached out to every aspect of life because religion and daily life were not separated from each other. (...) The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians 12:26 also spoke to them: "If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together." The communities began to experience these words, no longer as abstract doctrine, but as a description of their own life in solidarity as the people of God.²³

The relation to the village community and the mutual respect shown are expressed directly in the dialogic form of the evangelization: contact in the shared everyday life is used for discussion, and daily life becomes an object of shared reflection.

With evangelism, the Kekchí have never fallen back on the methods of the evangelistic campaign. They have never applied the "four spiritual laws", as used by Campus Crusade. Instead they have the custom of working from five in the morning until three in the afternoon, and then afterward visiting one another, to be together with other families in order to talk about their work, etc. In order to evangelize, they have used this method. They visit their neighbors as before, but instead of talking about their work, they talk about the Gospel.²⁴

This approach tends to bring daily work and the Gospel into relation with one another. In the other Mayan presbyteries, dialogue also plays an

important role. Even in the worship services, a dialogic form of preaching is winning ground step by step. As in many Ladino communities, the Sunday School often has a dialogic form rather than taking the shape of formal teaching:

Sometimes, when we are holding a prayer service with fasting or a vigil we also practice Bible discussion. Then we listen to a brother who describes how he feels and what he thinks of the Bible text. In the beginning we didn't do this at all. But now that we have tried it and it has worked out, we've begun to do it in almost all worship services. There I read the text in Spanish and in our language, and afterward I ask the question: Can anyone tell us what they heard in the text? And then a brother or sister says: Well, I heard this and that, and I think such-and-such about it. Then we all feel very joyful and say to one another: Let's be more responsible with one another! I only guide the discussion; if we stray from the theme, I explain it briefly.²⁵

In this way the message of the Bible and the social situation of the Maya come together in a fruitful relationship. The critical element of the Bible is no longer transmitted via the Ladino culture or the culture of the missionaries, thus arriving estranged from the indigenous listeners. Instead, reference to the Bible comes with criticism of the typical transmission of the biblical message through dominating interpretations:

I have always been helped by what my mother taught me. She was not a Christian, but she had the custom of telling us stories. She taught us: you are allowed to do this and not that, that's the right way to go, do what is right and things will go well for you. And she told us stories about what happened to the people here or there in such-and-such a year, and so we have to think about how we can do it better. She taught me all the traditions. And then I began to read the Bible. I didn't always quite agree with what the pastor said to us. And then I had to check the Bible, to see if it is so or not. And when I understand the Bible, then I also understand what is close to our culture. Some characteristics of our culture are really not so far removed from the Bible. In Genesis there are many aspects that are very similar to our culture. I think that if the Gospel had come to us from the Jewish cul-

ture directly, then it would have been much simpler to spread. But it had to take a detour through Europe!²⁶

In other words, it had to take a detour through an individualistic reduction in which the community stands far behind the significance of the individual. Indigenous interpretations bring out this aspect of the biblical message again: the interpretation is oriented toward the community. From common reflection on biblical texts, from their interpretation in a social and cultural position and with a background of solidarity in the indigenous community, new consequences arise and old problems are eliminated.

Thus the Bible - the written Word of God - is an important element in the faith of Mayan Christians.²⁷ The Bible is seen as standing very close to the indigenous culture. Here more is expressed than a culturally critical consciousness of a distorting interpretation through whites and Ladinos. Much more the Bible is held to be the direct Word of God to the Mayan Christians, and so the expression of the direct relationship to Him.²⁸ "No concern is shown for imported disputes over inspiration, inerrancy, or internal consistency... the Bible as God's word is understandable and, as written text, is accessible in expressing God's ways and will for his people."²⁹ All that matters is to do His will.

When worship is over, we should have a clear idea and hopefully a bit of advice for ourselves. This moment is for us to nourish ourselves spiritually. But not just this, rather we are to put into use what we have heard, and do it eagerly.³⁰

"The Bible prescribes a life that Mayas may not only expect to enjoy but also help to create as a part of God's Kingdom."³¹ For the Mayan Christians it is the Gospels which evince the will of God most clearly.³² "The Mam churches show a definite preference for the New Testament... Nearly half of the New Testament texts in this [i.e. Coke's] survey were read from the Gospels.³³ There is a deep interest in the life and work of Jesus. Every period in his career from birth to resurrection received thorough treatment."³⁴

The human Jesus is central, as the preacher of the Sermon on the Mount, as healer and exorciser of demons and as the Resurrected One.³⁵ Jesus gives direction, protects life and shows himself as victorious over death. In this way He corresponds to an image of God which - according to Scotchmer - receives special attention among the Mayan Christians: "the God of creation who meets our needs for health, protection, good crops..."³⁶ God, the heavenly father, who sends the sun and rain, who

shows his love, forgiveness and wisdom, hears our prayers and gives us guidance.³⁷ As victor over death, Jesus expresses the second central element of indigenous theology: "the God of salvation in Christ who forgives sin and requires obedience."³⁸

This reading of the Bible refers unambiguously to the central motif in the faith of the Mayan Presbyterians: Jesus Christ is Lord.³⁹ The Son of God, the human, knows us "in all our struggles and needs, and suffers with us, strengthening our walk. He makes tangible God's love in one's own life and calls us to obey God by obeying him."⁴⁰ God's love becomes perceptible when Jesus heals the sick. As a last resort, after all treatment has failed, even a miraculous healing is possible. Then it is "the Lord who is at work."⁴¹ The forgiveness of sins is also contained in Jesus Christ, so that a person can say:

I am a sinner, but Jesus Christ is my God, and I hold on to that.⁴²

The deciding point is obedience to Christ, the Lord. The obedience of the faithful to Christ "makes his power personal, tangible, benevolent, and ever-present."⁴³ In the obedience of the faithful to his commands, Christ himself answers to the problems and needs of the community. The faithful follow the call of Christ in many ways: in the church as elders, lectors and catechists; in social work as activists for health, literacy and agriculture; in politics as helpers of the persecuted and voices of the defenseless...⁴⁴

It comes then as no surprise that Pentecostal practices and premillennialism play a much smaller role in Mayan communities than in Ladino communities. A Mayan pastor discussed the Pentecostal churches:

Well, the only thing the Pentecostals have learned from the people who taught them is that they should be emotional; they like very much preaching in Spanish (and not in our language). (...) But when we approach them about work for the welfare of the village, they usually refuse; they say that it is worldly and not the concern of the faith.

The premillennial eschatology of the Pentecostal churches finds few listeners among the Mayan Presbyterians.

Q: What can you say about eschatology, i.e., about the last days, for example the Second Coming?

A: In general we talk very little about it. The position which we have in our church is Actually, we don't have any fixed concept of it. We're not like the other churches, who have laid down their position exactly. We are open. It's more important for us to work for our life now and to do right by God, rather than to wait for the last days. Well, if I'm not mistaken, there are three things in the eschatology: the Second Coming, the end of the world, and the year of the millennium. But that is not especially important for us. God knows and has his plans. We trust in him and our security is that we already belong to him.⁴⁵

Signs of premillennialism can still be recognized: first Christ returns, then the end of the world, then the Millennium. They have, however, lost all meaning for the theology and practice of the church. It is much more recognized that the Kingdom of God is *already* dawning, in that Christians already belong to him. But their, and God's, effectiveness does not remain limited to the church. The Kingdom of God and of justice belong together...

...because I find in the Bible that we must talk about justice and the Kingdom of God.⁴⁶

Correspondingly, the Kingdom of God can already become real through its heralds. For example, some congregations of the Kekchi - according to the report of James Dekker - confront their suffering, exploitation and poverty with the promise of a new, earthly Jerusalem.

They discovered that it did not please this God to see them suffer as they were accustomed. Isaiah 65:17-18 spoke expressively to them. "...for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people." Instead of relying on the dream in Isaiah 65:17-24 as an empty spiritual prophecy, the congregation and their leader read this text as one which contained the promise of God to bring justice, peace and happiness, in the present as in the future.⁴⁷

As with eschatology, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit finds itself far from the center of indigenous-Presbyterian theology. It is accepted but seldom discussed. It is Christ, "who is alive and real to the believer..."⁴⁸

When the Holy Spirit is discussed, it is the power which functions in justification and healing: it creates the realization of forgiveness and leads to a change in the whole life of the believer.

The Holy Spirit works in us, but only when we are really converted. When we have opened our heart to God, then the Holy Spirit comes, and we feel God's mercy.

Q: Do you speak in tongues?

A: No. The Holy Spirit takes away the fear and intimidation and we feel free to talk about our situation before God. We are no longer afraid and ashamed to say: "I am a sinner, but Jesus Christ is my God, and I hold on to that." The characteristics and attitude of a Christian let one recognize if the Holy Spirit is with him or not. (...) And we believe that when the Holy Spirit is there, the character of the person changes.⁴⁹

In their worship service, the Mayan Presbyterians are concerned to bring indigenous elements to the forefront. Presbyterian liturgy in its developed form is not practiced at all. At most a few elements appear in a rudimentary form. The Kekchi, for example, practically have their own liturgy and use their own musical instruments, such as the drum, marimba and flute (*chirimia*)⁵⁰ In other Mayan presbyteries the worship services are a bit more formal. With regard to indigenous music, for example, there are also efforts in the other Mayan presbyteries to integrate it into the worship services.

The connection to the Presbyterian Church, however, is not forgotten. The fact of being a Presbyterian and not a Pentecostal or a Catholic is still important. It does not therefore, lead easily to historically necessary ecumenism, as with some politically active Christians, at least with regard to the teaching of the church. The Catholics, so it seems, tend to be regarded as non-Christians and are the goal of evangelization; nevertheless, the interest in conversation seems to recede into the background:

Well, the Catholics believe that members of the Catholic Church are something better, almost saints. But we talk reasonably with them and interpret the Bible. We don't evangelize as we did before. (...) We ask: what do you think about God? And if they say: we have a Bible here, then we ask: what do you think of such and such a verse? And we begin to examine the matter together with the people. And when

they have understood, then it is not our intention that they leave the Catholic Church. We want them to learn the Bible. (...) Then it is their decision, if they want to stay in the Catholic Church or not.⁵¹

This respect for the convictions of others reflects the importance of the community for the Mayas. As long as the bond with their own culture remains, a radical conversionalism will hardly take root. Only where the Mayan culture itself is destroyed or caught in the midst of its destruction can a determined conversionalism (such as Pentecostalism) itself complete the destruction of the community. In a community in the Kekchí region in which the work of the Presbyterians is firmly founded and carried out for the benefit of the whole (largely culturally intact) community, several Pentecostal churches have split, but not grown.⁵² According to Dr. Muñoz, in the Kekchí region as a whole the indigenous Presbyterian churches are growing more quickly than the Pentecostal churches.⁵³

The strong missionary dynamic of the Mayan presbyteries lies neither in an extreme conversionalism nor in a dualistic theology of flight from the world. On the contrary: their theology shows itself very devoted to the world. It takes the Mayan community seriously, even beyond the boundaries of the church. It seeks solutions in a social situation in which many claim there can no longer be any solutions. This position of hope is translated into action in the social projects of the Mayan presbyteries.

3. **Against Poverty, Bondage and Violence, for the Community of the Children of God: the Ecclesiastical Practice of the Mayan Presbyteries**

The determining factor which leads to a new orientation of the outward practice of the church and to a new organization within the church seems to be the financial state of the community. *The poorer the specific Mayan group, the more sharply the new orientation seems to assert itself.* With regard to the internal organization of the presbytery, the poorest of the presbyteries, that of the Mam people, diverges most markedly from the formalization of authority normal in the Presbyterian Church. The self-description of the presbytery reads:

The committees and programs are (two years after the founding of the presbytery) not yet fixed, because we wish to remain flexible in those things which must be adjusted to Mam culture. For example, we have not restricted the representa-

tion of the church in the presbytery to the elders; it can also be carried out by other members. We have come to agree that the tithes of the churches should be paid directly from the local congregations. Coercive rules and outside pressure are not accepted. (...) When a presbytery succeeds in continuing to share the social conditions of the remaining Mam population and not in transforming itself into a privileged group, then - we believe - the Church will grow.⁵⁴

A representative of the Mam presbytery went into more detail on the specific differences in church administration among the Mam:

Q: What are the specific differences which distinguish the church administration of the Mam from that of the other presbyteries?

A: Well, the laws of the Presbyterian Church are very nice. But in practice they are never kept. Even in the Ladino churches many rules are not followed. For example, there is an article which says that elders are allowed to hold office for only three years, after which they should take a break. Well, this is not considered at all by the Ladinos. They have elders who have been holding office for twelve or fifteen years and can't do anything more for the church. We also have this sort of problem, but we are trying to find a better way. After four or five years at the most the brothers take a break from their office, but they continue to work in the community. (...) The most important thing is that the brethren who work also have the opportunity to express their opinion.⁵⁵

When the faith, as we have seen, is understood in terms of the community, then the activity, which is based on the community (religious as well as social) cannot be external to the faith. A Christian acts with regard to the entire community and to its benefit. The blessing of God becomes perceptible, through the action of the Christians, as the welfare of the community.

We got together, the representatives of the Mayan presbyteries, to discuss what we could do. (...) Each of us contributed an idea. We drew from the Bible; and when we think of a person, and that he or she has accepted Christ, then it must

be possible in one way or another to sense God's blessing. And when we look at our communities: most of them are poor and undernourished.⁵⁶

The blessing of God becomes visible when undernourishment disappears and life wins out:

The fundamental concept in the indigenous congregations - in the Ladino congregations it is probably otherwise - is the following: God is the father and provides, but I shouldn't sit down and wait, instead (...) the first help comes through the Christian community itself; and not necessarily as a gift, but instead by working together.⁵⁷

The special importance of service to the community in the Mayan presbyteries can be measured by the fact that each one of them has established as first priority an effective social program. We can assume from this that social programs are more important than evangelization programs for the Mayan presbyteries. The fact that the Kekchí presbytery has a committee for evangelism and for pastoral work (*Cultura Ministerial*) - which approaches the Ladino emphasis - is with all likelihood due to the influence of the Ladino Central Church. Admittedly, we must consider that it is this presbytery which has grown the most, which speaks for the quantitative productivity of a combination of both elements. The fact that both of the other purely Mayan presbyteries, without Ladino influence, have no committees for evangelism but *still* are growing more quickly than any Ladino presbytery indicates that the Mayan population is being moved to conversion, quietly but steadily. A material inducement does not seem to play a role, since the general population can also take advantage of the services of the church if they do not convert. These facts indicate that the membership figures from the Mayan presbyteries are those of firm members and that only a slight fluctuation can be assumed. It is exactly this approach to evangelical work as witness in social action that brings about quantitative stability. The social work of the Mayan presbyteries takes up the Mayan tradition of communal action once again. In the Mam region, the Mam-Center has existed since 1940 as a charitable institution of the Synod under the direction of missionaries.⁵⁸ With a church, a Bible school and workshops, as well as a formerly attached, but since 1962 separately-functioning clinic, the Center for the Mam people has long been beneficial. However, "the Mam Center has remained through most of its forty-year existence external and foreign to the Mam-speaking community."⁵⁹ In a

slow process starting in the mid-seventies, the Center was turned over to the direction of the Mam church. This process was completed with the founding of the Mam presbytery. The first project carried out had an eminently communal perspective and required the cooperation of Christians and non-Christians: "The drinking water project, introduced in July 1980 and carried out with the direct participation of three villages, won for the Mam Center forever the friendship of each of the villages' three hundred families."⁶⁰

The social projection of the church's activities expresses itself in the fact that people who are active in the church are often also active in society in general.

An elder in my neighboring congregation who is also a lay preacher (*obrero*), works as a social worker as well. He was trained for it by the committee for Christian service in our presbytery. He works with his church and in his village. And he is president of the development committee of his village. The people in his village respect him greatly. They have done a lot together, the church and the people from the village.⁶¹

The programs which have been proposed are based on the social situation and the social projection of Christian action and reflect the specific problems of the Mayan population; they attempt to counter the economic need with the development of agriculture; against disease they bring medical care and preventative medicine; and they attempt to master the problem of cultural oppression through literacy programs (in the indigenous languages and in Spanish) and with schooling.⁶² An important condition for the functioning of the program is the education and training of indigenous people, so that the administration can be taken over responsibly. Training is especially important because the Mayan population has only limited access to formal education; this is true for congregation members and pastors alike.⁶³

This fact underlies the problem of education for pastors, because the indigenous lay preachers, who already practice *de facto* as pastors, are not accepted into the theological seminar in San Felipe due to their insufficient primary school education. The restructuring of the work of the Presbyterian Seminary according to the extension method could partially help to correct this iniquity, especially in the Mam region; only in part, however, because this training by extension is not sufficient to be ordained as pastor. From the twenty-five persons who graduated from the

seminary in San Felipe as lay preachers only four could continue to be ordained as pastors; two others were ordained as "local pastors", recognized only within the area of their own presbytery. The interaction of the poor general education with educational barriers in the church itself is not considered acceptable in the Mam presbytery today. A representative of the presbytery:

For about nine years our seminary was subordinated to the seminary of the Synod. This year, the presbytery has decided that we no longer want to be connected with the seminary of the Presbyterian Church, and instead that we want to open our own seminary for the Mam presbytery. With this step we will improve the study plans for the students and for the pastors who are already practicing. (...) It is necessary that we open our own seminary and respect our culture.⁶⁴

A new concept of pastoral activity has appeared in the Mayan presbyteries, arising from the necessity of orienting the training to the Mayan culture and to its specific social needs. The pastor should not be educated in theology alone; he should also receive basic knowledge of agriculture and first aid:

...then when the pastor comes to a community, many brethren hope that he can also help them a little. When I visit the brethren, I am asked often. We simply can't do a thing!...And so the presbyteries have their plans to train (and further educate) the pastors, social workers, and also the communities, so that they can help in the face of their needs. And we always make it clear to our communities that our problems will not be solved with donated money. Instead, we need training, we need knowledge of better agricultural methods, raising poultry - whatever is useful. We thank God that some communities can already enjoy the fruits of this work.⁶⁵

Even if donated money cannot solve the problems, especially in the long run, it is still necessary to finance the *start* of the various independently-administered programs. Programs which are dependent on individual missionaries often lose their financial support with the departure of the missionary. This applies to the clinic of the Mam Center, which lost with the departure of Ruth Ester Wardell, its director of many years, an important source of its funding.⁶⁶ This shows how important it is for the

programs to be supported by the participants in the long run; but since the economic situation of the Mayan population is extremely poor and could not even produce the contributions necessary to start projects, it is also clear that it is helpful when those interested can take care of the funding of their projects themselves.⁶⁷ This has been done by the Mayan presbyteries since their inception. But the reception of the socially oriented projects in the Synod is still problematic.⁶⁸

Once in a General Assembly of the Synod we talked about setting up a committee to help the people who were victims of the situation; at least, that we would help them out with rebuilding their houses or feeding themselves, (...) whether they were members of our church or non-Christians. But some people stood up and said that it wasn't our responsibility; if these people are suffering, then it was because of their own thinking, is what they said. Then they let it be known that the Indigenas were involved with the guerrillas, and that is why the army attacked them. Everything was led back to the behavior of the Indigenas. A pastor said our intention was liberation theology, because pure theology is concerned only with spiritual things. We were not supposed to concern ourselves with other things. One of us got into a fight with him because... Really, when you see our churches and our neighbors... if you don't help these people, you aren't a person yourself anymore. I had really thought that our church would take on the mission to help these people. But no. Another time a plan was proposed to the Synod on how the pastoral training could be carried out in a more integral form, by taking account of theological and social aspects in the training, and that the pastors should learn better agricultural techniques and some first aid. We made a plan. But when it came into their hands, they said: "We will only consider the theological part; the social part doesn't belong here. The pastor is a servant of God and doesn't need to worry about agriculture or first aid when there are doctors for that. There is after all the Department of Health." They didn't accept our plan, they only considered theology. (...) Then we had a few more ideas, but they weren't allowed.⁶⁹

**Program of the Brotherhood of
Mayan Presbyteries (1985)**

Historical Background

1. Discovery and Conquest

More than four hundred years ago our forefathers, the Mayas, were driven from their land, the basis of their existence. They changed from masters to slaves, forced to cultivate their own land for the use of the conqueror and "discoverer"...

In our time (1985) the consequences of that terrible development can be felt violently in the poverty, suffering, discrimination, hunger, etc. which affects the vast majority of the successors of the Mayas...

The indigenous presbyteries of the Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala - the Quiché, the Mam, the Kekchi, the Cakchiquel and the Kanjobal now join together to speed help to our afflicted brethren.

2. History of the Church

The Presbyterian Church came to Guatemala 103 years ago... at the time of the triumph of the liberals.

The North American missionaries brought to us a very spiritualistic theology which perceived man as soul alone; his destiny was to be saved from this material world in order to enter heaven. As good foreigners they deemed it wise not to involve themselves in the social problems of this country; and they taught this to the new Christians as a part of Christianity.

Nonetheless, after twenty years they decided to participate in health and educational work. Only much later did they become interested in the agricultural problems and in higher education.

At the same time a national leadership was trained but was, with few exceptions, used only for spiritual duties.

**3. The Work of the Indigenous Churches
(Presbyterians)**

In 1961 the first indigenous presbytery was founded...

For more than two years the representatives of the presbyteries Quiché, Mam, Kekchi and Cakchiquel (the last is still in the formative phase) have met again and again to exchange opinions and experiences, so that we can answer to (the needs of) our indigenous brethren, based on our faith in a contextual and appropriate way. Recently the Kanjobal have joined us.

We have asked the following questions:

- Does the theology and ecclesiology which we hold as Presbyterians correspond to our culture as Mayas?
- What is our response as indigenous churches to the violence?
- Which problems do we see confronting us from our current Presbyterian organizations, which forbid us to work contextually and appropriately?

In light of the fact that action is necessary in the form of a pastoral of consolation for the communities in which our church exists, we have joined together into a committee for permanent consultation, the "Brotherhood of the Indigenous Presbyteries." The work is, however, not official and the organization is at this time neither official nor public...

The proposal and financing of such projects becomes the restrictive factor for the work of the Mayan presbyteries. In the discussion shown above the political arguments of the conservative Ladino wing of the church oppose directly the autonomous project planning of the Mayan presbyteries.

To understand the basic position of the Synod in its historical context, it is important to note that the representative bodies and administration of the church have always been in the hands of missionaries and of those people who were sufficiently educated for the job. These were in general Ladinos from the middle class. And, as we have already seen, the governing elders are for the most part economically and socially somewhat better situated and correspondingly more conservative than the average members. This situation gives rise to a synod which tends to represent the upper class of the church.

A holder of the conservative position in the Synod on the question of the financing of projects and the position of the Mayas:

The idea that the support should bypass the Synod and go directly to the Mayas is a maneuver from the educated Mayas. When I was a president of the Synod,⁷⁰ three synodal members of the Maya-Quiché presbytery, an indigenous teacher from the university and

The first tasks are:

- The Mam presbytery has begun work with the refugees...
- The Maya-Quiché presbytery is training Indígenas at the Presbyterian Bible Institute in San Cristóbal, Totonicapán; a theological education with social and economic emphasis. (Here we are working together with the indigenous Iglesia Nacional Metodista...) The program for service and emergency aid (CESSMAQ) has been helping in the areas of agriculture, preventative medicine and literacy in thirteen villages...
- The Kekchi presbytery has already carried out village development programs for many years; it is now concentrating especially on widows and orphans, in order to give an answer to the effects of the violence.
- The Cakchiquel presbytery, which extends over the Chimaltenango Department and is still in its formation, had already begun with social work in 1976; in 1982 it not only continued this work during the violence but also began a project on shaping attitudes from a Christian perspective. In the following years it will continue to work, focusing on (the welfare of) sixty widows and three hundred orphans, on the construction of housing and on projects promoting social and economic development.

It is important to mention that all the indigenous presbyteries are experienced and have trained people at their disposal so that they can carry out these projects; since our beginnings we have directed our efforts especially to communally-oriented development projects.

(Source: Hermandad de Presbiterios Mayas, ed., *Hermandad de Presbiterios Mayas*, Memorandum, Guatemala, 1985.)

two others, came to me and asked the commission that the entire assistance from the USA should no longer be channeled through the Synod, but should instead go directly to the Maya presbytery. "Why?" I asked him. "Because we are being marginalized here" - and so on and so on. "Now just a minute", I said, "we aren't marginalizing anyone here! You are teachers because we've given you a scholarship for our college 'La Patria' in Guatemala City. And many Indígenas have been educated in the Quiché Bible Seminary." (...) Apropos marginalization: we have had three indigenous presidents of the Synod.⁷¹ (...) That is not marginalization. (A whole series of Indígenas have good posts today.) And furthermore: the

funds can't be touched by unauthorized persons because they are bound to the projects. When the funds come for the Maya-Quiché presbytery, then the Synod gives the money to Maya-Quiché. (...) But I have already told you at the beginning that this assistance serves only to divide us. The United Presbyterian Church should stop all assistance. Not a penny more for Guatemala. That would really help our church, because then everyone would begin to work for himself. What's more, there is a new current here that has done us a lot of harm (...); the Pope has promoted it: a liberation theology which is even propagated in the offices of the Synod itself. (...) They have given a lot of money to the Indígenas. As a result the Indígenas have grown so much that now they want to open their own synod with all the support they've received. This means that the Ladino leaders are behind the whole thing, they manage the funds from the USA. (...) They don't understand that the Indígenas are like us. In the Lord

there are neither Jews nor Greeks, that is the motto of the Synod. Why do they want to divide the Synod? And furthermore: they all speak different languages, how do they expect to understand one another in a plenary session? But they all speak Spanish. Aren't they actually more bound to the Synod, all together? (...) The situation with the Indigenas is for that matter the biggest problem of the Presbyterian Church at the moment; and not only the Presbyterian Church, it is the same with other churches as well.⁷²

The person interviewed focused the discussion of financing indigenous projects on the concept of liberation theology. This opens a new perspective to the problem: until now it appeared as though the Synod did not approve of the financing of projects directed to the social situation of the population. There are, however, synodal programs such as the rural assistance program Agape, the preventative medicine program Diaconia or the new refugee program Geriel which take account of social situations.⁷³ This raises the following question:

Q: Where then does the difference between the Indigenas programs and those of the Synod lie?

A: We could say that they are similar in their technical and organizational aspects. (...) The difference is that the indigenous programs are proposed and carried out by the Indigenas themselves.⁷⁴

The autonomous planning and execution of the projects, as we have seen, actively involves the secular Mayan community. Their starting points are completely different from those of the Ladino church government. Furthermore, the fully autonomous indigenous planning and execution would reduce the control of the Synod considerably. In any case, one can clearly speak of an emancipatory step by the indigenous presbyteries. Liberation theology, in the sense of a battle cry as applied here, leads to much further-reaching conclusions in Guatemala's political circumstances and to serious difficulties for those so labeled.

In addition to the standpoints mentioned, it is important to consider that the Mayan presbyteries actually do receive much more money for social projects, including that which is channeled through the programs of the Synod.⁷⁵ This is also probably the case because the Ladino presbyteries, as can be seen clearly in their program concentrations, propose only

a few projects.⁷⁶ The Presbyterian Church (USA) would also welcome closer cooperation with social programs for the Ladino presbyteries.⁷⁷

The funding of important projects through the Synod has proved to be difficult for the Mayas. For some projects in the Mayan presbyteries, it was possible to receive funding from the Christian Reformed Church, USA, or from international relief organizations which went directly to the presbyteries or projects. The Presbyterian Church (USA), on the other hand, channels its funds for social and educational projects through the church government, controlled by the Synod. Funds are bound to projects but can only be given to those projects which are accepted by the Synod.⁷⁸ The control of the Synod to determine whether or not a presbytery can carry out a certain project remains present. In this way frustrations arise when applying for projects described by the person interviewed.

The more the Ladino Synod exercises its administrative power against the Mayan presbyteries, the more necessary it will become for them to consider institutional alternatives to the status quo:

The Ladinos (in the Presbyterian Church) have described their culture as the real culture, and they have presented our culture to us as if it were no culture at all. This is only part of the economic and social situation of the country, it is only an expression. (...)

We got together and came to the conclusion that we should form a group including all the (indigenous) presbyteries. But this group is neither official nor public, because we don't want to enter into conflict with the Synod, that is absolutely not the spirit of our action.⁷⁹ We wanted to get together so that we Indigenas could for once all meet together and consider (our situation).

Q: When did you meet for the first time?

A: That was 1985. Some of us had in mind to found a completely new church. But we came to the conclusion that would be wrong. We will stay in the church and try to introduce changes from within.

We asked ourselves: What do we want to do? And we began to identify our most important needs. It was at a time when the worst political violence was once again over. And one of our questions was: what have we done as Christians and Indigenas in this time of oppression, massacre and so on? In a period when 95 percent of all the victims were Indigenas. Some of us had done something individually, others even on

the community level. Well, we concluded from our discussion: the least that we can now do is to work together with the victims.⁸⁰

Or, as another participant in the discussion said:

The only hope we have - and many brethren in my community say this as well - is first and foremost to trust in God, and then to work and develop our abilities and knowledge.⁸¹

CHAPTER 6

THE THEOLOGICAL IDENTITY OF THE CHURCH IN RESPONSE TO CURRENT CHALLENGES

Even with its weaknesses, the new version of the Confession for the Sunday Schools is an attempt to return to a Presbyterian doctrine which has been completely lost to us, because we have never done more than badly parrot foreign books and sermons.

The search for the theological identity of the Presbyterian Church takes place in the complex situation of a church whose own problems are overshadowed by the country's tense political and social situation. A considerable part of the church, the Ladino presbyteries, directs its activities to quantitative growth but is stagnating nonetheless; and in both the lower class and the upper middle class, the Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal offensive is challenging the Presbyterian Church forcefully. The Presbyterian leadership reacts with intransigence and exclusion, basing its position on the status quo of the church ordinances. Only the Mayan presbyteries show a strong dynamic of growth; at the same time they are developing their own theological and practical positions, some aspects of which are also seen as problematic by the majority of the Ladino-dominated Synod. In this conflict as well, the arguments of the church leadership seek primarily to maintain the status quo. An observer cannot avoid the impression that the sections of the church which determine its official policies are moving themselves further and further out of the picture.

In this context, the orientation on the "Confession" is certainly a step in the right direction. It expresses an attempt to work out a specific Presbyterian answer to the challenges facing the church. The new teaching materials for the Sunday Schools seek to create and anchor a Presbyterian identity in all levels of the church by reaching back to the Westminster Confession (1646). This is why the series of textbooks for the Sunday Schools attempt to orient themselves as exactly as possible on the old Confession.¹ The booklets reproduce the structure of the Westminster Confession, presenting the dogmatic topics in this order and interpreting them dogmatically. The treatment of the Holy Trinity appears with this strict thematic approach in the following order: "What is the essence of God?"; "The attributes of God"; "The sovereignty of God"; etc. The difficulties of this direct reference to the Westminster Confession are already apparent: long sections of doctrinal explanation in the new materials are

Excerpts from the New Material
for the Sunday Schools

IV. Who is God?

God is he who revealed himself in Christ through the Holy Spirit. In Christ we encounter God himself, who is present among us. He does for us what only God can do for us. The difference between God the Father and God the Son is not the difference between two beings, but the difference between two ways in which God is God. To have Christ means to have the Holy Spirit and also God (I Cor 12:3).

In Christ we have God with us, in the Holy Spirit we have God in us, not in three presences, but rather as one presence...

1. The sovereignty of God

a) Gen. 14:19; Mt. 11:25: God is the Lord of the universe....

2. The presence of God

a) This concept is used to show that God is all-knowing, above all in context of the fact that He already knows everything in advance (Ps. 139:1, Is. 46:9). For God everything is an eternal today and now. Time is a thing of the finite creation, and He lives in eternity (Ps. 90:4; Is. 57:15; 2 Peter 3:8)....

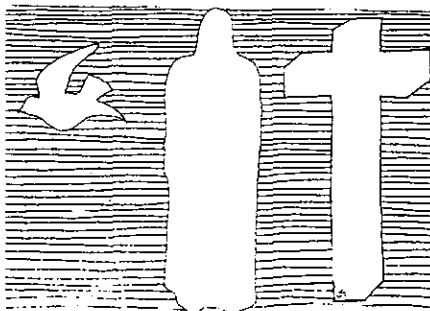
V. Conclusions

In order to understand God as three persons, we are allowed to hold only to the Bible, because Scripture is for the true Christians the infallible guideline for faith and action. It is heard that the Confession of the Presbyterian Church contains some mistake in light of present times, and some think that it must be brought up to date; but to this day, after centuries, it is still our Confession. If some mistakes are present, that is natural because it is the product of men, and no work of man is perfect....

VI. Questions for reflection

- Does the doctrine of the Trinity seem important to you?
- Have you understood the unity of God in His eternal action?
- Why do we not understand the ministry of God in three persons, although we have the Holy Spirit in our hearts?
- What means do you have to progress in your understanding of God in three persons?

(Source: Comité de Educación Cristiana Iglesia Nacional Presbiteriana, "Confesión de Fé. Apuntes y Comentarios a la Confesión de Fé", *Escuela Bíblica Dominical* 9 (January 1986), pp. 23ff.)



highly abstract, and a connection to the daily life of those addressed is utterly lacking. Questions for the review and reinforcement of the lessons, such as: "Have you understood the unity of God in His eternal action?" do not give any basis for a living understanding of the already difficult topic. It is doubtful if these guidelines will contribute to the formation of a Christian identity in the largest target group of the new effort, the poor and marginalized Christians who make up 70 percent of the Presbyterian Church. The claim that the new material for the Sunday Schools is "obligatory" (Muñoz) will not prevent anyone in this group from migrating to a Pentecostal church.

But the problem of the direct reference to the Westminster Confession is not exhausted in the doubtful methods used to convey its doctrinal content. Much more so, it is the historical and philosophical assumptions of this confession which make its direct application to the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala appear questionable. This is clearest in the problematic of *substance ontology*, which is the prerequisite in the Westminster Confession for - among other topics - its Christology and its concept of God.² The interpretation of the corresponding articles in the Guatemalan materials for Sunday School moves without exception in the philosophical discourse of ancient Greek ontology. It goes even beyond the Westminster

Confession by speaking about the "essence" and "attributes."³ The discussion of the concept of God remains abstract, even where it could become concrete, as in the statements on the being of God as "justice" (*justo*) and "love" (*amor*). Instead it merely establishes that "He practices His perfect justice in the function of His unity and Trinity (*en función de Uno y Trino*)."⁴ Further: "God is, in addition to His diverse perfections (*entre sus múltiples perfecciones*), love."⁴ The most concrete statement about God in the entire chapter on the Trinity is the Christological and pneumatological emphasis: "In Christ we have God with us, in the Holy Spirit we have God in us..."⁵ The abstraction of these statements is an expression of the fact that the substance-ontological assumptions of the Westminster Confession cannot be transferred to the present lived reality of a person in Latin America. They miss completely those whose confession of faith they are supposed to express. Human consciousness today is deeply impressed by history. This is even more valid for countries such as Guatemala, where the movement of history is experienced especially painfully as sudden and conflicting change. The strength of the Pentecostal churches lies in the fact that, with their eschatology, they take the offensive with the issue of history. But early modern confessions, oriented on Greek and medieval metaphysics, are not adequate to this task, especially in the central point of the Christian faith: the person of Jesus and His unity with God the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Already, the classical confessional-hermeneutic problem is discernible: can a confession be the guideline of a church through centuries without also being changed itself? And to what extent is a confession a competent guideline at all, if it must be checked against the Bible? These questions are not answered when the editors of the Confession for the Sunday Schools write that the central truth of the Westminster Confession is that it *refers* only to the Bible as the "sole and infallible norm of conduct."⁶ The statement of one of the authors that the Confession, despite the human mistakes that it contains and the efforts to modernize it, is still "our Confession" is of little help.⁷ Beyond this, we must also ask if simply the application of a confession to a church can really regenerate its meaning. Is the confession of a faith merely a spiritual effusion of the contents of church traditions? Or is a confession actually the fruit of bearing witness "in the context of worship and the external struggle?"⁸ Theological and social challenges have tremendous meaning for the identity of the church and cannot be ignored in the process of establishing the church's identity. The meaning of "confession" for the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala today is best defined by examining the challenges and opportunities it currently faces.

THE GOOD NEWS FROM THE GOSPEL OF MARK

WHOEVER WANTS TO BE MY DISCIPLE WILL TAKE UP HIS DAILY CROSS



I DON'T HAVE MUCH SEED, BUT I AM A CHRISTIAN, SO I'LL SHARE IT WITH YOU.

THE DISCIPLES



1 PROCLAIM THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

MARK 3:14

LUKE 9:2

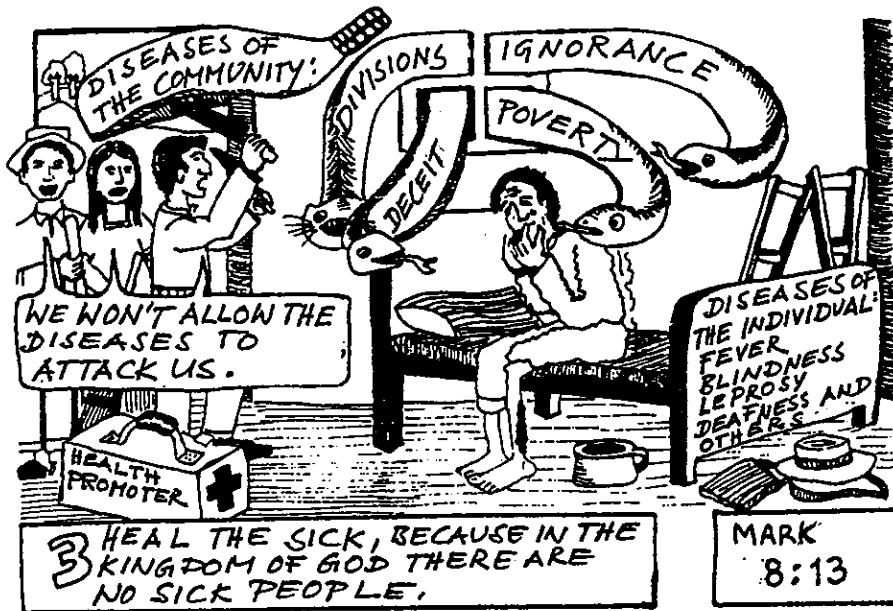
BROTHERS, WE HAVE ACCEPTED CHRIST, THEREFORE WE WANT TO HELP YOU SO THAT YOU DONT HAVE TO SUFFER.

AMEN, AMEN, HALLELUJAH, BROTHER



2 PROCLAIM REPENTANCE FOR UNJUST BEHAVIOUR WHICH INFLECTS SUFFERING ON OTHERS.

MARK 8:12



Questions for reflection at the end of the workbook:

- Why does Jesus need apostles?
- What social position do most of Jesus' apostles have? And why?
- What does it mean to proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven?
- What does it mean to call for repentance?
- What does it mean to heal the sick?

(Source: Programa Pastoral, Consejo Cristiano de Agencias de Desarrollo (CONCAD), ed., group Bible study workbook. It is now being used by many Mayan congregations.)

1. The Pentecostal Challenge

The poor are leaving the Presbyterian Church for the traditional Pentecostal churches because the Pentecostal churches provide the illusion of flight from the world. Premillennialism is the foundation of this illusion: the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala now seeks to combat it after more than a half-century under its pervasive influence.

In the history of Guatemalan Presbyterianism, the premillennial flight from the world has been brought repeatedly into a delicate balance with the affirmation of the world found in the doctrine of the creation and the preservation of the world through God's providence. Even among the poorer members of the church this balance has existed. Sociologically, this arises from the fact that at least some of the members of the poor Presbyterian communities are, despite their poverty, somewhat better economically situated than the average inhabitants of their village or slum communities. They therefore enjoy higher social prestige. Persons with a certain social recognition and some capital may tend to place the expectation of an imminent Second Coming in the background, conceiving of the world instead as God's good creation and as an object which they can shape or influence. But as the social crisis in Guatemala grows more severe, it becomes more difficult to testify that God benignly protects and cares for the Creation through His providence.⁹ The clearer the evidence of evil, the more pressing the problem becomes: does God in His providence create and promote evil? The temptation to see God opposed to an evil counter-God in a fundamental dualism thus becomes stronger. Here dualistic models of explanation, such as the premillennial, present themselves, and the premillennial influence of the traditional Pentecostal churches thus increases among poor Presbyterian congregations. For many who live under these conditions of economic deprivation and brutal military oppression, flight from the world offers the only escape from their despair.

The Pentecostal churches take over and intensify the dualistic and premillennial view of history. This underlies their success, and they find fertile ground with this approach in the poorer presbyteries, burdened as they are by the premillennial dispensationalism inherited from the Central American Mission. The religious system of premillennial Pentecostalism explains to the people in an utterly simple way the hopelessness of their life in history: the whole world is bad because it is ruled by Satan; until the coming of Christ it will only get worse; but Christ's coming is near, and the people need only to wait. Social problems then serve to prove the validity of this belief in the imminent world catastrophe. Any commitment to

solving these problems becomes an antichristian work, because this attempt goes against God's historical plan. The healings and illusions of healing, and the ecstasies of the worship services become a means to evade the crushing burden of daily life and forget, in moments of joy, the sense of hopelessness. But these moments demand constant repetition; otherwise, the illusion crumbles into the dust of everyday life.¹⁰ The formal authority of the Pentecostal churches and their pastors gives support and reassures the deceived of the power and reality of illusion. In this way, Pentecostal religion makes the flight from reality the very center of its belief.¹¹ It separates the history of God and the Church from the world; it abandons the world and human history to the malevolent powers whose violent rule is felt all too keenly on the shoulders of the poor of Guatemala.

In order to confront Pentecostal premillennialism, shouldn't the Presbyterian Church take the concrete and daily suffering of the people seriously and offer them, in opposition, an equally concrete hope for change? And shouldn't this hope be grounded, not on eternal life to come, but instead directly on the fact that God himself in Christ entered history as a poor and despised *human*?

This is precisely the focus of the great Reformed confessions: that God has truly become human in Christ; He who is "born among brothers" and sisters.¹² The idea that God in Christ became human in the fullest sense of the word, as a poor and despised man, comes more and more often to the center of confessions and theological explorations of Christians in the Third World.¹³ This is expressed by new confessions from such churches, with their high concentration on the incarnation and Christological titles of honor such as "Christ the worker" (*Cristo obrero*)¹⁴ and "Christ the companion" (*Cristo compañero*),¹⁵ the Christ who is the companion of the poor in their struggles. The confession of the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba (1977) places the incarnation of Christ at its center: "The incarnation of God in Jesus of Nazareth and the call of liberation based upon it reveals the spiritual foundation of the historical obligation to which [the Church] knows itself to be called."¹⁶ It is decisive that it is *truly God who became truly human*. Only thus is evil really overcome. When we conceive of the crucified Christ as one who died under torture, the "crucified God" (Moltmann), then God in Jesus Christ has descended to the lowest depths of evil that a person in this world can reach. So God in Christ became the companion of the victims. And only because it is truly God who has done this, is evil truly overcome. To believe in the resurrection is to believe in this. There, where evil is most powerful, God has redeemed it and defeated it. The crucified God becomes the resurrected

human Jesus. Even the depths of evil are not alien to God: He has borne it and conquered it. Those who believe in the resurrection and in the kingdom of the crucified Christ do not therefore deny that evil still wreaks havoc in the world; but they see that the true Lord of history is Jesus Christ - *now*, before God fulfills all. If Jesus Christ is truly the son of God, then the world is not lost to the devil. Instead, His death and resurrection give the strength which plants a tiny tree of hope in the wasteland of death. From this hope grows the communal and united action of the Church in the world and for the world.

It is exactly here, with belief in the cross and resurrection of Christ and in the practice that follows from this faith, that we can find a theologically grounded possibility to confront with solidarity and action the Pentecostal flight from the world. This premillennialism is an expression of a social situation, and any theological and practical attempt to come to terms with it absolutely cannot ignore the living conditions of the poor. In other words: one can neither forbid nor debate away premillennialism and Pentecostal practices. The living conditions of the people will have to change if the support for this premillennialism and dispensationalism is to be removed. The critical problem is that premillennialism sells illusion as hope, serving only to deepen the suffering of the poor.

In the debate with neo-Pentecostal groups, a concrete discussion on pneumatology could be very productive for the Presbyterian Church, especially when the position of the Holy Spirit in the neo-Pentecostal doctrinal system is considered within the context of the social interests of the members of these churches, who for the most part belong to the upper class and the upper middle class.¹⁷ The Synod's criticism of the form of the neo-Pentecostal liturgy does not actually apply to this worship service; the services are in no way "disorderly", but instead carefully structured: even the ecstatic phenomena are planned, provoked and coached. It is theologically much more relevant that these liturgical manifestations are elements of power and status confirmation for the individual. According to the neo-Pentecostal view, in an ecstatic experience the individual receives power from the Holy Spirit; through this the individual is strengthened in his self-regard and ultimately in reaching his social goals. This doctrine of the Holy Spirit is integrated in a direct political function: it serves to establish a strictly dualistic anti-communism, in the broadest sense of the word. For example, the dictator Ríos Montt has said that when he kills Indians, he is really only killing communist demons. On the basis of his neo-Pentecostal pneumatology, he can do this with the best of consciences. The neo-Pentecostal theology and church practice restricts the working of the Holy Spirit to individuals and makes the Spirit servile: the Holy Spirit

helps people to do that which they can do gladly and well without it, namely extend their power. Considering these assumptions, it is no longer surprising that it is primarily the wealthier members of the Presbyterian Church who migrate to the neo-Pentecostal churches.

The theological tradition in which the Presbyterian Church of Guatemala stands has a twofold difficulty with the appearance of the neo-Pentecostals. On one hand, the *pneumatology* has receded too far into the background; on the other hand, the *individual* has been pushed too far to the fore. Since the Middle Ages and especially after the Reformation the major Western churches, in an effort to suppress spiritualist movements, have given only scant attention to pneumatology in the development of their own doctrine. In many Reformed confessions and compendia, the result is that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in general plays only a limited role. The Spirit is either discussed in short articles or in relation to other aspects of doctrine - especially the Trinity and the Eucharist. The original Westminster Confession did not have a separate article on the Holy Spirit.¹⁸ Not until 1903 did the United Presbyterian Church in the USA include an article on the Holy Spirit in their version of the Westminster Confession,¹⁹ although in the opinion of Hendry it brought nothing substantially new.²⁰ With regard to the second problem, individualism, we can say that it first arose after the Reformation. It soon gained a wide influence, especially in connection with the Synod of Dordrecht in the Scottish Reformation and - more importantly for Guatemala - in pietist-influenced Puritanism.²¹

Nonetheless, there exists in the Reformed tradition a decisive element of pneumatology that brings new impulses for contemporary theology and action, at the same time casting a revealing light onto neo-Pentecostal pneumatology: the close connection of *the Spirit and Christ*. Calvin himself wrote: "The Holy Spirit is the bond through which Christ effectively unites us with Himself."²² In the articles later added to the Westminster Confession this union with the Holy Spirit is emphasized directly.²³ But in the Reformed tradition, the Holy Spirit and Christ are always separated such that the Spirit "only" refers to Christ. According to Berkhof, the main trend of Reformed pneumatology has asserted that the work of the Holy Spirit is exclusively to awake belief in Christ.²⁴ From the witness of the New Testament, however, the connection is much closer: "This *Pneuma* is the *Kyrios*, Christ himself, insofar as He gives himself to the people and can be experienced by the people."²⁵ The Spirit is "Christ in Action."²⁶

Thus it is impossible to act - as in neo-Pentecostal practice - as if the work of the Holy Spirit is solely or even primarily directed to give the

individual "power" (of whatever kind). The work of the Holy Spirit is revealed through the presence of the resurrected victim of the cross. Jesus Christ, who raised the people in their poverty to the throne of God, who reigns through the Holy Spirit as the Lord of the World. This Spirit is not limited to the individual and his or her piety. It sends His witnesses into the world, it builds His Church, it preserves the existence of the Creation and brings it to fulfillment; in all this the Spirit is the companion of the poor, the hungry and the tortured - just as Jesus was and is.²⁷ This Spirit also works in the individual by justifying and sanctifying, to bring the individual to the way of the imitation of Christ.²⁸ The Holy Spirit purifies the heart from the desire for power and riches; it is the Spirit of the crucified, not the crucifier. Where, if not on the path of this Spirit, will the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala find a guideline for the confrontation with the neo-Pentecostal challenge? And doesn't this understanding of the Holy Spirit also hold important impulses for the teaching and activity of the Presbyterian Church in general?

The Presbyterian Church is being challenged to provide a theological and ecclesiastical alternative to a compensatory religion of flight from the world and by a power-oriented religion of legitimation. This alternative must respond to the social and political situation without being either compensatory or legitimating. The position on the social situation, however, is the most controversial question in the Presbyterian Church itself.

2. The Social Challenge

In questions of politics and society, the dispensationalist inheritance of the Central American Mission gave rise in the Presbyterian Church to a position which (without intending to) approaches closely that of the Pentecostal and fundamentalist churches. This position is expressed, for instance, in the claim that the church is responsible only for "spiritual" matters and the state for "worldly" matters, so that a basic course in preventative medicine or agriculture should not be integrated into pastoral training. "Pure teaching", it is often maintained, has nothing to do with worldly things. This position uses the dualistic separation of the church from the world which accompanies the Pentecostals' flight from the world.

Moreover, one must ask if the concern for "pure teaching" which stands behind this position does not in fact contradict itself and miss its goal: when a Reformed position is argued and the holiness, radical otherness and sovereignty of God over the human being is stressed, one cannot also maintain that one can possess, as an object, the "pure teaching" of the Word of God. Shouldn't we recognize that human sin, our egoistic

interest (concupiscence), is always in the position to pervert God's Word to serve our own selfish strivings? Those who are interested in the purity of the church's teaching will take as their starting point the endless distance between the sinfulness of man and the sinlessness of God. They would then ask about the truth, "chase after it", but not claim to possess it. In other words: those who recognize the difference between humanity and God will critically ask themselves about their own interests, from which they formulate their own conception of the doctrine. They will be conscious that the pure teaching must always be sought in a *dialogue of brothers and sisters*, which takes up the social situation and attempts to overcome, in the community of the faithful, the interest-bound, sinful limitations of the individual. Won't those who seek the pure teaching value the community of the faithful and their discussions about Scripture more highly than a supposed spiritual possession and its dogmatic solidification?

The question of distinguishing pure teaching now appears quite differently within the context of pastoral training: pure teaching is no longer defined as a separation of church and society that naively disregards human sin, but instead as the common historical path of brothers and sisters questioning each other under the Word of God. The inclusion of the historical conditions of this shared path in the education of the pastors leads - when it takes place in continuous contact with the message of Scripture - not away from the pure teaching, but rather to it.

The dualistic separation of world and church - this equally false and persistent claim of premillennialism - calls into question one of the fundamental tenets of Christian belief, namely the rule of the resurrected Christ over history. It is undisputed that premillennialism, with its separation of the church from the world, can be a psychological consolation for people living under hopeless conditions. It helps them to accept this hopelessness in the world and not despair utterly in their misery. But these teachings sever the world from Christ, its Lord, and let it disappear under the evil rule of the Devil. Premillennialism and the denial of the world completely abandon history to evil, thereby rejecting the essence of the message of God's incarnation in Christ. Whoever fundamentally questions the turning of Christians to the world in order to shape it, brings the rule of the resurrected Christ over the "forces and powers" into doubt at the same time. How, if not through the daily victory over sin, death and the Devil, on the road to a community of brothers and sisters, to life and the Kingdom of Heaven, how, if not so, should the Kingdom of Christ over human history come to be?

The New Testament testifies repeatedly: Jesus Christ is Lord (*Kyrios*). Calvin incorporates this testimony in his teaching on the three offices

of Christ, one of which is the kingly office.²⁹ The Reformed confessions after Calvin also portray Christ through the doctrine of the three offices, with lasting emphasis on the doctrine of the Atonement. According to the Westminster Confession, Christ is "prophet, priest and king."³⁰ In traditional opinion, the Kingdom of Christ's kingship extends only over the community of the church.³¹ But this limitation to the church must be modified if we take seriously that the resurrected human Jesus Christ is *God*. Thus Jesus Christ has as a person of the Trinity through all eternity a share in the creation and preservation of the world; and thus the Savior rules over the whole world,³² ruling over the church in a special way. His rule extends over the whole world, even when it lies hidden under the cross, even when it has not made a complete breakthrough against the evil in the world. The doctrine of the Kingdom of Christ expresses God's claim to His sovereignty in the church and in the world: there is no part of the world or a person's relations to the world which could be excluded from Christ's claim to sovereignty.³³ The church is commanded (not merely allowed!) to assert this claim against the world; it is a "chosen tool...", which through witness and cooperation helps to bring this reign to its breakthrough."³⁴ The church testifies to the dominion of the crucified one, who announced to the world God's rule and law. The witness of the church thus asserts God's rule and law in solidarity with the crucified, against the crucifiers and the profiteers of violence.

Following Karl Barth, there is a special relationship between the Christian community and the civil community.³⁵ "The Christian community shares in the task of the civil community precisely to the extent that each fulfils its own task. By believing in Jesus Christ and preaching Jesus Christ it believes in and preaches Him who is Lord of the world as He is Lord of the Church."³⁶ The Christian community testifies to Christ in the spheres of society and politics. It does not act for itself and attempt to Christianize the community. Its own power as a church is specifically not its goal.³⁷ The church looks much more to the weak and oppressed:

That it will bestow its love on them - within the framework of its own task (as part of its service) is one thing and the most important thing; but it must not concentrate on this and neglect the other thing to which it is committed by its political responsibility: the effort to achieve such a fashioning of the law as will make it impossible for "equality before the law" to become a cloak under which strong and weak... in fact receive different treatment at its hands: the weak being unduly restricted, the strong being unduly protected. The Church

must stand for social justice in the political sphere. And in choosing between the various socialistic possibilities... it will always choose the movement from which it can expect the greatest measure of social justice...³⁸

In this way the church becomes a church in the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, because "the liberating and transforming power of the Holy Spirit is always at work where people are being freed from tyranny."³⁹

Seen from the perspective of the witness of the church for the Kingdom of Christ, the idea of "social service" seems more like a step backwards, because it goes no further than the charity of the strong for the weak, leaving the relations of power as they are. In this respect it is criticized by the Mayan presbyteries, who accuse this socio-ethical approach of paternalism. The application of the concept of "social service" in distinction to "social action" shows an awareness of the specific political problems which arise from a responsible shaping of the world. This distinction attempts to exclude the concept of social action from the work of the church. The examples of politically and socially committed Christian groups from the basis of the church have made clear that the oppressed themselves quickly come to reformulate their concern for the shaping of their world into a critique of the dominant economic and political relations, due to the Christian interpretation of the simple fact that "the few have everything and the others nothing." If in the corresponding practice each person is the servant of the other and social service is no longer one-sided giving and taking, but instead becomes a shared path through God's history, then the difference between social service and social action is no longer valid. And, as we have seen, when the social situation and the common path of mutual responsibility for the shaping of the world are interpreted theologically by the poor, the result is a theology which inevitably comes into conflict with the ruling views.

The Presbyterian Church can accept this authentic development of theological reflection and evangelization among the poor: it can make its way along the shared path of sisters and brothers. But the church can also label this development within its ranks according to the ruling opinions and attempt to exclude it from the church. This happens when the theological evaluation of the church is oriented by definitions established by the state - for instance on the identity of "liberation theology" and "communism". When the church lets the state dictate its theological judgments, isn't it then allowing worldly authority to rule in exactly the place where the resurrected Christ claims authority for himself alone? Do they

not leave - in the narrower sense - the Presbyterian tradition, which places great value on the independence of the church from the state?⁴⁰ If the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala carried out the state-ordered "excommunication" of parts of its body, doesn't it then offer up as a sacrifice to the reasons of state the opportunity for a common path to an identity as a church?

3. The Practice of the Mayan Presbyteries

The relationship between the Ladino majority in the Synod and the Mayan presbyteries is many-sided. Alongside signs of solidarity, such as the concern over the Kekchí communities threatened by forced migration,⁴¹ suspicion overshadows the relationship with regard to the path of the Mayan presbyteries. But the energetic and fruitful work of the indigenous presbyteries, as well as their openness to discussion, really calls for a consideration of their ideas. The question of the "living confession of faith among Maya-Christians today", as Scotchmer puts it, is raised.⁴²

A decisive point of reference for the theology and church practice of the Mayan presbyteries is the reflection on the fact that they, together with the majority of the other indígenas, are victims of the social situation. After several communities in the Kekchí region recognized their worth and dignity as children of God, they began - as James Dekker reports - to think about their position as an oppressed part of the population.⁴³ This constructive view on the social situation from the perspective of the victim parallels the shift in theology, which is also occurring in other confession-building processes in the nations of the Third World.⁴⁴

This viewpoint also finds a similar answer: hope lies in *Cristo compañero*, in Christ the companion; in the Christ who became human among men and knows our suffering; in the Christ who is the truly risen Lord, and as such present in the community; in the Christ who heals wounds and stands at our side in our struggles. This Christ of the Mayan presbyteries is in the fullest sense of Reformed Christology human *and* risen Lord. He dispatches the Holy Spirit and is himself present. And this - which may seem to be a weakness of the pneumatology - is nothing more than the consistent carrying out of the Christological concentration as the New Testament has handed it down to us.⁴⁵ This is especially important to the indigenous believers, because in the Mayan religion the concept of "spirit(s)" has a solely negative connotation. As the risen one present in the community, Christ is teacher, protector, healer, and master over death; he forgives sins and demands obedience. The risen *human* Jesus devotes himself to the people as a whole, in all the relationships of their lives; and

it is in the best Reformed tradition that no aspect of life remains excluded. The Hermandad de Presbiterios Mayas (Brotherhood of Mayan Presbyteries) has criticized the tradition of the earlier Presbyterian missionaries, which was directed purely toward spiritual salvation. Must not this criticism be grasped attentively and applied to the current trends in Presbyterian theology in Guatemala?⁴⁶ The Kingdom of Christ over all areas of human life - individual and social - means that the obedience of the faithful to Christ also extends to all areas of life. This conclusion is taken very seriously by the Mayan presbyteries. They seek to give shape to the Kingdom of Christ in the community of the church and in society (beginning in the village community).

For many Mayan Presbyterians, acknowledgement of the power over one's own life becomes practical reality in acts of love. The close connection between faith and love is of great importance for Reformed thought. From faith grow the works of love like good fruit from a good tree - this thought is the common property of all branches of the Reformed tradition.⁴⁷ The closeness of the connection between faith and love has been interpreted in different ways. In the Westminster Confession, in any case, faith and love are inseparably bound together.⁴⁸ The saving faith brings forth a new behavior through obedience to God.⁴⁹ Faith is nothing without love; it is not "dead faith, but [it] worketh by love."⁵⁰ In this sense good deeds are "fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith."⁵¹ It is questionable whether Scotchmer's interpretation of the relationship between faith and works among the Mayan Christians is accurate when he states that grace alone no longer provides justification, and that obedience has stepped before it.⁵² It seems more to be the case that good works are interpreted as a revelation of the faith. With this, justification *sola gratia* is not questioned. Beyond this, the emphasis on obedience does not ever seem to attempt to conclude that good deeds can confirm or deny the actual presence of faith. The obedience to Christ in acts of love is meant to testify to the faith in the perspective of the indigenous community, with the means they value most highly: solidarity and the fidelity to the community. Clearly, a certainty of faith and closeness to the Lord also grows from these acts of love, not as the result of a spiritual method, but as spontaneous joyous certainty of the presence of Christ: "Loyalty to... 'Christ our Lord' makes his power personal, tangible, benevolent and ever-present."⁵³

On the basis of the presence of Christ the Mayan Presbyterians also create their image of the church. It is the community of sisters and brothers under the sole leadership of Christ; it is the body of Christ in the world. Traditionally, the indigenous people think in terms of the communi-

ty, not the individual. Thus the church is seen primarily as a living community and not as an institution or a mass of converted individuals. With this precedence given to the community over the individual, the Mayan Christians take up *de facto* Calvin's interpretation of the church and that of the Heidelberg Catechism. The church as such is elect.⁵⁴ Christ offers himself to us in the church, and so "the gathering together of the saints is carried out, the body of Christ is formed... and we become one with each other."⁵⁵ God establishes the church and gives it the preaching of the Word and the sacraments as a "treasure to preserve."⁵⁶ The church as community is therefore for Calvin much more than an accumulation of converted individuals; it is an objective institution, ordained by God. This ecclesiology reflects the position of the Church in the Geneva city-state as well as Calvin's strong concentration on God's objective activity. But already in the *Confessio Helvetica Posterior*, the Church is "no longer determined as a community chosen by Christ, to which belong individuals, but rather as a community of elect individuals."⁵⁷ This shift continued in further confessional development. The individual comes more strongly to the fore, and in pietist-puritanical thought, especially in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, it becomes the determining element. For the Westminster Confession the church consists of "the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, and shall be gathered into one..."⁵⁸ The trend toward a conception of the church based on converted individuals was further strengthened as pietistic thought and modern subjectivism gained influence in the Reformed tradition. The following assessment of the Brazilian Reformed theologian Zwinglio Dias can also be applied to the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala:

I believe that, as Presbyterians, we... do not have... a more consistent theological view of the church as the body of Christ in the world. From this point of view we are not really Calvinistic, being much more indebted to the individualistic salvation of American Puritans than to the ecclesiology of the Geneva Reformer. In the process, the filtering imposed on the development of Presbyterianism by the peculiar conditions of the formation of religious ideas in the United States impaired the corporate view of the church as community, in favor of individualism, which caused the permanent weakness of our ecclesiology and led us to cherish a view of Christ independent from the church as a *communio sanctorum*.⁵⁹

This development naturally had to do with the changes in the social conditions in which the different Reformed churches lived and do live: today they are no longer state religions as once in Geneva, but instead one among many religious options in a pluralistic field. Nonetheless, the question is raised: with the development of an individualistic "church of the converted", have decisive elements of the Reformed tradition been lost? A church that knows itself to be elect and recognizes itself as the body of Christ in the world has no need for a nervous drive for conversion. It *festifies* to Christ in the world. A church under the sovereignty of Christ desires to live as a model, as an example to the world;⁶⁰ and the "concept of election gives the church, in the Calvinist view, the peace, certainty and force which it needs for this ministry in the world."⁶¹

This church is, according to Calvin, no "rigid institution, but rather a living organism, a community of mutual ministry and aid."⁶² According to Calvin, it is a special sign of the "community of the saints" that those within it are convinced that "God is their common father and Christ their common head, and that it thus cannot be otherwise: they are bound together in brotherly love, and share their possessions with one another."⁶³ The community extends not only over the shared religious rituals - as in every other religious community - but also to the common life. The Westminster Confession agrees with this view.⁶⁴ According to Hendry the conception of the church found in the Westminster Confession corresponds to the *koinonia* of the New Testament.

This word points to a fundamental feature of the Christian life, which has often been overlooked. What makes a man a Christian? Many tend to think of it as something that takes place in the inward privacy of a man's individual life. According to the New Testament, the really decisive thing that takes place when a man becomes a Christian is that he is taken out of his individual privacy and brought into *koinonia*, or fellowship..."⁶⁵

Precisely in this active love for one another, it is proven that Christ is the head of the Church. The Church is the body of Christ, in which God has given special honor to the humbler parts, "so that there might be no division in the body, but that all the members might feel the same concern for one another" (I Cor. 12:25).

The existence of the body of Christ is thus a new life. It is an eschatological existence, insofar as the coming Christ is already present in his body, the Church, and works outward from it.⁶⁶ The Kingdom of God

is already breaking into history and into the world; it casts its light ahead. This is admittedly not a major aspect of the thought of the indigenous Presbyterians, but it comes again and again to consciousness. Here a contradiction to the premillennialism of the Pentecostal and other churches is evident. Premillennialism gives up on the world completely; God himself wants to destroy it. The full depth of this refutation of premillennialism discloses itself first in Christology, the center of the faith of the Mayan Presbyterians: here the coming God shows himself as the God Jesus Christ, the creator, preserver and fulfiller of the world. Those who imitate Christ, do not abandon the world, but instead search longingly in the midst of suffering for its fulfillment.

Someone who is ill can acquiesce in that situation as long as he is convinced that his disease is incurable; but, if a medical authority tells him that he can recover after a shorter or longer treatment, a new period of restlessness and longing begins...That is the paradoxical situation of God's children in the world. That they hope is not due primarily to what they miss, but to what they have already received.⁶⁷

Based on their social situation, the Mayan Presbyterians have developed further the doctrine handed down to them from the missionaries and Ladinno Presbyterians. This work has restored emphasis in a new way to several important elements of Reformed theology. Doubtless the inherited doctrines are being changed distinctly in the process; the same is true for the liturgy. Inherited liturgical forms are seldom applied; instead stronger forms, which approach the indigenous culture more closely are being sought. Despite this, the ties with the Presbyterian Church play an important role for the Mayan Presbyterians. They feel that they belong to this church. The changes in doctrine grow from an organic reshaping of the traditions, oriented by the social situation of the faithful and the testimony of Scripture. Therein lies a decisive difference from the influence of Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal ideas on the Presbyterian Church. While the Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals bring alien and imported concepts to the Presbyterian Church, the indigenous presbyteries are developing from their own situation a theology which is both authentic and Reformed. Such a theology simply cannot be compared with the assumptions of the traditional Reformed confessions, such as the Westminster Confession.⁶⁸ The theological reflection and ecclesiastical practice of the Mayan Presbyterians develops further the available elements of the Presbyterian doctrine for the Mayan community in Guatemala, helping to bring about their

cultural incarnation in Guatemala. From their own starting point, however, they ultimately approach essential elements of the tradition of Calvin and the confessional writings in an astonishing way. In contrast to the doctrine imported by the Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal approaches, the Mayan presbyteries are formulating (in the context of their possibilities) an authentic Guatemalan theology.

The secret of the quantitative success of the Mayan presbyteries probably lies here as well. Even in the Kekchí presbytery, where following the model of the Ladino presbyteries a special committee for evangelism has been set up, the number of converts does not seem to be the main criterion for evangelization. Here, as well, evangelization is oriented on action in the context of a shared life and mutual respect. In other words: the church gives living witness. When signs of the truth are found in living example and conversation, in listening to one another, then "evangelization campaigns" and one-way communication have no place. Evangelization is given its place in shared daily experience, and in this context of common life it is the power of the Holy Spirit which performs the work of convincing, despite the weakness of the evangelist. Evangelism is not dependent on the persuasiveness and skill of a fleeting visitor or a voice from the anonymous distance of the radio - they are mere idols. Through the power of the Holy Spirit in communal life, evangelization first truly becomes evangelization in the full sense of justification and sanctification, faith and love. In this way discipleship and the keeping of Christ's teaching belong together inseparably.

Without this orientation to the community of Christians and to the community of the world, the new theological approach of the Mayan presbyteries would not be productive. Its power is based on this orientation; and with this power it can roll away the heavy stone of the premillennial and dispensational inheritance from the entrance of the tomb, revealing a common path to the identity of the church in responsibility for the creation of God. The practical orientation of the Mayan presbyteries to the shaping of the world is very theological, not primarily social or political; it casts sparks of hope onto the mercy of God in Christ, from whom all blessings come, and onto the brotherly and sisterly love of Christians, united on a common path in the Kingdom of Christ through God's history. The Mayan presbyteries struggle against the destructive social order, against the ongoing murder and against theologies of power and destruction. It is precisely this stand against the diverse forms of death which gives the witness of the Mayan Presbyterians its power. On this path the Mayan Presbyterians leave all offers of flight and compensation behind: when the solutions to real problems appear on the program, the illusions lose their ef-

fect, and the Pentecostal offerings are simply left behind. The Pentecostal churches are not attacked - their indigenous members are invited to stop their flight from the world into illusion and instead to accompany the world communally in the name of Christ toward its fulfillment. The Holy Spirit makes Christians free to speak in an understandable language in the midst of a culture of silence, and it binds the joy of the worship service with joyful hope in common action.

4. Bearing Witness: The Path to the Theological Identity of the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala

For the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala the question arises: how can a Reformed, Presbyterian Christianity "become incarnate" in view of the challenges and opportunities in Guatemala today? The return to the Westminster Confession proves itself to be especially problematic when the intellectual-historical prerequisites for understanding the *substance ontology* of the old Reformed confessions are considered. Hindrances are especially powerful at the core of Christian doctrine, the statements on the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. The language of the traditional confessions, oriented on this relationship between two modes of being, makes it difficult for God to enter into history. The difficulty applies not only to Guatemala; it is almost universal. The problem becomes especially clear in the Third World, where the tension between the inherited Christological systems, the living presence of Christ in the churches and the pressure of the forces of history reaches absurd levels. Therefore, in many of these "young churches" new confessions have arisen. Many of these confessions stand out especially because they - according to a study by Konrad Raiser⁶⁹ - translate the "ontological statements of classical Christological confessions" back into "statements about human history."⁷⁰ Those who are threatened to be crushed between millstones of historical forces must learn about the ways in which God intervenes in history.

Perhaps for us in Latin America it has never been clearer than today that bearing witness to the hope in which and from which we live has little or nothing to do with theoretical discourses on the ontological or terminological existence of hope "as such". It is probably the growing consciousness of the necessity for the human in human beings... to survive that forbids us... to dwell on purely philosophical or theological speculations on the prolegomena of hope.⁷¹

The form of the answer speaks to a specific situation: the "necessity for the human in human beings to survive" forces us to bear witness. In such a situation the concern is not for an intellectual clarification of theological assumptions, but for testimony as a relevant answer to God and the world; this can easily become a testimony of suffering. But here is exactly the place of confession in the life of a church.⁷² From this testimony grows identity as a church.⁷³

The need to formulate new confessions has also been sensed by churches within the Reformed tradition as a whole.⁷⁴ Even the "mother church" of the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala drafted a new confession in 1967.⁷⁵ These confessions are confessions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Topics which were once of central importance are missing; others not present earlier are now central. In many cases new forms have also been chosen.⁷⁶

Many of these confessions have arisen from situations in which a definition of the position of the church with regard to social conflicts was demanded. This starting point is no different with the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala. The question then follows: why is this church responding to a series of internal and social challenges with an exposition of the Westminster Confession for the Sunday Schools, pursuing the goal of "learning the doctrine?"⁷⁷ The answer of one of the authors that the Confession was still "our Confession" despite the "human errors" it might contain, does not help to answer this question.⁷⁸ In comparison with recent confessions from the Reformed tradition, the offensive of the IENPG seems more like an attempt to retreat to an apparently secure position outside the confusions and struggles of the Guatemalan situation. The question remains: do those who demand that, in the future, proper Presbyterian liturgy will be practiced in every congregation, and that every member must know the "five most important points of Presbyterianism" really take seriously the people from which they demand this? These requirements are in danger of becoming a weapon of the so-called pure teaching, defending nothing more than the law of the status quo. Doesn't this lead the church into stagnation?

A return to the Westminster Confession which does not serve as a simple reflection, in order to prepare further steps forward, but instead is understood as a retreat to a fixed and secure position threatens to succumb to the danger of "confessional fundamentalism." In this way the confession itself - instead of Scripture - easily attains the quality of the highest standard of doctrine and practice.⁷⁹ The likelihood of this happening rests less on the intentions of the editors; they assure the reader in the introduction to the lessons that the central truth of the Westminster

Confession is that it draws upon Scripture as the "sole and infallible norm of conduct."⁸⁰ The actual deployment of the Confession in church politics and theological decisions will be decisive.

Confessional fundamentalism has three major consequences in view of the challenges faced by the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala. It indicates flight from the historical transformations to a secure rock of certain truth which is supposedly untouched by any change. This flight is at the same time self-protection and - according to the use of the Confession with those whose opinions differ - passive or active defense of the unjust social status quo. In view of the challenges from outside the church, especially from the Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches, confessional fundamentalism evades the conflict over Scripture. This can be understood as a reaction to the fact that one cannot argue with fundamentalists about the Bible, because they simply allow no arguments but their own; it can also be understood that in debate between fundamentalists, one side feels it holds a trump card. In any case it is a retreat back to a confessional bastion which, considering the development of churches in Guatemala, will soon be starved out. The Confession cannot guarantee that the members will not leave. Moreover, the question is raised: does confessional fundamentalism suffocate approaches to dialogue among various groups within the Presbyterian Church? How can the Westminster Confession help to work with the quasi-identity of the Spirit and Christ among the Mayan Presbyterians? (To mention only a less controversial issue.) Particularly in light of the recent confessions of other Reformed churches in the Third World the question could be raised if in Guatemala a Presbyterian Confession should look at Scripture and society directly, and not through the prism of the testament of an European church which is in the meantime over three hundred years old.

The Reformed church is a constantly self-reforming church (*ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*). A true Reformed confession is therefore an expression of actual, current confessing.⁸¹ This is made clear by the place given to confessions in the Reformed tradition. "According to the Reformed interpretation confessions are always the products of erring people and should be judged as the expression of faith of the living... The Reformed confession is the 'work of an occasion', valid only 'in the act of the constantly renewed recognition' and therefore 'replaceable.'"⁸² The same is true for the Westminster Confession and speaks for its relevance in its time. Its statements - today broadly abstract and orthodox - were in the context of the (political) conflict with Anglicanism in no way without consequences. This relevance is lost today, especially in Guatemala. To proclaim the Westminster Confession today in Guatemala as confession of

faith may remain largely without consequences for the answer in prayer before God and in witness before the world. This is not to say that the contribution of the Westminster Confession is completely irrelevant today. With the confession of the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba we can say the following: "All doctrines which the Church has progressively elaborated in the course of the centuries are valid to the extent that they lead us to better understand the loving intention of God for the people."⁸³ So must the Westminster Confession be evaluated. But the attempt to express the loving intention of God in a relevant confession puts a series of demands on a confession to which the direct imposition of the Westminster Confession does not correspond. These demands can be summarized briefly - not only in view of the confession of the "young churches" - in four criteria:

First the question: is the confession of faith rooted in the Holy Scripture? This question goes beyond the formal principles of scriptural interpretation and asks if in such a confession the voice of the Gospels discloses itself. The second criterion: Is such a confession heard as a call to a change, to penance, to renewal of the church? Further, is the confession also a confession of guilt which names the points where in the life of the church the confession is in danger of being obscured? The third criterion: is the confession relevant? Does it speak to the present experience and situation?... And the fourth point: is the confession a statement that seeks conversion and calls for agreement in the act of confessing?...⁸⁴

Only when Scripture, a transformation in life, the social situation and witness come together does a confession truly arise. This does not mean that the reference of the IENPG to the Westminster Confession is in every respect useless. The offensive of the church government for a new orientation on the Confession is an important step forward, if it is done as a first step. The return of the Westminster Confession in the congregations would be a meaningful reference to the tradition as the beginning of a discussion and consultation process for the formation of a confession in the Presbyterian Church. On the path of a church to its own authentic identity, the practice of the Mayan Presbyterians contains several impulses. The first is its theological contribution as such, the second the attempt to actively include the community in the theological work. Both have taken shape up to now in the use of new materials for community work, which

takes up the daily life of the people.⁸⁵ The consciousness that bearing witness first gains life when it contradicts the powers of death is decisive. Of equally great importance is the fact that the faith of the Mayan presbyteries seeks to articulate itself in and not above the indigenous culture, but does not remain limited to a single culture.⁸⁶ Another important impulse comes out of the practice of similar churches in comparable situations.⁸⁷

If the return to the confessional sources is a first step, in order to push forward on the road of a shared and equitable discussion of the faithful from the sources on the current situation of the church, then it is justified to hope for a new identity of the church as an authentically Presbyterian and authentically Guatemalan community of believers. The answer of the congregations is just as important as the call of the church leadership. The sought-for identity of the church can only become a truly *Presbyterian* identity in *Guatemala* when it develops further from the historical situation of the church, in a creative act of faith, dialogue and practice which seeks to actively involve all members of the Presbyterian tradition. And so, with a new identity for the church, an authentic contribution to the identity of the entire Reformed community also emerges.

APPENDIX

**Autobiographical Accounts from the Presbyterian Church
in Guatemala**

The three accounts each center on conversion.¹ The Appendix is also oriented to the methods of oral history, without raising the slightest claim to a systematic processing of the materials. The accounts are meant to provide a biographical background for the positions discussed in Chapter 4.

The first account, from a church member of many years, brings the conservative standpoint best to expression. In addition, the person interviewed relates details from the history of the Presbyterian Church, and so provides a subjective impression of some aspects of the historical description in Chapter 2.

The second life story represents an experience from the circle of socially and politically committed members of the church. It shows a two-step structure in the conversion, as already pointed out by Christoph Blumhardt: first from the world to God, then from God to Creation.

The third account is the story of the conversion of a poor small farmer from the southern coast of the country. It centers on the ordering of personal life through conversion and represents the many people who, as a consequence of their conversion, turn away from the "world" as the embodiment of damnation.

ACCOUNT 1

I was born in 1909 (...) in a Christian home. My father had already converted to the Gospel in 1913 on a trip to Esquipulas.² On the way to Esquipulas he came through Chiquimula. The Quakers, the Friends, were holding an evangelization campaign there. He heard the hymns and some speeches, and then he converted to the Quakers. Naturally, he didn't continue on to Esquipulas, but instead went back to my mother. And after him my mother also accepted Christ. (...) Then I was born. When I was still very young, nine years old, my father sent me to a Protestant boarding

school run by the Friends. There I learned the Bible almost by heart; it is after all the real foundation of the philosophy of the Protestant schools. But after I left the school in 1933, my life was like a little sealed bottle within a larger vessel of water; in other words, I was in the Gospel, but the Gospel was not in me.

Later, after 1933, when we moved from the coast to the capital city, the first thing my father did was to look for a Protestant church. And so he registered us as members of the Presbyterian Central congregation. I was about fourteen years old then. I was very badly treated there, very badly! My father was sick and had sought help from the Protestants. The pastor of the Central congregation then was Linn P. Sullenberger, who has since passed away. He sent my father to the Hospital Americano, to Dr. Ainslie. He examined him and then simply gave him a recommendation for the public hospital. And I stood there without any support. (...) That's a problem with help among the Protestants. We actually got more help from the Catholics then. We were very poor at the time. All eleven of us slept in a little room like this one here, nine children and the parents.

My father went into the hospital and I began to support the family. At that time I didn't like much hearing the word "Protestant" - although I knew a lot about it - because of the contempt and the poor treatment which it had brought us; when we arrived there they despised us for all possible reasons: because we were poor, because we didn't have the necessary outward appearance, because we came from the village... And at that time there was no Church of the Friends here. From then on I went eight years without any contact with Protestants. You understand, I didn't want anyone to tell me anything about the Gospel. My life was really worldly (*de mundo*). I learned very well what it means to be worldly, disorderly; but I was still able to straighten my situation out - from my own efforts. I worked as a day laborer, as a servant; I took any work I could find to support my six younger brothers. Later, when my father got out of the hospital, he apprenticed me to a carpenter from Quetzaltenango, Fabían Andrade, who has since died. So I became a carpenter; now I have my own workshop and make furniture.

So Fabían Andrade taught me this, and it was also he who talked to me again about the Gospel. In the meantime ten years had gone by, from 1933 to 1943, in which I had lived completely secularly. But in 1943 my father insisted that I had to be Protestant and took me with him to an independent church. - At that time in the capital there were only the Presbyterians and the Central American Mission. Later Emanuel came, and the Church of the Friends also came here. - So my father took me with him to an independent church. That was a movement which came out of the Cin-

co Calles Church,² (i.e. the Central American Mission) and built a church here in Palmita called Betania. It still exists today. It was there, while Luis Quino was pastor, that the Lord seized me. Since then it has been forty-three years that I have been a Christian, that I have been converted and that I experience the power of the Holy Spirit, because I have become a new creation. And since then, there are no more differences for me: there are no more poor people and no more rich people, no more who would do me good or do me harm. From then on, I hold the left cheek out to those who hit me on the right, so that he can give me another one on the left; and when someone suffers from poverty, then I give him my last shirt. To conclude: I have tried to be a Christian according to the standards of the Bible. *

After I became a member of the church and the pastor noticed that I knew the Bible well, he appointed me teacher of the Sunday School. During the time that I was Sunday School teacher, the pastors of the independent church staged a coup and made the church Baptist. My father was in the church council, and they said to him: "We're not independent anymore, now we're Baptists. And Baptists must be baptized again, by full immersion. Everyone who wants to be a member of this church has to be baptized again." With that the troubles and strife began. They practically threw my father out of the church. And I also had to go.

At that time I was somewhat more mature and I got to know my wife, who is still my wife today. (...) During the whole time (when I was going to other churches), I kept up my friendship with her. We were engaged the whole time, but I didn't go to her church anymore because of what they did to my father. (...) I was in trouble again, this time not for material reasons, but more for psychological reasons. I asked myself: "If they are truly all Protestants, why do they keep splitting up? If they are all Protestants, why do they suddenly have another doctrine?" - and so on... Where should I go?

I remember that I was in the city park one Sunday; and there I met a childhood friend who had been with me in the Friends' boarding school. (...) He asked me: "What are you doing here?" And I told him the whole story. He asked me why I didn't go to the Central congregation. "I don't want to go there," I said, "because this and that has happened to me there at such and such times." "Today it's different," he said, and we went there. At that time Linn P. Sullenberger was still pastor, and Raúl Echeverría was the second pastor. I had been a member of the congregation for barely two months when another split occurred. Raúl Echeverría left the congregation; not so much for doctrinal reasons, but more for a somewhat silly reason. The problem was that the girls wearing short

socks⁴ weren't allowed to enter the chancel (*púlpito*); the ones who had short-sleeved dresses... To sum it up, that was the Gospel from 1945 or so. Everything was simply forbidden. That didn't please don Linn because he was democratic. So he just said that those who wanted to go were better off going. And my friend also went with this group. (...) That's how the fourth Presbyterian congregation was founded. The Peniel congregation already existed; and there was the Bethlehem congregation, which was led by Antonio Sandoval; he later turned away from the Presbyterian Church completely. Today he has his own presbytery, the Bíblico presbytery: he works with Carl McIntire. Sandoval has done a lot of harm to the Presbyterian Church. (...)

The fourth Presbyterian congregation had only existed a short while when there was yet another division. My friend went with them again. (...) I stayed in the fourth congregation. Eight days after I had been there for the first time, don Raúl Echeverría granted me certain privileges.⁵ But my friend came with two elders one day in the workshop to tell me what had happened and to ask me if I was going with them and the others, and if not, then not. I went the next Sunday, and we met under a tree, there near the brewery. And there the Church of the Divine Savior (*Divino Salvador*) was born. I still belong to it today, in the Avenida Elena. (...) The church was founded in the year 1948. Well, at that time (when we met), I said to him: "Good, but only if it is really a formal and real thing; I've been through everything and I want to serve the Lord, because he has called me." In any case, because I have the power of the Holy Spirit, because I have experienced a reform, a new birth, all the things that I have been through couldn't bring me to temptation; if all that had happened before the baptism with the Holy Spirit, then it would have made a difference to me. I decided to join the elders and brothers. We numbered about thirty then, in 1947, and together we founded the Presbyterian congregation Divine Savior (*Divino Salvador*). We applied for the recognition of the presbytery, which we received; and the presbytery sent us a representative pastor. And from then on to this day I have served the Lord, in the presbytery, in the Synod of the Iglesia Nacional Presbiteriana, and in my congregation. (...)

I have always believed that the baptism of the Holy Spirit seizes a person when one really believes in the Lord. That is my conviction and my faith. I am a teacher for catechumens in the Divino Salvador congregation. For over twenty-five years I have given these classes for the freshly converted. I have a personal plan of teaching based on my convictions, which is recognized by the church. It is a curriculum based on the conviction that no one can teach about something which he has not experienced

himself and without a clear conviction of belief. That's why the consistory has always tried to keep me as a teacher for these classes. Up to this day I serve in the Divino Salvador congregation.

Two years after the founding of the congregation I married my wife. She still was going to the Baptists, she had become a real Baptist. Now we have been married for thirty-six years, and she became a Presbyterian through marriage. (...) In 1942 I bought this house; now I have my workshop here. In 1966 I bought the houses from here to the corner and gave them to my sons. (...) I have two sons, both are accountants. Both are leading employees, one at a bank and one at the Instituto Evangélico América Latina.⁶ One lives here on the corner, the other next door. My children were born in the Divino Salvador congregation; there they drank their spiritual milk, there they grew up, there they were married. I now have four grandchildren. And where they now have their children, you can say that they drank from the same teaching, from the same convictions, from the same faith and from the same Gospel that I drank from. The home is the child's education, but so is the Church; they complement one another. And so all the children born in this house were baptized as children, according to the teaching of the Presbyterian Church. They were born and have grown up, and perhaps the Lord will grant me the privilege of being allowed to see great-grandchildren before my death.

ACCOUNT 2

I converted to an independent church (and then came later to the Presbyterian Church). I was at that time very much impressed by the wonders of the conversion, the weight of sin and so on. I went at that time to high school and had been Catholic, and my whole family was also Catholic. (...) I went at that time to a public high school; that was at time of the government of Ydígoras Fuentes.⁷ There were strikes in the schools, the students went onto the streets and our school was closed. We were out on the street without any possibility of continuing our education. Our parents looked for possibilities in various other schools, but we weren't accepted because the school year was too far along. We were finally accepted at a Protestant school after taking a test. At first I didn't want to go, because the school was Protestant and I wasn't. But to keep from losing the year, I went anyway. I was there at a boarding school, and for the boarding students the free time was always organized; there was preaching on how good it is to be a Christian. And because at that time there

was still strong tension between Protestants and Catholics, I soon had a strong feeling that as a Catholic I was living in sin. I saw an open doorway and I felt that it wasn't all just talk, but that something was really calling me. I watched for a while, then I said to myself: "I have to meet the Lord!" That's how I began.

Then I began to give up all the things that the Protestants said we weren't allowed to do: dancing, going to parties. But despite that I still kept on having fun dancing. I suffered a great deal, because my father played a lot of music. But I could feel how certain ways of behaving were changing in me, and I went my own way, following the Bible more closely as it was presented to me. In school we went to worship services and talked about the faith. It was all very ethereal, very heavenly. We had no business here on earth; we would have our crown in heaven.... So, we had to do good works, be good, be nice, keep the Ten Commandments. But I felt - already since my time in the public school - a certain disapproval of the injustices. (...)

(After my conversion) I felt a great deal of respect for our pastor. I liked him a lot. He is after all the person who baptized me. At this time, I myself was an active member of the church youth group; but we didn't feel very comfortable. In the church we were pushed to the fringes, we weren't respected, and they didn't give us the assignments which we wanted to take over. When we wanted to appear with our choir, they were outright disrespectful with us. (...) I no longer liked the situation with the youth group. (...) When I left high school and went to the university, I continued to go to church faithfully on Sunday, (...) now, however, in a Presbyterian congregation. (...) I lived the life of a Sunday Christian: going to church on Sunday, not going to the movies, not going out, behaving properly, studying a lot and working a lot in general. At the University I didn't participate in anything; I was completely apolitical.

Until the beginning of the 1970s I stayed at the university. In a certain way I began to sense that as a Christian I had to share more with the community and I began to give Bible lessons to the children in my congregation. But it wasn't the usual form where one person stands at the front and talks: instead everyone began to communicate with one another and to say what they wanted - it was another kind of Bible study. Then, I remember, a letter was published here in Guatemala, in which some pastors and priests referred to the injustices which had happened; it was directed to the Department of the Interior. They requested in the letter that the injustices should stop. That must have been around 1971. I began to get interested in the matter, and in this way I got to know a priest. We began to discuss the Bible and Christ and he said: "Look, I work in a community

where we all read the Bible together. Why don't you come along once and we'll read and talk together?" We went there several times, just for the Bible studies. But while we were there with the poor peasants in the country, we recognized for the first time the needs of these people and how severely they were exploited by their landowners. We saw the malnutrition, the lack of education, of medicine, of everything. That stirred my conscience, and the belief was born within me that I can't be a Christian if I just sit in church, while our brothers outside are starving to death. Then I began to follow my path. I feel that my faith began all over again there; that I saw Christ himself present in the little dirty children; that He is present in all people and not just in those who are gathered in church. I believe that my real conversion first began there, with them.

ACCOUNT 3

Well, I was very stubborn when I was supposed to be evangelized. The brothers from the neighboring congregation wanted to convert me, but I didn't want it. I didn't like the gospel, not one bit. "The Bible was made by men and not by God," I said. And so I went on. I just didn't want to accept the gospel. My family all accepted it, my wife and oldest daughter, and they asked me if I would give them permission. I said: "That's your business; but think twice about what you're doing there!" That is, after all, a tricky situation. But they said they had already decided. (...) And then my whole family took on the gospel, six daughters and a son. They all believed except for me. That's how it went for two, three years, and I still didn't want to do it. For me it was just too much fun going to parties, drinking with friends and staying out late. When I went out during the day, I would come back home late that night or the next night. But one time, at Christmas, I invited three friends to my house for Christmas night. And on the morning of the twenty-fifth I sat there on the street boozing it up with my friends; then I invited them to lunch at my house. "We've got some tamales^B at my place," I said. But then after we got there, they began to argue; they wanted to get into a fight and then they did. Then I said to myself: "Your wife is evangelical and you bring drunks home with you! No! The best thing to do is throw them out!" They didn't want anything to eat, they only wanted to beat each other up anyway, and I didn't like that. So I left with them. Later I came home, totally drunk.... But I still didn't regret it, I didn't regret it at all. Once I rode into the village with some friends, we worked in a committee; we all got really drunk. The horse

threw us down on the path, it didn't want to go any further, it just went back a few steps and then broke down under us.

The next morning I woke up with a hangover and I was shaking. I was really hurting, because the night before the horse had also kicked me. So I was laying there with my hangover from the booze; but then I said to myself: "No, if I keep on drinking like this, this booze will kill me one day." And then I told my wife that I wanted to accept the faith. "What, you want to convert?" she said. "Yes," I said, "at the next service." And then when the brothers came together for the worship service, there was a whole load of people there; and I went in and talked with a few friends. While the pastor was preaching and then afterward as he called for people to convert, I remembered again what I had said, namely that I would take on the faith. During the sermon I didn't really know what I wanted to do; first I wanted to, then I didn't, then I got up the nerve, then I lost it again. But then I said to myself that I would definitely never accept (Christ) if I didn't do it that evening. So then I went up, knelt down in front of the table, and asked God to forgive me for everything I had said and how I had insulted him. On that evening I accepted the Gospel. That was in 1975. Since then my life has changed a lot. I've been a responsible elder of the church for two years now.

NOTES - INTRODUCTION

1. Following preliminary research in Central America in 1983, this project has been under the direction of Prof. Dr. Konrad Raiser, Oekumenisches Institut, Universität Bochum, since 1984. In 1985-86, after five months of preparatory studies in Mexico, the author carried out eighteen months of field work in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and the United States. The project has been generously supported by the Evangelische Landeskirche von Westfalen (The Evangelical Church of Westphalia), the Lutheran World Federation, the World Council of Churches, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the United Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Germany and the Evangelisches Studienwerk, Haus Villigst, (Scholarship Foundation of the Evangelical Church in Germany).
2. The interviews are quoted word-for-word, slightly reworked; the content of the conversations is presented. In the transcriptions of the interviews, ellipses in parentheses (...) indicate that a part of the interview has been omitted by the author; the simple ellipses: ... indicate a break by the person interviewed, so that the following text continues directly on the tape.

NOTES - CHAPTER 1

1. In Nicaragua the figure is about 13 percent, in Costa Rica about 17 percent, in El Salvador and Honduras roughly 9 percent. These estimates are based on an extrapolation of the corresponding figures from 1980 with the application of the growth rate of Protestantism in the 1970s according to Clifton L. Holland, *World Christianity. Central America and the Caribbean* (Monrovia, California, 1981). All statistical remarks on Protestantism in 1980 are (unless expressly stated otherwise) from the evaluation of a census of Central American Protestantism in: *Proyecto Centroamericano de Estudios Socio-Religiosos (PROCADES)* (San José, Costa Rica, 1979-1983).

The sociographical research underlying the following remarks refers back to a fully new reworking of the materials prepared for the author's field work. The author first conducted an analysis of the data from PROCADES in this context together with José Valderrey F. in 1985 in México as a contribution to a research project of the Centro

de Estudios Ecueménicos. The author presented the first sketch of a typology of Protestantism in Central America in the context of this work. The earlier works of Valderry and the author - unpublished, but duplicated - have occasionally become the booty of academic piracy in Latin America.

2. The exceptions are those churches that came to Central America in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries under English influence. They have little importance today.
3. On Protestantism in the USA, see: James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia, PA, 1977); Walter Hollenweger, *Enthusiastisches Christentum. Die Pfingstbewegung in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Wuppertal and Zürich, 1969); Norman C. Kraus, *Dispensationalism in America: Its Rise and Development* (Richmond, VA, 1958); George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925* (New York, NY, 1980); F. E. Mayer, *The Religious Bodies of America* (Saint Louis, MO, 1956); Frank S. Mead, *Handbook of Denominations in the US* (New York, NY/Nashville, TN, 1970); J. Gordon Melton, *Encyclopedia of American Religions*, Vols. 1 & 2, Wilmington, DE, 1978); Margaret Poloma, *The Charismatic Movement: Is There a New Pentecost?* (Boston, MA, 1982); Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism 1800-1930* (Chicago, IL, 1970).
4. Cf. Holland, *World Christianity*; Virgilio Zapata A., *Historia de la Iglesia Evangélica en Guatemala* (Guatemala, 1982); John Siewert and Samuel Wilson, eds., *Mission Handbook* (Monrovia, CA, 1986).
5. There was already a Lutheran congregation in Guatemala in 1870, but it has restricted itself exclusively (up to the present day) to German immigrants to Guatemala. Thus it has remained ethnically attached and without influence on Guatemalan society as a whole.
6. For the variables see Christian Lalive d'Épinay, *Religion, Dynamique Sociale et Dépendance* (Paris, 1975), pp. 104ff. One can with Lalive - following the typology of religious organizations from Milton Yinger, *The Scientific Study of Religion* (New York, NY, 1971), pp. 251ff - distinguish the organizational type denomination, established sect and sect as relevant to Central America. The au-

thor would like to take over these distinctions but not this terminology, because the term "sect" is a battle cry of religious polemic in Central America, and because even in its strict sociological application it is received as such. The terms "group" or "grouping" will be used here to designate the sociological term "sect".

7. New data of the Guatemala administration (Ministro de Gobernación, *Registro de Reconocimiento de Personería Jurídica, Orden alfabético de iglesias reconocidas en su personería jurídica a partir de 1973*) (February 1986) and personal observations (until February 1986), compared and corrected with the statistical data from 1980.

NOTES - CHAPTER 2

1. This chapter is based on the following literature: Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, ed., *Apuntes para la historia* (Guatemala, 1982); Paul Burgess, ed., *Historia de la obra evangélica presbiteriana en Guatemala* (Guatemala, 1957); José Carrera G., *Lecciones de historia de la Iglesia Presbiteriana de Guatemala* (Guatemala, 1973); W. Reginald Wheeler, *The Crisis Decade. A History of the Foreign Missionary Work of the Presbyterian Church in the USA. 1937-1947*, (New York: Board of Foreign Missions, Presbyterian Church, USA, 1950); Gennet Maxon Emery, *Protestantism in Guatemala* (Cuernavaca, México, 1970) [Sondeos 65; Virgilio Zapata A., *Historia de la Iglesia Evangélica en Guatemala* (Guatemala, 1982); Eugenio Samayoa Dávila, *Memorias de la obra evangélica en Guatemala. Pioneros de las misiones Presbiteriana y Centroamericana* (Mazatenango, Guatemala, 1980); Hans-Jürgen Prien, *Die Geschichte des Christentums in Lateinamerika* (Göttingen, 1978); Clifton L. Holland, *World Christianity. Central America and the Caribbean* (Monrovia, California, 1981).
2. On the following see Prien, *Die Geschichte des Christentums in Lateinamerika*, pp. 489ff. and 696ff.
3. The twenty-three "Indian peoples" of Guatemala all belong to the Mayan ethnic group, a highly developed culture in Central America corresponding to the Aztec culture in Mexico. In this study the term "Maya", colloquial "Mayas" (adjective "Mayan") will be used as a

collective term in place of such expressions as "Indian", "Indígena", "Natural", "Indio", etc.

4. This term designates in the Mesoamerican region the Mestizos, people of mixed white Spanish and Mayan descent.
5. Prien, *Die Geschichte des Christentums in Lateinamerika*, p. 700.
6. Emery, *Protestantism in Guatemala*, p. 15. Cf. Edward M. Haymaker, "Footnotes on the Beginnings of the Evangelical Movement in Guatemala", unpublished manuscript (El Rancho, Guatemala, 1946), cited by Zapata, *Historia de la Iglesia Evangélica en Guatemala*, p. 29.
7. Cf. Wheeler, *The Crisis Decade*, p. 212.
8. Burgess, ed., *Historia de la obra evangélica presbiteriana en Guatemala*, p. 63.
9. See Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, *Apuntes para la historia*, p. 83ff.
10. In contrast to premillennialism, postmillennialism postulates a reign of peace before the Second Coming; it assumes therefore that this reign of peace can be approached within human history. Amillennialism designates those theological positions which - theoretically or *de facto* - entirely dispense with the teaching of the thousand-year empire. On the various concepts in Central America, see Heinrich Schäfer, "Das Reich der Freiheit. Überlegungen zur Funktion millenaristischer Eschatologie in den gesellschaftlichen Konflikten Mittelamerikas," *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 73 (April 1989): p. 138-143.
11. Cf. Zapata, *Historia de la Iglesia Evangélica en Guatemala*, p. 76.
12. Occidente (1923) and Central (1927).
13. See the first account in the Appendix.
14. Cf. Prien, *Die Geschichte des Christentums in Lateinamerika*, p. 710.

15. See Deborah Huntington, "The Prophet Motive," in North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA), ed., *The Salvation Brokers. Conservative Evangelicals in Central America* (New York, 1984), 11 (1984), pp. 2ff and 8-9.
16. One in the present-day Mam presbytery and two in the present-day Maya-Quiché presbytery.
17. Wheeler, *The Crisis Decade*, p. 215.
18. Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, ed., *Apuntes para la historia*, pp. 123-24.
19. Suchitepéquez (1939), Pacífico (1946), and Norte (1950).
20. The most important among them are the Presbyterian Mission (since 1882), the Central American Mission (since 1899), the Mission of the Church of the Nazarene (since 1901), the Society of Friends (Quaker) (since 1902), and the Primitive Methodists (since 1922); in addition the Plymouth Brethren (1924), the Mision Evangélica Independiente, with Baptist background (1928), and the Pilgrim Holiness Church (1917). See also Holland, *World Christianity. Central America and the Caribbean*, p. 72ff.
21. On the following see Wheeler, *The Crisis Decade*, p. 214-15.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 214.
23. The Protestant alliance was founded first in 1960, ten years after the defection of the Presbyterians. This delay is explained by the shock effect of the Presbyterian decision on the other churches.
24. Interview 5.
25. See Prien, *Die Geschichte des Christentums in Lateinamerika*, p. 710.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 710.
27. This includes the Departments Suchitepéquez, Sololá and El Quiché.

28. See Robert Wasserstrom, "Revolution in Guatemala: Peasants and Politics under the Arbenz Government," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17 (1975): p. 443-478.
29. See Prien, *Die Geschichte des Christentums in Lateinamerika*, p. 711-12, who examines the various interpretations of the Arévalo/Arbenz period.
30. See Pablo Richard and Guillermo Meléndez, eds., *La iglesia de los pobres en América Central. Un análisis socio-político y teológico de la Iglesia centroamericana (1960-1982)* (San José, Costa Rica, 1982), p. 199.
31. This is the father of Virgilio Zapata Arceyuz, the author of the history of Protestantism in Guatemala (Zapata, *Historia de la Iglesia Evangélica en Guatemala*). The son has, however, not followed in his father's footsteps, but instead become a glowing admirer of the military dictatorship and those in power, which is easily seen in the above-cited book.
32. Interview 2.
33. The Asambleas de Dios (Assemblies of God) alone baptized a total of 2300 people and kept 1000 of them as full members of their church. See Holland, *World Christianity. Central America and the Caribbean*, p. 76.
34. Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, ed., *Apuntes para la historia*, p. 50.
35. See especially Prien, *Die Geschichte des Christentums in Lateinamerika*, p. 713.
36. Norte in 1950 and Maya-Quiché in 1959.
37. See Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, ed., *Apuntes para la historia*, p. 316ff.
38. On the following see Conversation 3.
39. See Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, ed., *Apuntes para la historia*, pp. 108-109.

40. Ibid.
41. Conversation 1.
42. The question of the position vis-à-vis Catholicism cannot be pursued in detail in this study.
43. See Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, ed., *Apuntes para la historia*, p. 339, and Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala/United Presbyterian Church in the USA, *Guidelines and Principles between the National Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Guatemala and the United Presbyterian Church in the USA*. Memorandum, (New York, NY, April 3, 1980.)
44. Conversation 2.
45. Informationsstelle Guatemala e.V. ed., *Guatemala, Der lange Weg zur Freiheit* (Wuppertal, 1982), p. 91.
46. This concerns a wide strip of land in the northern part of the Departments El Quiché and Alta Verapaz. The region is fertile and also contains valuable mineral resources. Through exploitation of its position of power, the military divided almost the entire region amongst themselves in the sixties and seventies and drove away the peasants living there or forced them into wage labor.
47. Interview 20.
48. Comisión Económica para América Latina, *Satisfacción de las necesidades básicas de la población del istmo centroamericano*. Research Report, (Mexico, November 23, 1983), p. 11.
49. Interview 5.
50. This was the equivalent in 1985 of US\$ 60.00; in 1983 this sum still corresponded 1:1 with the dollar.
51. Interview 5.
52. Interview 11.

53. See especially Dieter Boris, Peter Hiedl and Veronika Sieglin, "Guatemala," in Dieter Boris and Renate Rausch, eds., *Zentralamerika* (Cologne, 1983), pp. 107ff; Informationsstelle Guatemala e.V. ed., *Guatemala. Der lange Weg zur Freiheit*, pp. 151ff.
54. Interview 1.
55. Interview 2.
56. Cf. Informationsstelle Guatemala e.V., ed., "Nach den Massakern der Hunger. Guatemalas fortgesetzte Politik der Massenvernichtung", Information Report, (Munich, December 1983), p. 7; Tribunal Permanente de los Pueblos, Sesión Guatemala, Madrid, 27 al 31 de enero de 1983, (Madrid, 1984), pp. 108-109.
57. Ríos Montt on the occasion of a private meeting with party politicians, according to the *Latin America Weekly Report*, London, November 5, 1982, cited in Informationsstelle Guatemala e.V., ed., "Nach den Massakern der Hunger," p. 7.
58. Frankly triumphal features are shown by a popular history of Protestantism in Guatemala published for the anniversary; see Zapata, *Historia de la Iglesia Evangélica en Guatemala*. The corresponding publication of the Presbyterian Church, Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, ed., *Apuntes para la historia*, distinguishes itself agreeably from Zapata's work.
59. Dr. Muñoz studied under C. Peter Wagner at the Fuller School of World Missions and is therefore especially well-versed in questions of church growth.
60. The figures can be applied only to the Protestant churches as a group and not to the Presbyterian Church alone; see the graph comparing the growth of the Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala with the Asambleas de Dios at the start of Chapter 3.
61. Interview 9.
62. See chapter 5.

63. Comité de Educación Cristiana Iglesia Nacional Presbiteriana, "Confesión de Fé. Apuntes y Comentarios a la Confesión de Fé," *Escuela Bíblica Dominical* 9 (January 1986).
64. Interview 9.
65. Interview 5.

NOTES - CHAPTER 3

1. See the following chart comparing the growth of the Presbyterian Church with that of the largest Guatemalan Pentecostal Church, the "Asambleas de Dios."
2. Interview 5.
3. Interview 10.
4. The reasons for this situation in the Mayan presbyteries will be made clearer in Chapter 4.
5. Significantly, it became clear later in the interview that this pastor is strongly dispensationalist.
6. Interview 19.
7. Interview 5.
8. "Passive member" is perhaps a better term.
9. Interview 22.
10. This administrative unit consists of a central community and several smaller communities.
11. Interview 23.
12. Interview 21.
13. Interview 13.

14. Interview 5.
15. Interview 5.
16. Interview 5.
17. These figures are based on Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, ed., *Apuntes para la historia*, pp. 250ff., and Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, Secretaría del Sínodo, *Cuadro de Estadística Año 1984* (Statistical Report, Guatemala City, April 30, 1985).
18. This question can only be touched on superficially here. The following discussion incorporates several aspects of the author's research on the Pentecostal movement.
19. Interview 4.
20. The author would like to thank Isaac Ramírez for a number of documents pertaining to both cases in which neo-Pentecostal influence led to a division in the Presbyterian Church. In the following analysis, the conflicts will not be discussed in detail, but rather sketched as is necessary.
21. Interview 5.
22. See Honorable Sínodo de la Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, "Caso del Presbiterio Central. Caso Iglesia Sinaí de Retalhuleu," (Memorandum, Retalhuleu, Guatemala, October, 1984), p. 1.
23. Interview 21.
24. In Latin America, Bill Bright's "Campus Crusade for Christ" is called "Cruzada Profesional y Estudiantil para Cristo": the name alone betrays its orientation to the new middle class.
25. See Honorable Sínodo de la Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, "Caso del Presbiterio Central. Caso Iglesia Sinaí de Retalhuleu; Plenaria del Sínodo Presbiteriano de Guatemala," Acta No. 1, Sesión Plenaria, Iglesia Monte de Santidad, San

- Agustín Acasaguastlán, (Minutes of the meetings, El Progreso, Guatemala, May 25, 1984).
26. Edmundo Madrid, et. al., "Open letter to the honorable Central presbytery," Guatemala City, October 8, 1983. Unpublished.
27. See Pastor Angel Edmundo Madrid, *Relación, Organo de comunicación del sínodo de la Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala*, 5 (September-October 1973).
28. Interview 14.
29. Cf. Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, ed., *Apuntes para la historia*, pp. 419, 432. Isaac Ramírez, who has been president of the Synod several times, considers Rev. Madrid's figures to be incorrect; according to an observer, the *same* people were actually present at the two Sunday worship services which were supposedly held because of the large number of members. But in 1985, two years after the break with the Central presbytery, in which the entire consistory as well as almost all of the congregation left the presbytery, Rev. Madrid's new church had 525 members. Even if he had had only these 525 members in the Centroamérica congregation, his congregation still would have been the largest of the Presbyterian churches.
30. *Párrafos del folleto, "La Obra del Espíritu Santo" publicado por la 182 Asamblea General de la Iglesia Presbiteriana Unida en los Estados Unidos de América*, trans. Edmundo Madrid (Publicaciones de la Iglesia Presbiteriana "Centro América" de Guatemala, Guatemala City, no year). Due to the ambiguous bibliographical reference, it is not clear if this paper was published by the General Assembly, or if it was drafted by the Presbyterian Charismatic Communion, Oklahoma, as a proposal to the General Assembly. Because the author was unable to see the original paper, the text quoted here is a re-translation into English.
31. In the early eighties, this corresponded to about US \$250. In Guatemala this was somewhat more than the monthly income of a qualified executive secretary.

32. Interview 6. It was not possible for the author to speak with the woman mentioned by Dr. Ramírez because she was traveling. The author requested a response to these charges in a letter to Rev. Madrid, but received no answer.
33. Interview 6.
34. Interview 14.
35. The following is based on the partially theological reply of the consistory of the Divino Salvador Church (Consistorio de la Iglesia Presbiteriana El Divino Salvador) to Rev. Madrid's open letter (see note 26 above) in a letter to "Señores miembros del Honorable Presbiterio Central, Guatemala," (October 26, 1983). The letter is titled "Observaciones sobre el documento presentado por las iglesias: Centroamérica, El Mesías, El Mesías Linda Vista, Nueva Jerusalén de Villa Canales, Eben-Ezer y Horeb."

NOTES - CHAPTER 4

1. Interview 1.
2. Interview 1.
3. Conversation 1.
4. Interview 3.
5. Interview 4.
6. Interview 5.
7. Interview 6.
8. Interview 6.
9. Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, ed., *Apuntes para la historia*, p. 306.
10. Interview 8.

11. Conversations 2 and 3.
12. The Sibleys came to Guatemala in 1959.
13. Interview 8.
14. Interview 8.
15. Interview 8.
16. Interview 9.
17. Gyori was a missionary from 1962 to 1980.
18. In the mid-seventies, the workers of the Coca-Cola bottling plant in Guatemala sought to form a labor union. The Coca-Cola franchise holder John Trotter, who is accused of having close connections to the death squads, fired 152 union-organized workers at one time in 1974, upon which the workers occupied the bottling plant; the police then stormed the factory. Afterward, there were severe conflicts within the company. The eight leaders of the movement were murdered by death squads a few years later. See Barry and Preusch, *The Central America Fact Book*, pp. 244ff.
19. Robert Thorp was a missionary and fraternal worker from 1946 to 1979.
20. Interview 1.
21. Conversation 1.
22. Isaac Ramirez gives 1978 as the year of the conflict.
23. Interview 6.
24. See Philip Berryman, *Christians in Guatemala's Struggle* (London, 1984), pp. 62ff.
25. Interview 10.

26. In Guatemala, the expression "disappeared" is used to mean "kidnapped by the military" or "killed".
27. Mardoqueo Muñoz, "Un estudio del ministerio pastoral y del iglecrecimiento entre los presbiterianos en Guatemala," (Dissertation, Pasadena, CA, 1984), pp. 181ff.
28. Conversation 4.
29. James C. Dekker, "Conversión y opresión; análisis de una experiencia," *Pastoralia. Racismo y Marginalidad en América Latina*, ed., Centro Evangélico de Estudios Pastorales (CELEP) (San José, Costa Rica, 1985), pp. 77ff.
30. Interview 8.
31. Conversation 3.
32. Conversation 5.
33. It is important to note that Emilio Nuñez, the leading theologian of the Central American Mission in Guatemala and chief executive member of the *Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana*, refrained from offering his services to Ríos Montt.
34. Conversation 1.
35. The "hood" generally refers to a mask made of leather which encloses the entire head except for the mouth. It cannot be removed by the prisoner. The duration of use varies. The author knows of cases in which prisoners were forced to wear them for months.
36. Interview 12.
37. Interview 12.
38. The largest traditional Pentecostal church originating in Guatemala.
39. The largest Pentecostal church from the USA.
40. Interview 15.

41. A Pentecostal church is meant.
42. Interview 16.
43. Interview 16.
44. Interview 17.
45. Interview 12.
46. Interview 15.
47. Interview 18.
48. Dr. Mardoqueo Muñoz probably chose this example because we had spoken shortly before about field studies among Pentecostal churches, and the subject of hairstyle had come up in this context.
49. Interview 9. According to information from Dr. Muñoz, there are three estates totaling about 800 hectares (approx. 325 acres).
50. Interview 7.
51. He writes in the dissertation: "The Gospel came to Guatemala mixed with certain characteristics of class and category, operating among the upper class.... If we analyze the way the evangelical church operates today, we see that it still thinks in terms of upper class. The church committees and commissions meet in the best hotels, the international evangelists come with bodyguards, the pastors of humble congregations sport fancy rings and wear expensive suits that painfully contrast with the clothes of their congregation." Muñoz, "Un estudio del ministerio pastoral", p. 20.
52. "Our" is clearly emphasized. It refers to the congregations of the Kekchí presbytery, which is assisted by the Central church.
53. Interview 9.
54. Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias (Latin American Council of Churches). The Presbyterian Church in Guatemala had received the newsletters of the CLAI up until the time of Lucas García; but -

according to Adán Mazariegos - because the charges against García's regime printed on the outside of the mailing (thus visible to the postal service) were so easily read, further subscription to the newsletter became too risky; see Conversation 1.

55. Interview 10.
56. See Informationsstelle Guatemala e.V., ed., *Guatemala*, p. 179.

NOTES - CHAPTER 5

1. See Hermandad de Presbiterios Mayas, ed., *Hermandad de Presbiterios Mayas*, (Memorandum, Guatemala, 1985.)
2. See the graph at the beginning of Chapter 3.
3. See the following graph. From 1981 to 1984 the growth rate of the Presbyterian Church as a whole was 14.02 percent: the Mayan presbyteries showed a growth rate of 68.28 percent, while the Ladino presbyteries stagnated with a decrease of 0.04 percent.
4. In the Ladino presbyteries only 18 percent of all congregations are young developing congregations: in the Mayan presbyteries they make up 65 percent of the total.
5. See the table showing the concentrations of the programs of the presbyteries.
6. Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, ed., *Apuntes para la historia*, pp. 282ff.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 282.
8. Interview 20.
9. Interview 20.
10. Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, ed., *Apuntes para la historia*, p. 295ff.
11. See *Ibid.*, pp. 286ff.

12. Interview 6.
13. Interview 20.
14. In connection with this problem, see the above interviews with Dr. Muñoz, pastor of the Central church, concerning social service and the Kekchí, in the last section of Chapter 4.
15. Interview 8 and Conversation 2.
16. The following pages are based on the interviews carried out by the author and on David Scotchmer, "Dynamic Theological Equivalency among Maya Christians," unpublished manuscript, 1985. Scotchmer was a missionary with the IENPG as director of the Centro Evangélico Mam, presbyter in the Presbiterio Occidente, and instructor at the Instituto Bíblico Mam. He was also responsible for the Mam region at the Presbyterian seminary, and promoted the founding of the Mam Presbytery. Together with Rendon Thomas he carried out a survey of the 262 pastors and elders of the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala. Cf. Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, 1982, p. 513. The latter work is unfortunately not available to the author.
17. Aside from isolated exceptions which have an alibi function for the government ruling at the moment.
18. Interview 20.
19. Cf. Scotchmer, "Dynamic Theological Equivalency," pp. 14ff.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
22. Cf. Section 3, Chapter 4.
23. Dekker, "Conversión y opresión; análisis de una experiencia," *Pastoralia. Racismo y Marginalidad en América Latina*, ed., Centro Evangélico de Estudios Pastorales (CELEP), p. 79.
24. Interview 10.

25. Interview 20.
26. Interview 20.
27. Cf. Scotchmer, "Dynamic," pp. 7ff.
28. The translation of at least the New Testament into over twenty indigenous languages plays a certain role in this belief. Cf. Scotchmer, "Dynamic," p. 7, and Hugh M. Coke, "An Ethnohistory of Bible Translation among the Maya," doctoral dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, 1978, esp. pp. 25ff.
29. Scotchmer, "Dynamic," p. 9.
30. A Mayan leader quoted in Scotchmer, "Dynamic," p. 10.
31. Ibid.
32. Cf. Coke, "An Ethnohistory of Bible Translation among the Maya," pp. 215ff. Coke's study on the history of Bible translation and the use of Scripture among the Maya represents an examination of the readings in the worship services of congregations of the IENPG and the Iglesia Centroamericana in the Mam region. The details which form the basis are found in the following pages. Scotchmer, "Dynamic," p. 9, also refers to this study; his interpretation is taken into consideration here.
33. ... above all Matthew.
34. Cf. Coke, "Ethnohistory," p. 232. From 301 readings, 216 were from the New Testament; 104 of these were from the Gospels.
35. Ibid., p. 234.
36. Scotchmer, "Dynamic," p. 9.
37. Ibid., p. 12.
38. Ibid., p. 9.
39. Ibid., pp. 11ff.

40. Ibid., p. 12.
41. Interview 20.
42. Interview 20.
43. Scotchmer, "Dynamic," p. 13.
44. Ibid., pp. 13-14.
45. Interview 20.
46. Interview 20.
47. Dekker, "Conversión y opresión," p. 79.
48. Scotchmer, "Dynamic," p. 11.
49. Interview 20.
50. Interviews 9 and 10.
51. Interview 20.
52. Interview 10.
53. Interview 9.
54. Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, ed., *Apuntes para la historia*, pp. 298ff.
55. Interview 20.
56. Interview 20.
57. Interview 9.
58. See Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, ed., *Apuntes para la historia*, pp. 169ff.
59. Ibid., p. 176.

60. Ibid.
61. Interview 20.
62. Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, ed., *Apuntes para la historia*, pp. 282ff.
63. Many of the indigenous pastors are illiterate or have not finished primary school; only about 3 percent have completed primary school (six years of school), and only two pastors have been to the university. (See Interview 20.)
64. Interview 20.
65. Interview 20.
66. See Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, ed., *Apuntes para la historia*, p. 171. There are more such cases in the Presbyterian Church. Isaac Ramírez, several-time president of the Synod, complained about a similar problem in the theological seminary, as well as in the conference center and rest home "Monte Sion". See Interview 6.
67. In 1982, the Mam presbytery had a monthly income from the tithes of its members totalling US \$30.
68. The framework of the conflict which affects the church can only be indicated here in simplified terms. The historical and church-political background and other detailed questions cannot be considered here.
69. Interview 20.
70. Isaac Ramírez was president in 1964-65, 1966-67, 1973-74, and 1978-79.
71. The author could verify only Moisés Colop, 1979-80, and Feliciano Baquix, 1981-82. Of the thirty-four presidents since 1949, two were Mayas. See Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala, ed., *Apuntes para la historia*, p. 157.
72. Interview 7.

73. Interview 7. The problems which nonetheless arose from this orientation of the Agape project cannot be discussed specifically here.
74. Interview 20.
75. Interview 7.
76. See the table "Program concentrations" on p. 85.
77. Conversation 2.
78. Interview 7.
79. The Synod (as we have seen) despite this knows of the existence of the committee; it is therefore not a breach of discretion to report about it here.
80. Interview 20.
81. Interview 20.

NOTES - CHAPTER 6

1. See Comité de Educación Cristiana Iglesia Nacional Presbiteriana, "Confesión de Fé. Apuntes y Comentarios a la Confesión de Fé," *Escuela Bíblica Dominical* 9 (Jan., 1986). It is open to question whether or not this orientation is always successful; for example, Chapter 13 on "the bond of God with mankind" could be checked for a dispensationalist influence.
2. "In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons of one substance, power and eternity..." Westminster Confession II, 3 (II, 3). Unless otherwise noted, all citations from the Westminster Confession are taken from the version published in George Hendry, *The Westminster Confession for Today. A Contemporary Interpretation* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1960). The chapter numbers which follow in parentheses are based on the somewhat divergent chapter numbering in the version of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA: *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA), Part I, The Book of Confessions* (New York and Atlanta: The Office of the General Assembly, 1983). The chapter numbering in this ver-

sion is identical with that of the Spanish translation common in Guatemala: Asociación de Pastores y Predicadores Presbiterianos de Guatemala, ed., *Libro de Confesión de Fe de Westminster de la Iglesia Presbiteriana de Guatemala* (San Filipe: Seminario Presbiteriano, no year).

3. "God according to His essence. Lord of the Universe... Omnipotent... Holy... Just... Love..." Or: "The attributes of God. a) Attributes are the perfections of the essence of God (*las perfecciones de la esencia de Dios*)." Comité de Educación Cristiana Iglesia Nacional Presbiteriana, "Confesión de Fé. Apuntes y Comentarios a la Confesión de Fé," *Escuela Bíblica Dominical* 9 (Jan., 1986), p. 22.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 23
6. Ibid., p. 7.
7. Ibid., p. 24.
8. Otto Weber, *Grundlagen der Dogmatik*, v. 1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1955), p. 40.
9. See Comité de Educación Cristiana Iglesia Nacional Presbiteriana, "Confesión de Fé. Apuntes y Comentarios a la Confesión de Fé," *Escuela Bíblica Dominical* 9 (Jan., 1986): 45ff., 34ff and the Westminster Confession V and IV (V and IV), as well as Hendry, *The Westminster Confession for Today*, pp. 57ff for an interpretation. See also Jan Rohls, *Theologie reformierter Bekenntnisschriften* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht/UTB, 1987), pp. 64ff. for the *Loci de cratione* and *de providentia* in the Reformed confessions in general.
10. Repetition was stressed convincingly as a factor in the "electronic church" in the USA by Jörn Halbe, Predigerseminar Preetz, at a conference at the Missionsakademie of the Universität Hamburg, September 1987.
11. The complete picture is naturally much more complicated than that which is contained in this short sketch. This analysis is based pri-

marily on Guatemala. In Nicaragua the picture is different, but a detailed description of the conditions there does not lie within the confines of this study.

12. Rohls, *Theologie reformierter Bekenntnisschriften*, pp. 133, 121ff.
13. Cf. Konrad Raiser, "Bekennen und Bekenntnis heute," in *Materialdienst des Konfessionkundlichen Instituts Bensheim*, insert to May 1987 special issue, pp. 116-120.
14. Ibid., pp. 117ff.
15. The title of a magazine for pastoral work with the poor published by a group of Christians - among them the Protestant pastor Julia Esquivel - in the seventies.
16. Quoted in Lukas Vischer, ed., *Reformiertes Zeugnis heute* Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1988), p. 112.
17. In the following section the author will sketch, again quite briefly, several lines of inquiry from his study of the Pentecostal movement and neo-Pentecostal groups in Central America. Edmundo Madrid's church belongs more to the lower class of the neo-Pentecostal churches with regard to the social composition of the members of his congregation. There are nonetheless a number of characteristics which call for the interpretation of their theology and practice in the context of Neo-Pentecostalism.
18. Cf. Hendry, *The Westminster Confession for Today*, p. 117: The fact that the article is absent "may be held to indicate a certain insensitivity to the real import and significance of the theme which was characteristic of the theological thinking of their period."
19. Cf. *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA)* Section 6.183, note d. (here article XXXIV).
20. Cf. Hendry, *The Westminster Confession for Today*, p. 117.
21. Cf. Rohls, *Theologie reformierter Bekenntnisschriften* pp. 27ff; Hendrikus Berkhof, *Theologie des Heiligen Geistes*, second ed. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1988), pp. 74ff. (English

edition *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* [Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1964]); and Martin Schmidt, article on Puritans in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* third ed., v. 5 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1961), col. 722ff.

22. *Institutio* (1559) III, 1, 1. Unless otherwise noted, citations from Calvin are drawn from the edition of Otto Weber: Johannes Calvin, *Unterricht in der christlichen Religion*, second ed. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1963).
23. "By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit all believers being vitally united to Christ..." Westminster Confession IX, 4 (XXXIV, 4).
24. Cf. Berkhof, *Theologie des heiligen Geistes*, p. 25.
25. Ingo Hermann, *Kyrios und Pneuma. Studien zur Christologie der paulinischen Hauptbriefe* (München, 1961), p. 140; cited in Berkhof, *Theologie des heiligen Geistes*, p. 28.
26. Berkhof, *Theologie des Heiligen Geistes*, p. 28.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 34ff., 47ff., 107ff.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 74ff.
29. On the kingly office of Christ see *Institutio* II, 15, 3-5. On the doctrine of the offices in Calvin see Wilhelm Niesel, *Die Theologie Calvins*, second ed. (München: Kaiser, 1957), pp. 166ff.
30. Westminster Confession VIII, 1 (VIII, 1).
31. See Hendry, *The Westminster Confession for Today*, p. 97.
32. Cf. Berkhof, *Theologie des Heiligen Geistes*, pp. 115ff.
33. A trenchant expression in the development of the Reformed confessions is found in Thesis II of the Barmen Theological Declaration (1934), which speaks of "God's mighty claim upon our whole life" ("*Gottes kräftiger Anspruch auf unser ganzes Leben*"). See Alfred Burgsmüller and Rudolf Weth, *Die Barmer Theologische Erklärung. Einführung und Dokumentation* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner

Verlag, 1983), p. 35. The concept of the Kingdom of Christ was brought explicitly into theological discussion four years later by A. de Quervain, "Die Herrschaft Christi über seine Gemeinde," *Evangelische Theologie* 5 (1938): pp. 45-57. (See Hans-Walter Schütte, "Zwei-Reiche Lehre und die Königsherrschaft Christi," in Anselm Hertz, Wilhelm Korff, et. al., *Handbuch der christlichen Ethik*, v. 1 and 2 [Freiburg/Güthersloh: Herder/Mohn, 1978], v. 1, p. 343.) The Barmen Declaration has found its way into the *Book of Confessions of the Presbyterian Church (USA)*, 1983, sections 8.01 - 8.28.

34. Schütte, "Zwei-Reiche Lehre und die Königsherrschaft Christi," p. 350.
35. See Karl Barth, "Christengemeinde und Bürgergemeinde," in: Max Geiger, Eberhardt Jügel and Rudolf Smend, eds., *Theologische Studien* (Zürich: EVZ-Verlag, 1970), pp. 49ff. The English translation of this essay, "The Christian Community and the Civil Community," is found in Karl Barth, *Against the Stream: Shorter Post-War Writings* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954), pp. 13-50.
36. Barth, "Christengemeinde und Bürgergemeinde," pp. 56ff. (Section 8).
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 62ff. (section 12).
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 68ff. (section 17).
39. Berkhof, *Theologie des Heiligen Geistes*, p. 118.
40. The Westminster Confession maintains that "Civil magistrates may not... interfere in matters of faith" XXV, 3 (XXIII, 3). See also the limitation of the state's role in the Barmer Theological Declaration, Thesis V, in Burgsmüller and Weth, *Die Barmer Theologische Erklärung*, p. 38, and in the *Book of Confessions of the Presbyterian Church (USA)*, Sections 8.22 - 8.24.
41. For an assessment see Scotchmer, "Dynamic," pp. 19ff.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
43. Cf. Dekker, "Conversión y opresión," pp. 79ff.

44. Cf. Raiser, "Bekennen und Bekenntnis heute," pp. 117ff.
45. Cf. Berkhof, *Theologie des Heiligen Geistes*, pp. 27ff.
46. See the program paper of the Brotherhood of Mayan Presbyteries in the box on page 102.
47. Cf. Rohls, *Theologie reformierter Bekenntnisschriften*, p. 156.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 158.
49. "By this faith, a Christian... acteth differently... yielding obedience to the commands" of God. Westminster Confession XVI, 2 (XIV, 2).
50. *Ibid.*, XIII, 2 (XI, 2).
51. *Ibid.*, XVIII, 2 (XVI, 2).
52. Scotchmer, "Dynamic," p. 12.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
54. Rohls, *Theologie reformierter Bekenntnisschriften*, p. 199.
55. Calvin, *Institutio IV*, ~~3, 3f~~ 1, 2
56. Calvin, *Institutio IV*, 1, 1.
57. Rohls, *Theologie reformierter Bekenntnisschriften*, p. 199.
58. Westminster Confession XXVII, 1 (XXV, 1).
59. Zwinglio M. Dias, "Mission and Unity of the Church in the Context of Brazilian Presbyterianism, on the Basis of the Experience of the United Presbyterian Church," paper presented at the Consultation on Mission and Unity, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, John Knox Center, Geneva, 21-28 August 1988, p. 3.
60. Cf. Barth, "Christengemeinde und Bürgergemeinde," p. 80 (section 33).

61. Niesel, *Die Theologie Calvins*, p. 190.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 188.
63. Calvin, *Institutio IV*, 1, 3.
64. "All saints..., being united to one another in love,... are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man." Westminster Confession XXVIII, 1 (XXVI, 1). The reservation that this does not abolish bourgeois property is found in both the Westminster Confession and in the passage cited above from the *Institutio*.
65. Hendry, *The Westminster Confession for Today*, p. 218.
66. Weber, *Grundlagen der Dogmatik*, v. 2, p. 574.
67. Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, p. 107.
68. The Ladino presbyteries are at least as far removed from the Westminster Confession!
69. Raiser, "Bekennen und Bekenntnis heute," pp. 117ff.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
71. "Lateinamerika - Zeugnisse der Hoffnung, die in uns ist," in supplement to *Oekumenischen Rundschau* 35 (1979): 51; cited in Raiser, "Bekennen und Bekenntnis heute," p. 119.
72. On this see Weber, *Grundlagen der Dogmatik*, v. 1, pp. 39ff.
73. On the development of new confessions of this kind in Central America see Hans-Georg Link, "Confessing our Faith around the World, III, The Caribbean and Central America", Faith and Order Paper No. 123 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1984). For an example from a Protestant church, see the message from the Baptist Emmanuel congregation to the Protestant churches in El Salvador in 1977 (pp. 22ff.).
74. Cf. Vischer, ed., *Reformiertes Zeugnis heute*.

75. *The Confession of 1967*, in the *Book of Confessions of the Presbyterian Church (USA)*, sections 9.01 - 9.56. See also Vischer, ed., *Reformiertes Zeugnis heute*, pp. 157ff.
76. Vischer, ed., *Reformiertes Zeugnis heute*, p. vii.
77. Comité de Educación Cristiana Iglesia Nacional Presbiteriana, "Confesión de Fé. Apuntes y Comentarios a la Confesión de Fé", *Escuela Bíblica Dominical* 9 (January, 1986), p. 3.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
79. Weber, *Grundlagen der Dogmatik*, V. 1, p. 41.
80. Comité de Educación Cristiana Iglesia Nacional Presbiteriana, "Confesión de Fé. Apuntes y Comentarios a la Confesión de Fé", *Escuela Bíblica Dominical* 9 (Jan., 1986), p. 7.
81. Weber, *Grundlagen der Dogmatik*, V. 1, p. 40.
82. Johannes Wirsching, article "Bekennnisschriften," in Gerhard Krause and Gerhard Müller, eds., *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, V. 5 (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1980), p. 502.
83. The Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba, 1977, Quoted in Lukas Vischer, ed., *Reformiertes Zeugnis heute*, p. 113.
84. Raiser, "Bekennen und Bekenntnis heute," p. 120.
85. See the reproduction on the following pages.
86. Raiser, "Bekennen und Bekenntnis heute," p. 117.
87. The Lutheran Church in El Salvador could be a partner in discussion, for example.

NOTES - APPENDIX

1. The accounts are from the following interviews (with archive number): Account 1 = Interview 107; Account 2 = Interview 99; Account 3 = Interview 48.
2. Esquipulas is a Catholic pilgrimage site.
3. Here the Central American Mission began its work in the capital city in 1899; see Zapata, *Historia de la Iglesia Evangélica en Guatemala*, p. 61.
4. Short socks instead of knee-socks.
5. He was recognized as a full member with the right to hold church office.
6. A school of the Central American Mission.
7. 1958-1963.
8. Cornmeal with meat, cooked in banana leaves.

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1. Interviews and Conversations*

*The interviews were conducted with a tape recorder; the conversations were taken down on a notepad. The interview number corresponds to the number in the tape archives.

1.1. Interviews (recorded on tape)

Interview 1, with a Presbyterian pastor, 1986.

Interview 2, with a Protestant Christian from Guatemala, 1986.

Interview 3, with an elder from a peasant congregation in the plantation region on the south coast, December 8, 1985.

Interview 4, with a member of a Presbyterian Church in the coastal lowlands, December 15, 1985.

Interview 5, with Rev. Edgardo García, representative for evangelization of the Presbyterian Church.

Interview 6, with Isaac Ramírez, elder of the El Divino Salvador congregation, Guatemala City, long-time member of the Synod, four-time president of the Synod, February 2, 1986.

Interview 7, with Adán Mazariegos, Executive Secretary of the Presbyterian Synod, January 22, 1986.

Interview 8, with Dr. Ross Kinsler, fraternal worker of the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala 1963-1977, Altadena, CA, November 24, 1986.

Interview 9, with Dr. Mardoqueo Muñoz, Doctor of Missionary Studies of the Fuller School of World Missions (Pasadena, CA), pastor of the Central congregation of the Presbyterian Church, Guatemala, January 20, 1986.

Interview 10, with Dr. Mardoqueo Muñoz, Guatemala, February 11, 1986.

Interview 11, with a clergyperson, participant in the press conference, 1985.

Interview 12, with a Presbyterian pastor, 1986.

Interview 13, with a member of the Pentecostal church Asambleas de Dios, Guatemala, December 3, 1985.

Interview 14, with Rev. Edmundo Madrid, former pastor of the Presbyterian congregation Centroamérica, Guatemala, February 13, 1986.

Interview 15, with a Protestant pastor, 1985.

Interview 16, with a *campesino* from a Christian group, Guatemala, February 22, 1986.

Interview 17, with a second *campesino* from the same Christian group, February 22, 1986.

Interview 18, with Rev. Baudilio Recinos, Treasurer of the Presbyterian Synod, pastor of the El Divino Salvador congregation, Guatemala, February 21, 1986.

Interview 19, with a Presbyterian pastor in a poor quarter of Guatemala City, January 30, 1986.

Interview 20, with a group of indigenous Presbyterians, 1986.

Interview 21, with a member of a Presbyterian congregation of the Pacifico presbytery, Guatemala, December 6, 1985.

Interview 22, with an elder of a congregation in the Guatemalan coastal lowlands, December 8, 1986.

Interview 23, with an elder of a congregation in the Guatemalan coastal lowlands (the interviewee is also mayor of the town), December 3, 1985.

Interview 24, with Rev. Vitalino Smiliox, member of the new Cakchiquel presbytery and director of the Christian Council of Development Agencies (Consejo Cristiano de Agencias de Desarrollo, CONCAD), conducted by Sabine Weyersberg, Guatemala, May 5, 1988.

Interview 25, with Rev. Edgardo García, conducted by Sabine Weyersberg, Guatemala, May 10, 1988.

Interview 26, with Dr. Mardoqueo Muñoz, conducted by Sabine Weyersberg, Guatemala, May 15, 1986.

1.2 Conversations (from written notes)

Conversation 1, with Adán Mazariegos, Executive Secretary of the Presbyterian Synod, Guatemala, January 22, 1986.

Conversation 2, with Benjamín Gutiérrez, Latin America representative of the United Presbyterian Church, USA, New York, NY, September 30, 1986.

Conversation 3, with Ana Sibley, church worker in Guatemala 1959-1981, San José, Costa Rica, June 30, 1986.

Conversation 4, with Moisés Colop, pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala, San José, Costa Rica, June 25, 1986.

Conversation 5, with David Mendieta, Seminario Teológico Centroamericano of the Central American Mission, Guatemala, October 10, 1983.

Conversation 6, with Domingo Güitz, director of the Asociación Indígena de Evangelización, Guatemala, February 17, 1986.

2. Bibliography of primary sources*

*The bibliography contains only those sources from the Presbyterian Church itself. The secondary literature is given in the notes.

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Postscript

(This postscript was made possible by three interviews that Sabine Weyersberg kindly conducted for the author in Guatemala. The following remarks are based on the interviews of Ms. Weyersberg with Rev. Edgardo Garcia, Dr. Mardoqueo Muñoz and Rev. Vitalino Similox (Interviews 24-26). Dr. Muñoz wishes to emphasize that he himself holds no function in the church government and speaks only as pastor of the Central Church.)

In the years since 1985 changes can be seen within the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala in connection with the Mayan presbyteries, specifically with regard to their growth, their position in the Synod, the development of the activities of these presbyteries, and in the founding of a new church association.

Since 1985, three new Mayan presbyteries have been founded: the former Kekchí presbytery had grown considerably and has therefore divided itself into the Izabal, Playa Grande and Polochic presbyteries; the Cakchiquel presbytery has in the meantime been formally founded. A further ethnic presbytery, that of the Kanjobal, is in preparation. The unofficial cooperation of the brotherhood of the Mayan presbyteries (*Hermanidad Maya*) has been able to consolidate its work above all in the areas of theological education and self-help projects.

In the future, the Mayan presbyteries can be expected to increase their representation in the church government. It is assumed that for the period 1988-89, Mayans will be elected to the Executive Committee of the Synod and perhaps even supply the president of the Synod. As already shown above, the differences within the Synod lie more deeply than in the simple question of Mayan representation in the government of the church. Vitalino Similox, member of the new Cakchiquel presbytery and director of the Christian Council of Development Agencies (Consejo Cristiano de Agencias de Desarrollo, CONCAD), therefore emphasizes that such cooperation would really only be worth the effort if it would lead to a change in the theology and pastoral work of the church, especially in the understanding of missionary work, and to the movement of the church to commitment for the poor. If this is not the case, then the Mayan Presbyterians will give priority to the advancement of their local work.

In this context, it is important to note that the discussion of the founding of several new synods and a General Assembly is making head-

way in the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala. This fact arises from the growth of the church, as emphasized by Dr. Muñoz, making a restructuring appear necessary and sensible. If this step is carried out, the Mayan presbyteries would then form a common synod. In this way their unofficial cooperation in the *Hermanidad Maya* would achieve the status of a synod.

The founding of the Conference of Protestant Churches of Guatemala (Conferencia de Iglesias Evangélicas de Guatemala, CIEDEG) is of great importance, not only for Mayan Christians, but for all Guatemalan Christians who believe in and work for a mission for the church according to the gospel, a mission in which the church turns to the whole of the population in their actual social and political conditions. On April 4, 1987, the founding of the Conference was decided on; the statutes are in the advisory stage, and the work is to commence officially in November 1988. The Conference stands in the tradition of the Christian Council of Development Agencies (CONCAD). In the CIEDEG, congregations which have previously worked on self-help projects in cooperation with CONCAD have joined together. In this way the interested congregations should be better able to coordinate and plan their self-help projects, their pastoral work, and the theological and practical training of their members. The CIEDEG should furthermore be a forum for the contributions of Protestant Christians to the solution of the social and political problems of the country and for the formation of an authentic theology based on the specific situation of the people in Guatemala. Correspondingly, the work of the CIEDEG will be divided into four branches: 1) advice for pastoral work; 2) autonomous theological training; 3) self-help projects (here the CONCAD functions as a division of the CIEDEG); 4) general training and assistance for church workers. The members of the Conference are local communities - not church governments - from (as yet) six different Protestant, also Pentecostal, denominations.* A strong majority of indigenous congregations is clear in the conference, but Ladino cooperation has not been made difficult. The main goal, dedication to working with the poorest, brings together indigenous and Ladino members of the Conference on the common path of Christian witness under the specific Guatemalan conditions.

In developments since 1985, a threatening division in the Presbyterian Church has been avoided and transformed into a constructive force through the emerging discussion on the restructuring of the church. The Mayan presbyteries were able to consolidate their theological and practical work and act even more effectively in the service of the people. The founding of a general church conference has made concrete the hope of a witness of unity in the church in its existence as a church for others. We must not forget: the majority of the Protestant churches in Guatemala

have not (yet) taken the path described here. But with the work of the communities of the CIEDEG, important steps have been taken on the road to a materialization of the Gospel in the suffering, struggling and joy of the Guatemalan people, transmitted through the witness of Protestant Christians.

The Council is made up of congregations from the following churches: Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala (Presbyterian), Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Metodista Primitiva (Primitive Methodist), Iglesia de Dios del Evangelio Completo (Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, a large Pentecostal Church), Iglesia Evangélica Menonita de Guatemala (Mennonite Central Committee), Iglesia del Nazareno (Church of the Nazarene), and the Confraternidad de Iglesias Evangélicas de Aguacatán (an indigenous church of Guatemala).