CHAPTER
5

"Jesus Is Lord of Guatemala": Evangelical Reform in a Death-Squad State

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The vision came when an upper-class evangelical church relocated next to an old colonial aqueduct. The crumbling Spanish brickwork of the aqueduct crosses Guatemala City along the top of a serpentine earthwork left behind by a departed Mayan civilization. As soon as the church started building, government archaeologists leaped to the defense of the pre-Colombian site. But before the church's laborers stopped, they are said to have dug up the head of a snake carved in stone. The leaders of El Shaddai Church interpreted the suddenly revealed archaeology of their new location as a sign: the Lord had brought them face to face with his vision for Guatemala.

Three hundred years before Christ, Pastor Haroldo Caballeros announced, the serpent mound had been built to dedicate the entire country to Satan. Ever since that offering to the plumed serpent, the Mesoamerican god Quetzalcoatl, Guatemala and all of Latin America had been cursed. Why else would a continent so rich in resources and faith be among the poorest and most indebted of the earth? Why else would a country so green and blessed by God be so afflicted with violence and poverty? But now this curse of centuries could be lifted, Caballeros said. It is probably no coincidence that the name of his church, El Shaddai, means "the Almighty" in Hebrew: this was a vision not just for saving souls, but for seizing a country's destiny. Caballeros preached like a polished courtroom advocate—his former profession—and was attracting influential people to El Shaddai, including a man about to be elected president of the country.

Funded by a well-heeled congregation, Caballeros mounted a national prayer campaign to take the vision for overcoming the serpent's curse to every evangelical pastor in the country. Fifty thousand prayer warriors were needed to battle the territorial demons controlling Guatemala, Caballeros declared. God wanted to open up the skies and rain down his blessings. He wanted to bring a revival with so many signs, prodi-

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gies, and wonders that every tongue would confess that Jesus is Lord of Guatemala. Uplifted by an army of prayer, the church would rise up like a giant. It would prophesy over Guatemala, liberate it, and turn the curse into a blessing.

More than a little vision was needed to see 1990 as a year of blessing for Guatemala. As Caballeros took his prayer campaign to the provinces, business leaders in the capital were uttering wounded cries. At a meeting of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship, in a luxurious hotel a few blocks from the serpent mound, another member of the elite began his testimony by lamenting the sudden fall of the national currency against the U.S. dollar. His father had been one of Guatemala's most feared military presidents, under whose administration death squads became rampant. Young René[1] thought that he too would become president, but that was before surviving an assassination attempt and learning to sleep with a machine gun under his bed. He too had belonged to Guatemala's far right, René told the Full Gospel businessmen. But now he and a Catholic priest he had persecuted were working side by side to evangelize the country. (This was so despite the fact that Full Gospel is considered a Protestant organization, in a country where the Catholic Church warns its flocks against Protestant wolves in sheep's clothing.) Instead of becoming president of Guatemala, René had become the first president of this chapter of the Full Gospel Business Men, which was far better. Meanwhile, unfortunately, his country's debt crisis was getting worse. It was not right, he told the assembled Christian businessmen, that an economy revolving around the dollar should lose a quarter of its purchasing power in one week. It was not right that the walls protecting this New Jerusalem of the Americas be thrown down like that.

As René called on God to have mercy on his country, his repentant tone raised the question of whether self-reform was afoot in Guatemala's ruling class. Since 1954, when the United States toppled a government threatening North American investments, men like René had successfully defended their interests against reform and revolution. When guerrillas organized peasants in the eastern part of the country in the mid-1960s, then in the western highlands in the late 1970s, men like René had led devastating counterinsurgency campaigns. Now the Guatemalan army was the country's master, even after turning over the presidential palace to civilians. Repression was so effective that opposition forces seemed to have little popular support, even after the buying power of the average person had plummeted and hunger was rampant. The most popular recipe for advancement was leaving for the United States.

One of the few popular movements which thrived in this climate of fear and deprivation was born-again Christianity. Imported from the United States in the nineteenth century, evangelical Protestantism has gradually become less dependent on foreign patronage.[2] One sign of taking its own direction is the popularity of Pentecostal forms of worship, that is, baptism in the Holy Spirit, as manifested by speaking in tongues, faith healing, and prophecy. Even though the original missions opposed such practices, Pentecostals have become a large majority of Guatemalan Protestants. Their churches are growing so rapidly that, by 1990, Protestant leaders claimed 30 to 35 percent of a traditionally Catholic population.[3] Although the majority of Guatemalans still identify themselves as Catholic, the number active in church life has been

outstripped by the number of active Protestants. It is common for several times as many people to be meeting in new cinder-block chapels as in the imposing colonial church in the plaza. Moreover, Guatemala is only the most striking instance of the evangelical, mainly Pentecostal, growth taking place all over Latin America.

Like brethren in other Central American countries, Guatemalan Protestants usually refer to themselves as *evangélicos*. Although few call themselves *fundamentalistas*, their devotion to the Bible, to being "born again," and to evangelism identify them in important ways with North American fundamentalists. Like their missionary mentors from the United States, they believe in strict abstention from alcohol and other vices, uphold the "fundamentals" of the faith, and trace their spiritual genealogy to the fundamentalist revolt against the mainline North American denominations early in the century.[4]

Yet the change in cultural context, from Anglo to Hispanic America, has stretched the usual associations of the fundamentalist moniker. While U.S. fundamentalists want to restore the traditional religious values which they believe made their country great, Guatemalan believers do not clamor to return to their own religious and cultural roots. In Guatemala, such antecedents would have to be found not in Protestantism, but in the Mayan civilizations destroyed by the Spanish Conquest or the Catholicism imported from Spain in the sixteenth century. Instead of returning to their roots, evangelical leaders want to tear them up. Blaming Guatemala's backwardness on its Hispanic Catholic heritage, they want to remake themselves and their country in the image of another society which they idealize along fundamentalist lines—the United States. Despite all the conservative associations of the term "fundamentalist," these believers dream of a cultural revolution, a new outbreak of the Protestant Reformation which, this time, will penetrate the Hispanic pale. A movement that secular observers dismiss as a hopeless crusade to return to the past, or as a negation of the ability of human beings to shape their own future, is to believers a crusade to adopt a new cultural heritage and construct a godly future.

Evangelical churches in Latin America have, for the most part, been movements of the self-improving stratum of the lower classes. Researchers have concentrated on evangelicals in villages and poor urban neighborhoods. They have wielded concepts like migration, acculturation, and modernization to describe the adjustment of marginal populations to larger social forces. The resulting studies suggest the ability of evangelical Christianity to empower individuals, reform families, and elevate community morals.[5] But until recently, evangelical movements were relatively small except in Chile and Brazil, and they had not influenced the Hispanic elites of the region. Consequently, what has not been asked is whether born-again religion can effect social change on a larger scale. Now that born-again Christianity is breaking through its previous ceiling in the middle class, disseminating higher in the social scale, and broadening its vision, its success raises new questions. What will it look like when practiced by elites? Will upper-class evangelicals behave any differently than upper-class Catholics? How are the aspirations of evangelical elites constrained by the political economies in which they find themselves? Can evangelical practices change those political and economic systems?

If evangelical reform is visible anywhere, it should be in Guatemala, where the percentage of evangelicals is the highest in Latin America and elite churches have become more prominent than in other countries. Indeed, two of the last four heads of state have been evangelicals, an unprecedented turn of events in a region where elites have been almost exclusively Catholic. To ask how born-again religion could affect the social system, in 1990 I interviewed twenty-five evangelical leaders about the ways their movement is changing how power is exercised in Guatemala. When they told me that the Gospel prevented men from coming home drunk and abusing their families, I asked, "What about the army? What about political parties, the state bureaucracy, and business?" If Protestantism helps peasants control their drinking habits, can it persuade lawyers and colonels to obey the law?

The Protestant Challenge to Catholic Hegemony

Evangelical churches have grown steadily in Guatemala for decades, but not until the 1970s did they become omnipresent in the social landscape. Only in the next decade did they begin to look like a potential source of political and cultural hegemony, as symbolized in the figure of a born-again dictator. Significantly, the early 1980s were the same years in which the revolutionary movements of Central America were at their height. In Guatemala, the army was on the point of losing control of the western highlands when, in March 1982, junior officers staged a reform coup against their corrupt high command.

Unknown to the conspirators, the retired general they installed as head of the new government had, not long before, joined an evangelical sect based in California. General Efraín Ríos Montt did not just promise to end government abuses and restore order, as the heads of military juntas usually do: he also declared he had been put in power by God. He halted death-squad kidnappings in the capital, cleaned up civil administration, and harangued Guatemalans to change their sinful ways. In the countryside, unfortunately, the army continued its rampage against peasants suspected of supporting the guerrillas. According to Amnesty International, 2,186 men, women, and children were killed in rural Guatemala during Ríos Montt's first fourteen weeks in office.[6]

Banned political parties, the Catholic Church, and the Left denounced Ríos as a tyrant who was plunging the country into a holy war. Internationally he became known as the born-again butcher. Paradoxically, for many Guatemalans Ríos Montt's sixteen months in office were a return to relative stability compared to the random massacres of the previous regime. In the 1990 presidential race, to the horror of establishment politicians who regarded him as unpredictable and dangerous, the ex-dictator became the most popular candidate. Only a constitutional ban prevented him from being elected.

Under Ríos Montt, the Catholic hierarchy warned that evangelical growth was a political strategy to dominate the country. Most Catholic clergy in Guatemala conceded the right of parishioners to join dissenting churches. But as more evangelicals

defined their faith as a basis for political action, their new activism threatened Catholic claims to be the national church.[7] At one time the Catholic Church wielded considerable power in Guatemala. The very bulk of its installations, surpassing anything else on the traditional landscape, suggests their importance. The huge old churches in Indian towns were set up to overawe a peasant population conquered by the Spanish Empire. Particularly in these towns, which once made up most of the population, Catholic clergy could be more influential than a colonial or republican government. When dreams of modernization stirred the Guatemalan elite in the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church stood in the way with its hold on rural land, labor, and popular ideology. Modernizers had to break clerical authority, a process which began in the civil wars of the nineteenth century and continues today.

Just as telling have been internal weaknesses in the Catholic Church.[8] Priests were always in short supply, but the system itself was unable to respond to new spiritual needs when the colonial order broke up. As traditional agrarian communities diversified, so did the requirements of the people in them: while some sought solace in communal traditions, others wished for the kind of discipline associated with religious sects. Even though Catholic missionaries responded with great creativity—through new pastoral organizations, development projects, and political organizing—they were unable to respond to everyone's needs.[9] In particular, they were not able to satisfy a growing hunger for conversionist religion, the emotional, transformative kind of faith which has helped so many people adjust to the social dislocations of capitalism.

Brought in by a supportive Liberal state and a wide-open market economy, the evangelical missionaries and their converts ended the Catholic monopoly. The evangelical style of leadership was more egalitarian than Catholic authority: while the traditional Church jealously guarded clerical prerogatives, old-fashioned sectarianism—the splitting of one church from another in endless personal and doctrinal quarrels—opened up the leadership of evangelical churches to anyone who had the charisma to exercise it. While Catholics struggled to sacramentalize huge parish populations, new Protestant groups focused all their energy on recruiting the most spiritually restless, in a competitive drive to build up followings.

These disadvantages were still somewhat hidden, and the Catholic Church still a central institution in many Indian towns, when what priests refer to as "apocalypse" struck. The Church was still considered a conservative institution when, in the 1960s, the army's accelerating domination of political life began to radicalize clerics and lay leaders. By the late 1970s, even conservative priests began to speak out about the atrocities committed in counterinsurgency campaigns. Enraged by the resulting human rights reports, the army accused the Catholic clergy of collaborating with the guerrillas and, over a three-year period, killed more than a dozen priests and hundreds of lay leaders. The position taken by Guatemala's evangelical leaders was quite a contrast: they stood by silently, praying for divine intervention. They rarely expressed sympathy for the many Catholic pastoral agents murdered by security forces. Instead, they were more likely to justify the persecution by repeating army propaganda about priests storing guns in rectories. Although unheroic, their posture sheltered members

from reprisals and became a powerful draw for Guatemalans seeking sanctuary from the army's wrath.[10]

For Catholics who had been persecuted by the army, a born-again military president seemed to promise more of the same. The outspoken general used his skill with evangelical rhetoric to provide a new moral justification for the army's rhetoric of extermination against alleged guerrilla collaborators, forcing the Catholic Church to maintain a costly oppositional stance.[11] But for evangelicals, the sudden appearance of a military strongman speaking their language and promising to end government abuses was a miraculous answer to prayer.

Even though the shift to Protestantism cannot be attributed specifically to Ríos Montt, everything about his regime dramatized the loss of Catholic authority. His closest advisers in the national palace were elders from the congregation he had joined, the Eureka, California-based Church of the Word. Supporters launched a prayer campaign, based on the Book of Nehemiah, to "rebuild the walls of Jerusalem." The evangelist Luis Palau arrived to celebrate the Protestant centenary in Guatemala and, with Ríos standing beside him, proclaimed that it could become the first reformed country in Latin America. A born-again dictator had dramatized underlying shifts in Guatemalan society which were eroding the traditional position of the Catholic Church. He drew attention to evangelicals and defined their political role in a controversial new way. What had appeared to be a quiescent mass of the poor and lower middle class, apolitical and otherworldly in attitude, began to look like a movement with a vision for running the country.

Evangelical Organization in a Catholic Society

Born-again religion in Latin America is spilling beyond conventional boundaries and reaching into the upper class. Researchers accustomed to looking at Latin American evangelicals in terms of distinct social organizations such as congregations, sects, denominations, and parachurch agencies are finding that increasing numbers of people touched by the movement do not fit the image of a fervent, active member of an evangelical church. If we look at the lived experience of Latin Americans who have been influenced by evangelical Protestantism, rather than their degree of adherence to church doctrine, such experiences spill far beyond the boundaries of evangelical social organizations. If we look at the families, social networks, life careers, and personal interpretations of people who claim born-again experiences, their declarations of faith begin to look more like experiments, and the precise boundaries of doctrine blur into the ceaseless negotiations of social life.

With their rhetoric of separation, of being "in but not of the world," the leaders of evangelical churches make much of their own distinctiveness. If we focus on institutional beliefs, claims, and practices, it is easy to conclude that many evangelical churches seek to avoid the wider society and withdraw into an ecstatic social world. The popularity of Pentecostal forms of worship has heightened the perception of a sectarian movement apart. But when John Page studied the personal networks of

Pentecostals in Brazil, he found that their metaphors of withdrawal from "the world" simply do not reflect their interactions with the rest of society—without which they would be hard put to attract as many other people as they do.[12]

As for the experimental character of evangelical experience, it is evident from the transitory nature of affiliation. Many members pass through a series of churches, eventually become inactive, and may or may not continue to identify themselves as evangelicals. When church-growth researcher Jean Kessler asked a representative sample of Costa Ricans "Have you been an evangelical at any time in your life?" almost twice as many answered yes as currently identified themselves as such.[13] A comparable survey has yet to be done in Guatemala, but now that Protestantism is fashionable, so is dropping out of church life: the number of nominal evangelicals is growing rapidly, as is the number of Guatemalans straddling the fence with identities such as "I'm a Christian."

Evangelical influence has begun to permeate the culture in ways that do not require specific church memberships. Disregarding warnings from their hierarchy,[14] Catholics increasingly explain themselves in pietistic terms borrowed from the Protestant movement. A taxi driver says he's Catholic and then defines it—"we sing hymns too"—by comparison with evangelicals. "Catholics and evangelicals are going to unite because the two are heading for the same objective, no?" he concludes. "I'm half evangelical," another taxi driver says. "I don't go to church but all my family does." In a park crowded with idle men, one says he's a bit of both Catholic and evangelical, then denies that he's an evangelical, insists that he is a Catholic, and explains his faith in quasi-evangelical terms. Above all, he has given up smoking, drinking, and philandering for the undernourished pregnant woman resting beside him. "Guatemala is a beautiful country but Guatemalans are bad," he keeps repeating like a litany. "Throughout the republic, thousands apologize for not being evangelical," a national leader told me.

One example of how evangelical mores are infiltrating a Catholic society, and how evangelical institutions from the United States can be reinterpreted in a foreign context, is the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship. Founded in southern California, Full Gospel is a U.S.-based international network of men's clubs dedicated to fellowship in the Holy Spirit. In the 1980s, it expanded rapidly in Central America. By witnessing to business and political elites, Full Gospel hoped to bring peace to the war-torn region. By 1990 there were 150 chapters in Central America, with 59 of them and several thousand members in Guatemala alone. Meetings are held in restaurants and hotels, with rows of men in business suits sitting down to lunch like the Rotary Club, only to break into a hymn or suddenly jump up and start hugging each other. The climactic event is the testimony of a reformed male—a repentant philanderer, drunk, tax cheat, or worse—who confesses his sins and tells how the Lord changed his life.

The style is clearly evangelical. Full Gospel was started by Pentecostals from the United States, and many of the members there belong to the Assemblies of God. Yet Full Gospel denies being an evangelical organization. Instead, spokesmen say it is organized around testimonies of life transformation, not Bible teaching or preaching.

It does not require new members to make a declaration for Christ, let alone submit to adult baptism—both necessary to join an evangelical church. Instead, Full Gospel proclaims disinterest in where members go to church, and in Guatemala a majority of the members are Catholic. In fact, leadership is firmly in the hands of upper-class Catholics who are said to discriminate against fellow Catholics leaving for evangelical churches.

How could an evangelical organization be captured by Catholics? How could the dividing line between evangelical and Catholic, so emphasized by most church leaders in Guatemala, become so unclear? The men running Full Gospel are products of a religious revival which has brought Pentecostal practices into the Catholic Church in many countries. The charismatic movement dates to the 1960s in the United States, when speaking in tongues, faith healing, and prophecy broke out in the Catholic Church as well as in mainline Protestant denominations. Like their Pentecostal mentors, the charismatics interpreted their experiences as an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In Guatemala, where many Catholics were also attracted by Pentecostal practices, the resulting charismatic renewal became particularly visible in wealthy neighborhoods of Guatemala City during the 1970s. Full Gospel played a special role, as did less well-known groups like Gospel Outreach of Eureka, California. Unlike local Pentecostal leaders inured to sectarian battle, the North Americans did not demand that Catholic seekers immediately redefine themselves as *evangélicos*, thereby enabling the renewal to reach a wider audience.

The distinction between *católico* and *evangélico* began to blur, with born-again religious experience preached inside parts of the Catholic Church. The renewal became a middle ground where upper-class Catholics could have a born-again experience without taking the socially disprestigious step of declaring themselves evangelicals. Enough charismatics have eventually joined evangelical churches that, from the point of view of many Catholic clergy, the movement is a slippery slope downward into Protestantism. To keep charismatics inside the Catholic Church, the hierarchy has encouraged them to venerate symbols of Catholic authority such as the Virgin Mary, drawing a clear boundary against mariolatry-repudiating evangelicals. From a Protestant point of view, the charismatic renewal has become a clerical tactic to slow the defection of Catholics to evangelical churches. Full Gospel is so undemanding of Catholic members who continue to smoke cigarettes, wear crucifixes, and honor the Virgin Mary that dissidents eventually started a new network to uphold evangelical distinctives, the Hombres Cristianos (Christian Men). Even the name of the new group suggests the popularity of obscuring the Catholic-Protestant boundary.

Enough charismatic Catholics have turned evangelical to contribute to a new style in Guatemalan Protestantism, the "charismatic" or "neo-Pentecostal" churches. The most well known is the Church of the Word which Ríos Montt joined, via the charismatic renewal, a few years before coming to power. Neo-Pentecostals tend to be more urban, literate, prosperous, and higher in the social scale than traditional Pentecostals.[15] Unlike most Guatemalan evangelicals, who are poor and getting poorer, neo-Pentecostals come mainly from managerial and upper classes which continue to batten on agribusiness exports to the United States, a regressive tax system, and sun-

dry monopolistic structures concentrating income in their hands. In contrast to most Guatemalans, they tend to have money to spend in the U.S.-style shopping malls going up along the capital's traffic arteries. On Sunday mornings, parked cars ring their churches. Because of rapid growth, neo-Pentecostal congregations often meet in unconventional places such as convention halls, hotels, and circus tents. A thousand or more people at a service is not unusual. These are superchurches, of the kind popular in the U.S. Sun Belt, led by masters of ceremonies who choreograph services as smoothly as if they were television shows. Neo-Pentecostal churches are known for their warmth as well as glitz, however, thanks to their well-organized networks of "house churches." These smaller-scale worship groups and Bible studies meet in homes and neighborhoods. If you don't like one home worship group, you can always try another, or move on to the latest superchurch to become fashionable, as did many members of the Word Church who left for El Shaddai in the late 1980s.

The location of neo-Pentecostals in the privileged class makes them receptive to the North American religious right, whose messages have been transmitted in increasing volume over the subsidiaries of electronic evangelists like Pat Robertson and Jimmy Swaggart.[16] Indeed, one of the reasons upper-class Catholics have become interested in the born-again message is their reaction to the social teachings of the Catholic Church and the leftward politicization of part of the clergy.[17] Neo-Pentecostals are particularly attracted to the "prosperity" or "health-and-wealth" gospel popularized by such media.[18] This palatable doctrine that God wants Christians to enjoy the good things in life implies that poverty and misfortune reflect a lack of faith. While the health-and-wealth gospel retains the evangelical language of sin and repentance, it promises that personal transformation will be rewarded by affluence—quite a contrast to the humble rewards of self-restraint and survival sought by lower-class evangelicals. What appeals to neo-Pentecostals is a gospel of personal possibility in a situation that still offers them, unlike most Guatemalans, the chance for U.S.-style middle-class consumption and upward mobility.

At first sight, this is not a Christianity that agonizes over social obligations beyond the congregation and family. Most neo-Pentecostals belong to the social classes whose privileges the Guatemalan state protects, not the classes it represses. Like traditional evangelicals, most neo-Pentecostal pastors teach that the purpose of the church is confined to saving souls. But neo-Pentecostal congregations have so many connections with national institutions that they have created the impression that evangelicals as a group are moving from political withdrawal to engagement. Ríos Montt's brief rule in 1982–83 was simply the most visible sign of their emergence and connections. Born-again religion has percolated upward into social strata whose members habitually engage in politics, hence they are receptive to the admonitions of evangelical theologians for "social responsibility." The emergence of congregations in wealthy neighborhoods, together with upward mobility in older denominations, has created a new stratum of evangelical professionals eager to project their principles into society and politics. As a result, even "health-and-wealth" Christians can start to look like reformers.

Despite all the attention to flamboyant elite churches, evangelicals are still under-

represented in the upper strata compared to the lower. In the capital, elite evangelicals cluster in less than a dozen churches, including Word, Elim, Christian Fraternity, El Shaddai, and Shekinah—which have drawn on the charismatic renewal or split off from other churches that did. Even in the most prestigious churches, the upper class (owners of substantial firms or properties) is outnumbered by the upper-middle class (such as managers and professionals) and lower-middle class (such as taxi drivers and schoolteachers). The Full Gospel network is considerably diluted in this sense: while chapters meeting in luxury hotels are clearly upper class, those in the passé hotels of the old city center are made up of mid-level civil servants and owners of small businesses.

Of the Guatemalan elite, that is, owners of plantations or firms, only a small percentage has turned evangelical to date. One missionary estimated that even if 30 percent of the country as a whole is evangelical, as few as 5 percent of the elite might be. Evangelicals do not appear as a recognizable interest group in the powerful business lobbies known as the Comité Coordinador de Asociaciones Agrícolas, Comerciales, Industriales y Financieras (CACIF). But they are best represented among owners of "modern" businesses based on the importation of foreign technology. Evangelicals are least well represented in the more conservative wing of the bourgeosie. These are the owners of plantations, who grow coffee and other exports, and whose requirements for labor control did much to create the institution of the death squad. Plantation owners include many army officers, active and retired, and they are the dominant wing of the Guatemalan elite. Despite testimonies like René's quoted at the beginning of this chapter, the evangelical gospel seems to have made less impression on them than on the rest of Guatemalan society.

The Power of Prayer

The ideology of empowerment has become popular in elite churches. Wherever I went in search of evangelical impact on the Guatemalan social order, one name kept cropping up—Paul Yonggi Cho of South Korea, whose occasional visits to Guatemala have inspired many pastors there. Prophet of the megachurch, Cho has organized in Seoul what is said to be the largest congregation in the world. Worshiping with half a million people under the same organizational roof does not appeal to everyone, but for neo-Pentecostals, who have been shaped in so many ways by the church-growth movement, bigger is usually better. Yet it is not just the size of Cho's church which has impressed Guatemalan evangelicals, but Cho's country as well. Until recently poor and oppressed, it has suddenly leaped into the ranks of the industrial countries. The analogy to Guatemala is clear, or so believers hope, because Paul Yonggi Cho preaches the power of prayer. If South Korea has achieved its economic miracle through prayer, perhaps Guatemala can do the same.[19]

What neo-Pentecostals call "prayer warfare" or "spiritual warfare" may seem strangely triumphalistic in a situation such as Guatemala's. Projecting their hopes and fears in the language of millennialism, many fundamentalists continue to voice pessimistic scenarios in which an ever more sinful world rushes downward to destruction,

redeemable only by the physical return of Christ. Yet eschatological gloom has not precluded wildly optimistic scenarios for national redemption, from some of the same prognosticators. During the early 1980s, such interpretations became so popular in the North American fundamentalist movement that they became known as "dominion theology"—the central tenet being that the Lord has given Christians dominion over the earth and wants them to exercise it.

In Guatemala, the usual pessimism still reigns in lower-class churches, which are experiencing the full cost of economic crisis, and doomsday is still available in upper-class churches for events provoking sufficient anxiety. But better-off Christians have increasingly been drawn to visions of dominion, encouraged by visiting evangelists insulated from the day-to-day costs and compromises of living in Guatemala. Like millennialism in any time and place, dominion theology gives believers a place in the divine plan, a sense of themselves as actors, of being someone who can make a difference, and it positions them for social and political action in the cosmic drama.[20] The rhetoric of empowerment has been most attractive to members of the elite and hopeful new professionals from the middle class, people wishing to affirm their social position and assert a new ideology of control against the many threats they face.

For evangelicals accustomed to living under a repressive political system that offers few possibilities for constructive action, the language of activism is prayer. To a non-believer like myself, prayer sounds like passivity and resignation. But asking the Lord to intervene in an impossible situation is not inaction, a North American missionary corrected me. According to him, "You have to get back to providence, to the Book of Daniel, for example, and trying to move the hand of God. . . . The more Christians pray, the greater power which angelic forces have over demonic forces. Satan is the prince of this world. . . . He took territory away from God which we now have to reclaim."

Significantly, neo-Pentecostals are making much of demons that, based on biblical precedents, control particular areas.[21] Spiritual warfare against territorial demons provides a graphic frame of reference for believers struggling to exert their influence over communities and nations. As I pressed for a nonprovidential chain of causality, a pastor explained helpfully: "If God controls the universe and I pray to him, he can work in several ways. He can change the hearts of people, for example. There is a great quantity of Christians who do not live as such. They don't pay their taxes, they don't stop at traffic lights, they don't reject bribes. What would this country be like if they started behaving like Christians?" Certainly prayer could mobilize whoever was praying, and that could affect their social attitudes.[22]

Evangelicals are groping for ways to translate a reformation in personal morality into a reformation in public morality. The rhetoric of such prayer campaigns as "Jesus is Lord of Guatemala"—about curses and demons, prayer warfare and opening up the skies so that God can rain down his blessings—provides a new moral language to interpret Guatemala's crisis, identify underlying causes, and suggest ways to deal with them. On the analogy of casting demons out of a person, these Christians want to cast demons out of a country. Social exorcism is a language with considerable appeal in a folk Catholic society whose spiritual world is basically animistic. The struggle of

prayer warriors to "bind" demons is also a struggle to "bind" the powers of corruption, violence, and poverty.

For lack of a better term for spiritual mobilization as a basis for reforming society, let us call it "moralization." Moralization starts with the traditional evangelical belief in the power of personal moral transformation, of individuals being "born again." To change society you have to start by changing the hearts of individuals, evangelical leaders argue. Change enough individuals, they believe, and you will change society. More honest officials will inhabit the government, Christian military officers will end egregious human rights violations, businessmen and workers will treat each other with greater respect.

But facing a desperate national situation, the manifest power of the state, and destructive conflicts between entrenched political interests, moralization also becomes an ideology for taking control. To the old formula of personal transformation, upper- and upper-middle-class evangelicals are adding a new managerial vision in which Christians take command of society and reform it from on high. The vision is not necessarily plausible; indeed, it seems in stark contradiction to the pragmatics of survival. Nonetheless, let us explore how evangelicals are trying to moralize Guatemalan society from the bottom up and the top down, in sundry ways. These include encouraging men to be responsible to their families, changing other basic social attitudes, serving as "salt and light" in subordinate positions in business, government, and the army, and taking command of the state through electoral politics.

Evangelicals as Salt and Light

When I asked evangelical leaders how their movement is changing the way power is exercised in Guatemala, most found it difficult to answer in the social and political terms I was seeking, except for two with academic training similar to my own. Instead, they answered in terms that seemed most real and evident to them: testimonies of conversion—their own or others—illustrating the power of the gospel to effect personal transformation. Yet such testimonies speak directly to social and cultural issues, the most common of which is how men treat their families. Confessions of machismo also proved the most consistent theme in the dozen or so testimonies of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship I heard.

The story of a salesman I will call Arturo Rivera, a man in his early forties with an innocent face, seems to scour every corner of immorality. His early success working for a transnational corporation was based on getting government buyers drunk, taking them to prostitutes, and blackmailing them into ordering from him. His own drinking made him an "assassin by motor" and, after twenty-seven accidents, completely uninsurable. Finally he was brought to ruin: living in a dwelling with a dirt floor in an outlying barrio, smoking marijuana to escape his feelings of despair, blaming wife and children for his lack of self-control. The turning point came when the dreaded *judiciales* (government kidnappers) arrived, to collect him in payment for his countless debts. To stall the death squad, his abused wife risked her life so he could escape out

the back. Suppressing tears at this point, Arturo concluded with how Jesus had changed his life and reconciled him with his family.

A civil servant I will call Alfonso Palacios, forty-eight, described an idyllic childhood in the eastern part of the country. Then the snake in paradise: "The Latin American male is generally a macho, but above all where I come from." Young Alfonso learned to drink, patronize brothels, and brawl. Liquor held little power over him; his great weakness was picking quarrels with other men—hard to believe from his smooth, tranquil face—and with his spouse. Imitating how his father behaved toward his mother, he treated his wife like *basura* (trash) and was proud of it. When she asked to talk with him, he would lose his temper and abuse her. But this life was intolerable, Alfonso continued, because there was no peace in his heart. After coming to the Lord, he could communicate with his wife and children, learned a new approach to traffic accidents, and no longer experienced guns being held to his ear.

Such testimonies do not necessarily tell us how men are actually behaving toward their families, subordinates, and peers. We have no family, congregation, or workplace ethnography for corroboration, nor any statistical comparison of evangelical and nonevangelical behavior. Just because it has become popular to confess in public does not necessarily mean that one's behavior has changed. But there are reasons to take these stories seriously. It is common for wives (including Arturo's, for the record) to vouch that their spouses have improved. The desire of men to make such confessions—at variance with traditional models of masculinity and not easy to make, judging from the weeping—suggests a definite shift in social mores. If so, it should affect not just how men act out their masculinity but the wider system of gender roles, how children are socialized, and conceivably how authority is exercised in the society as a whole.[23]

Even as pietism influences the population, Guatemala's public institutions continue to suffer a lack of credibility. Nothing works the way it is supposed to; nothing is what it seems. From behind the scenes, an all-powerful army has continued to define what is permissible for the civilian governments elected since 1985. While the minister of defense talks democracy, thinly disguised army death squads kidnap dissidents. Understandably, most Guatemalans continue to avoid oppositional politics like the plague—while the politics of opportunism, embraced by the country's civilian political parties, once again flourishes. So long as civilian politicians do not offend the most powerful interests in Guatemalan society, they are allowed to compete for political office and the rewards of corruption. Meanwhile, basic issues like military accountability, land reform, and taxation of the wealthy continue to be off limits.

Hence the habitual silence of evangelicals on issues Guatemalans term *delicado*—the ones that could get them killed. "Evangelicals don't want to denounce the army, or even the police and the authorities in general, or go to court, for fear of reprisals," said one well-known leader. "It's very delicate. And not only for evangelicals. For Catholics, too. The Catholics only do it through their bishops. It is the principal problem Guatemalans face—fear of reprisals. That if they denounce abuses, they will be driven off, robbed, killed." Out in the churches of the poor and the lower-middle class, most evangelicals are not given to optimistic visions about reforming Guatemala. Such talk is still suspect even in some of the most sophisticated, well-connected

urban churches. "We believe that the kingdom of heaven is something which cannot be implanted because it is a kingdom which is not seen," explained a spokesman for the influential Elim Church, where caution reigned. "If the church tries to change established human structures, it becomes humanistic and falls within the terrain of the theology of liberation, of trying to impose the kingdom."

In a movement drawn primarily from the lower and middle classes, in a society with narrow latitude for innovative political leadership, most evangelicals are "in between" rather than "in charge," and will remain so into the forseeable future. What difference can they make? Instead of the grandiose rhetoric of prayer warfare, evangelical leaders are more likely to talk about their followers as salt of the earth, or the leaven which makes bread rise, or as beacons of light.

In the government bureaucracy, many evangelicals have reached middle- and upper-level posts. Presumably they are well placed to serve as salt or leaven. But in institutional systems lubricated by the *mordida* (the "bite" or bribe), in which an appointee who fails to enrich himself is considered a fool or a threat, how do born-again Christians maintain their integrity, let alone encourage morality in government? One high-level administrator told me how he had been able to use a personal relationship with President Vinicio Cerezo (1986–91) to turn down the hordes of job seekers and grafters sent over by Cerezo's party functionaries. But most evangelical functionaries in the Cerezo administration had less leverage and were forced to make excuses for themselves, a missionary reported. Such as "Yes, what can we do about it?" "We're doing what we can," or "If we complain, we're out on the street." "If a person wants to stand firm and not accept a bribe, they fire him," a national leader acknowledged. "That's why many evangelicals accept bribes."

"The evangelical ought to put up a fight against the system of bribes," said the pastor of a church consisting of middle-class doctors, accountants, and engineers. "But it's very difficult. As pastor, I don't have the right to demand a moral stand. Yes, to struggle a bit, but not to the death. Every Christian has to struggle alone and at his own risk, because he can end up without a job in a country with high unemployment." The pastor told the story of a customs official in his congregation who refused to accept a substantial bribe, to allow the private airplane of a well-known family to bypass customs. Soon his life was being threatened, he lost his job and was reduced to selling in the street. Such problems are "daily bread" for pastors of middle-class congregations like his own. "They're in-between," he said of his members.

Evangelical businessmen face similar dilemmas. Obliged to obtain countless permits from government offices, how do they survive without paying bribes? "I don't give bribes but I do make friends," one explained. "Friendships are what is needed. The Christian has to look out for himself by establishing friendships within the government." If he had a problem with the Interior Ministry, the businessman explained, he would go to the corresponding cabinet minister—who happened to attend the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship. When passports were needed, he obtained a letter from a congressman permitting him to jump past a long line of suffering applicants. When he refused to pay more than U.S. $1000 in bribes to obtain a telephone, a friend working for the utility had to pay a smaller bribe on his behalf—an ethical distinction which hardly affects how the system works.

Because of the level of patronage and corruption in the state apparatus, evangelicals have a special incentive to set up their own social agencies. The tradition of organizing educational institutions, media enterprises, and relief projects dates to the first foreign missions. During the late 1960s the older Protestant churches began their own agricultural and community development projects in Mayan communities, as well as legal and medical services to the squatter settlements spilling down the ravines behind middle-class neighborhoods. By the late 1980s a wider range of churches was undertaking such projects. While these efforts continue to emphasize personal salvation, they also represent an attempt to devise alternative institutions as a way of changing the system.

Evangelicals were projecting their agenda into vacuums left by the government's bankrupt and demoralized social institutions, sometimes with the backing of U.S. organizations like Prison Fellowship. In the case of juvenile offenders, according to the research institute AVANCSO, evangelical volunteers offer a supportive new social group as well as contacts for gaining a foothold in law-abiding society. They pluck converts out of state institutions and promote the family as the vehicle for reintegration into society. The result tends to be more convincing than what secular social workers have to offer. Evangelicals are helping people in crisis change their lives through one of the few resources at their disposal, religious faith.[24] "We take a message of restoration to all those persons who are not incorporated into the productive life of society," a leader at Elim told me with supreme confidence. "We can rehabilitate every person who takes the decision to restore their souls."

The sternest test of evangelical reform in Guatemala is the most powerful and feared institution in national life, the army. Owing to the intense conformity of military life, evangelicals seemed almost nonexistent in the officer corps prior to Ríos Montt. The general himself was an outsider: when junior officers gave him his moment of glory in 1982, it took the colonels in charge of army bases just sixteen months to replace him with a more conventional military figurehead. Under Ríos, nonetheless, it became customary for base commanders to allow evangelists, often North Americans, to preach to their men and distribute Bibles. By the late 1980s, officers could be found scattered through middle- and upper-class churches. According to the evangelical chaplain for the army's service academy, he was surprised to learn that as many as half of the four hundred cadets identified themselves as evangelical.

Yet believers within the officer corps have to comport themselves with great caution. Unsympathetic senior officers and peers interpret the refusal to get drunk and to philander as a reproach to their own unreformed ways. When a lieutenant published his testimony after Ríos Montt's fall, he was immediately discharged for threatening the institution. Colonels and generals seem to "come out" as evangelicals only after retiring, as if an active witness contradicts the demands of military hierarchy. There are no organized prayer groups in the army, a retired colonel explained, because that would create an impermissible "class within a class."

The four evangelical officers and the chaplain I interviewed all insisted that army commanders did not fear that moral scruples would prevent converts from carrying out orders. Instead, they stressed the duty of subalterns to obey orders. When I pressed them on the subject of human rights, two of the officers mentioned Old

Testament precedents for slaughtering old men, women, and children along with combatants. They went on to narrate anecdotes about providential deliverance from moral dilemmas.[25]

The Government of God

As the foregoing review of evangelicals' practice indicates, it is still not easy to find ways in which born-again Christians are changing the exercise of power in Guatemalan society above the family level. Unable to affect how the army and the state wield power, their main accomplishment continues to be constructing their own alternative system, that is, recruiting multitudes of people into new social groups that insist their purpose is strictly religious. Even if the behavior of individuals and families is changing, it has yet to translate into institutional change, except to further undermine the traditional counterweight to state power in Guatemala, the Catholic Church, at a time when nothing has evolved to replace it—not an evangelical leadership with weight in national affairs, let alone a civil society practicing respect for democratic rights and obligations.

Until recently, evangelicals in Guatemala were a small, powerless minority who tended to avoid politics. If born-again religion ever reformed society as a whole, such change was expected to come only slowly and incrementally, as the result of masses of individual conversions. Then the dramatic example of Ríos Montt awakened evangelical leaders to a controversial new scenario. Perhaps their rapidly growing strength meant that change could be mandated from on high in the presidential palace, by an evangelical president.

The rapid demise of the Ríos Montt experiment underlined the need for caution. After less than a year and a half, the general was removed from the national palace by an army command offended at his holier-than-thou attitudes. Fearing persecution by the Catholic hierarchy and the army, influential pastors retreated to the careful demarcation of political and religious spheres. While members could become politically active as individuals, evangelical churches as institutions should not. To clarify the line of separation, members who became activists or candidates were supposed to resign any church offices they might hold.[26]

Even after evangelicals constituted one-third of the population, the majority of their leaders continued to focus on building up their congregations. Despite considerable mentoring from the North American religious right, these men were all too aware that the Guatemalan context was very different from the North American one. Expanding their scope of action into the political arena meant running more risks than they cared to take. What brought the evangelical movement into politics was less pastoral activism[27] or North American influence than the movement's extension upward on the class scale. As evangelical churches attracted more of the sort of people who customarily jockeyed for power—businessmen, professionals, and military officers—the movement itself changed.

For all the discredit into which the political system has fallen, the aspiring upper-

middle level of society still mobilizes around the myriad political parties, as vehicles to compete for advantage in the next regime. Three months before the 1990 election, my interviews with evangelical lawyers and retired military officers unexpectedly turned into interviews with hopeful future deputies, and my quest for social vision bumped into their own political hopes. The head of a state enterprise proved to be a presidential candidate. At one point he threw back his head and warbled at me in tongues, then outlined his platform. It was based on Deuteronomy 28 ("Thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow"), and he referred to it as the government of God.

Evangelical politics in Guatemala point toward two different styles of authority. Ríos Montt exemplified the dream of the strongman in power, enforcing change from the top down. For his supporters, many of whom were Catholic, his status as a military man was at least as important as his religion, as summed up in the widespread belief that here was a *militar recto*, a just military man. The hopes invested in the figure of the general dated back further than the country's Protestant churches. Ríos was instantly recognizable as the nineteenth-century *caudillo*, the man on horseback who saves the nation.[28] He represented a traditional (and Catholic) style of authority, yet he talked like an evangelist, preaching that Guatemalans could save themselves and their country through moral exertion. In particular, he was attempting to translate the military virtues so abhorred by many foreign observers—obedience, discipline, devotion to authority—into a new culture of civic responsibility premised on a different kind of authority, the law. "Guatemala is not the police, the captain, the mayor, or the congressman," he told crowds during the 1990 election. "Guatemala is you! The mayor may think he is the authority. The captain may think he is the authority. The policeman may think he is the authority. But authority is he who obeys the law! Even if he has a pistol or a machine gun, this is not authority!"[29]

As a general accustomed to rule by fiat, Ríos was not a very consistent example of the virtues he was preaching. To the discomfort of many, including Protestants concerned about church-state separation, his fervent moralism sounded like a fundamentalist theocracy. Nor did the military chain of command he envisioned from God through himself to the nation sit well with the prevailing style of evangelical leadership, that is, the mutual deference of independent church leaders with no claims to authority over each other. In a sense, Ríos Montt's authoritarianism was a step backward for a movement that, owing to its decentralized form of organization, pointed toward a civil society where authority was based on checks and balances. This was the second style to which evangelical religion pointed—a kind of participation evident in many evangelical churches, but one that had yet to be practiced on the level of national politics.

Revealingly, it took the stern, imposing figure of Ríos Montt to galvanize evangelicals for electoral competition. The quietism of evangelicals had, as their numbers increased, become a loud silence, as if they were an incipient political formation for Guatemalans rejecting the established parties. But they were not a ready-made constituency, as born-again politicians learned when the country returned from a military to a civilian regime. The evangelical contender for the 1985 election was Jorge Se-

rrano Elías, a businessman reformer whom Ríos had appointed to preside over his advisory Council of State. To ward off charges of an evangelical power grab, Serrano's managers denied that they were mounting a religious campaign; but they were mainly evangelicals themselves, and they tried to organize through pastors. The results were disappointing: even though Serrano placed a respectable third—ahead of all the traditional right-wing parties—evangelicals failed to materialize as a bloc, and he obtained only 13.8 percent of the vote. Like the rest of the electorate, the majority of evangelical voters chose the Christian Democrats, a centrist party that originated in the Catholic reform politics of the 1960s and had suffered considerably from army repression.

Although an appealing candidate, Serrano was completely overshadowed in the next presidential campaign by his former chief—until Ríos Montt was thrown out of the race by a constitutional proviso against candidates previously brought to power by coup d'états. President Serrano—elected in January 1991 to serve until 1996—offered a different translation of born-again religion into the public sphere. As a politician, he represented businessmen who placed a high priority on peace and stability as the necessary basis for carrying out neoliberal reforms of Guatemala's state and economy. Serrano was a far more conciliatory figure than Ríos, a consensus builder rather than an authoritarian, who took care to emphasize that he did not govern as a representative of the evangelical church. His mother's family were Maronite Christians from Syria, part of an immigrant business community accustomed to making up for its lack of a power base by making deals.

Prior to election, Serrano demonstrated his negotiating skills by participating in a semi-official "national dialogue" between various sectors of Guatemalan society and the revolutionary movement. Once in office, he was able to bring a reluctant army to the negotiating table with the guerrillas. But he was not about to confront the army over its murder of dissidents. When he raised the issue of "impunity," that is, the unaccountability of the powerful before the law, he was rewarded with an increase in death-squad activity. Typical as well was Serrano's success in stabilizing the national currency against the dollar. While skillful management was part of the reason, another was Guatemala's conversion into a haven for laundering illegal drug profits—the only plausible explanation for an explosion of luxury construction in the capital, even though, for most of the population, the economy continued in recession.[30] Like other reformers being elected across Latin America, he faced an international debt crisis pounding the majority of the population into the ground, elites unwilling to make concessions, and a political system too compromised to extract even minimal compromises and reforms.

Prayer Warfare and Social Reform

Most evangelical leaders still assume that Latin America can follow U.S. models. Based on their own born-again experiences, in which they rose into the middle class (or managed to stay in it) by avoiding costly vices, they believe that the most fruitful

response to social evils is to convince more individuals to change their lives. As for structural injustice, making the exercise of authority more honest and responsible is their answer, not forcing radical structural changes. If enough people follow the rules, evangelical leaders believe, existing institutions will function the way they are supposed to, with a broader distribution of rewards and more respect for civil liberties.

What this means in terms of church politics is suggested by the position espoused by the main evangelical association, in national reconciliation talks with the guerrilla movement. At a 1990 encounter, the representatives of the Evangelical Alliance of Guatemala explained that it was not their duty to examine the historical, social, and economic causes of Guatemala's civil war (which would involve confronting the army over its domination of national life). Instead, they said, evangelical churches were accomplishing a silent form of social work which was transforming Guatemalan society from the ground up.[31]

What does this ameliorative approach offer for reforming the institutions of power in Guatemalan society? Could a new language for talking about the problem of authority change how that authority is exercised? Evangelicals claim that, eventually, it can. To quote Ríos Montt:

> I don't propose an economic program but rather an ethical and moral one. Our problem is disorder. We have to put order into our lives. We need law, order, and discipline. Not Fascism or Nazism, just order and discipline. Restoring order is not a question of administrative measures. It's a matter of setting a moral example. What's important is that the people understand that we know what the law is and that we will apply it. Democracy isn't letting people do whatever they want. Democracy means freedom with responsibility. Democracy means fulfilling your duties.[32]

"In prayer to raise up a nation," an evangelical social worker explains, "breaking spiritual bonds implies having an attitude more open to the changes which are necessary. . . . Then social changes can occur more easily." For example, evangelicals claim, prayer can attack the historical curse of the Spanish Conquest which has done so much to keep Guatemala poor and backward. How so? "You have to understand this country in terms of the Conquest," a businessman told me. "The mentality of the conqueror and the conquered is the great tragedy of this country. It has divided the country in two"—between Indians and the non-Indian Ladinos who discriminate against them. Latin Americans have long blamed their problems on *la mancha indígena* (literally, "the Indian stain")—their failure to exterminate the indigenous population as effectively as did the Anglo settlers of North America. The evangelical businessman have a different perspective on the problem: Christians have the responsibility to teach Ladinos and Indians to treat each other like brothers, and prayer will generate the spiritual dynamism to do so.

Can born-again practice affect the political culture of Guatemala and encourage more equitable social relations? The most detailed argument for such possibilities has been made by the sociologist David Martin. Drawing historical parallels with Protestantism in Europe and North America, Martin describes how evangelicals set up a

private, protected sphere—the congregation—that becomes a "free social space" or "protective social capsule" for generating more egalitarian social relations and forms of authority.[33] The resulting reforms can become a model for changes in the wider society, as occurred in nineteenth-century England when the morality of dissenting churches infiltrated the Anglican establishment, or as Pentecostal experience has infiltrated the Catholic Church through the charismatic renewal. Martin's colleague Peter Berger goes further, calling Latin American Protestantism a nascent "revolution-in-the-making" of the bourgeois variety, with the potential to build "democratic capitalism" in Latin America. Under the influence of Protestantism, Latin America is finally to imitate the pluralistic norms and broad economies of the Protestant heartland in Western Europe and the United States.[34]

Evangelical leaders themselves are making hopeful analogies to South Korea, whose huge, disciplined evangelical churches presumably explain its successful industrialization. But compare South Korea with the other boom economies of the East Asian rim, in Taiwan and Singapore where Christianity is largely absent, and Protestantism can hardly be seen as the key variable. In the case of Guatemala's evangelical elite, prayer warfare against curses and demons could provide a language that actually inspires reform, or it could become a quasi-magical rationale for failing to deal with the structural reasons for national backwardness such as the failure to control the extreme right, push through basic administrative reforms, and broaden the country's internal market.

The reformist bourgeoisie remains an elusive category in Guatemalan society. According to researcher Marcie Mersky, three political tendencies predominate in the Guatemalan upper class. The first is the "old guard," who do not believe in the rule of law and oppose political modernization. Such unrepentant reactionaries are outnumbered by what Mersky calls the "majority tendency," who support a return to constitutional government but only on the army's terms. While this second tendency in the Guatemalan bourgeoisie gives lip service to democracy, its loyalties remain with the national security state which the army maintains behind the facade of changing regimes. A third sector of the bourgeoisie, "the new modernizing right," centers around new industries and nontraditional exports. It opposes coup d'états, makes a more convincing show of revulsion against death squads, and actively seeks a wider social consensus based on free enterprise. Such neoliberal reformers were exemplified by President Jorge Serrano in the early 1990s, but whether they represented upper-class evangelicals as a whole is open to question.[35]

Evangelical growth may be a prelude to modernization in Latin America. But the Guatemalan case is hardly analogous to earlier situations of Protestant-inspired change and reform. The Guatemalan context puts severe restraints on the ability of aspiring reformers even to speak out, let alone accomplish anything. Like other Latin Americans, Guatemalans are also being caught in deeper and more disadvantageous forms of dependency on the global capitalist economy. With the country becoming a free trade arena for transnational giants, competitive forces are likely to undermine the kind of small-scale entrepreneurialism which Protestantism is supposed to promote but which in fact is already well established in Latin America.[36]

Evangelicals are also facing new obstacles in the extremely strong, contradictory messages of consumerism which emanate from the United States even more powerfully than Protestantism does. In the Quiché Maya town of Sacapulas, I found Assemblies of God elders, men in their thirties and forties from an upwardly mobile generation of schoolteachers and civil servants, worshiping in a handsome new temple which was almost empty. Afterward, they lamented that their younger siblings and children were converting instead to the town's new satellite dish. Jesus Christ had been very popular with the town's youth in the 1970s; now their successors were more interested in rock music and video.[37] Sociologist Timothy Evans distinguishes between the early stage of modernization, which entailed building infrastructure for an export-oriented world economy, and the contemporary stage (some would call it "postmodern"), with its "intense development of modern means of mass-communication (especially television)" and "wholesale dissatisfaction with the quality of life chances and life styles available to the people."[38]

Any argument for Protestant social reform depends on the faith (or at least on the values associated with it) passing to the next generation. But to the extent that modern capitalist economies commercialize images of sex and violence and encourage habits of instant self-gratification, the resulting patterns could undermine the reproduction of born-again churches and their ability to serve as a vehicle for cultural change. The "health-and-wealth" gospel is an attempt to resolve this contradiction by promising that believers will receive the rewards of modern consumption. But it may not be a very stable solution, as the poverty of the majority of Guatemalan evangelicals is increasing rather than decreasing.

With evangelical growth, the spectacle of Ríos Montt, and the election of Jorge Serrano are a guide, born-again Protestants seemed to be establishing a precarious spiritual hegemony in Guatemala. While the Catholic Church will continue to be an important institution, evangelical assumptions are increasingly defining how Guatemalans understand themselves and their world. No matter how deeply Guatemala plunges into poverty and chaos, the personal discipline encouraged by evangelical churches will have survival value compared to traditional folk Catholicism. What remains doubtful is whether evangelicals will be able to deal with the underlying inequalities and institutionalized violence which have brought Guatemala to its present state.

Notes

1. Not his real name.

2. For an account of Guatemalan Protestantism as a national movement, see Virginia Garrard Burnett, "A History of Protestantism in Guatemala" (Ph.D. diss., Tulane University, 1986).

3. According to O.C. (Overseas Crusades) Ministries, 31.6 percent of the Guatemalan population was evangelical by July 1987, not counting Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses. Roy A. Wingerd, Jr., "Primer reporte general del Credimiento y Distribución de la Iglesia Evangélica de Guatemala de diciembre 1980 a julio 1987," 12 January 1988, pp. 6, 8. For lack of census and survey data in Guatemala, even carefully calculated

claims are projections based on (a) the membership which each denomination claims; (b) a multiplier (often rather large, in this case 3.5) to account for unbaptized children and neophytes; and (c) growth rates of reported members for past years, in this case averaging 11.8 percent. The result can be quite misleading. For example, O.C. Ministries predicted that by the end of 1990, Guatemala would be 45 percent evangelical. But available survey data corroborate that Guatemala is unusually Protestant. In mid-1990 a Catholic sociologist found that 30 percent of a random sample of 352 people around Quezaltenango said they were evangelical, while another 5 percent identified themselves as Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists, or Jehovah's Witnesses. Timothy E. Evans, "Percentage of Non-Catholics in a Representative Sample of the Guatemalan Population" (Paper presented to the Latin American Studies Association, Washington, D.C., 4 April 1991).

4. The Central American Mission, still one of the most influential evangelical institutions in Guatemala, was founded by C. I. Scofield, author of the famous Scofield Reference Bible, which defined correct doctrine for several generations of North American fundamentalists. Through the mission's influential seminary and radio station, it has popularized the distinctive fundamentalist eschatology of dispensationalism far beyond the boundaries of its own churches, including such nonfundamentalist "historical" denominations as the Presbyterians. Dennis Smith, "The Gospel according to the United States: Evangelical Broadcasting in Central America," in Quentin Schultze, ed., *American Evangelicals and the Mass Media* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Books, 1990).

5. For Guatemala, see June Nash, "Protestantism in an Indian Village in the Western Highlands of Guatemala," *Alpha Kappa Delta*, Winter 1960, pp. 49–53; and idem, "Protestant Groups and Coping with Urban Life in Guatemala City," *American Journal of Sociology* 73 (May 1968): 753–67. David Martin surveys many such studies in *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1990). At the same time, Protestantism can be associated with new kinds of class stratification. This is particularly evident in indigenous communities where sectarianism erodes social cohesion and undermines previously strong defenses against the outside world. For a case study of Protestantism which is associated with the breakdown of communal authority and the sale of productive land to the tourist industry, in a Cakchiquel Maya town on Lake Atitlán, see Duncan Earle, "Authority, Social Conflict, and the Rise of Protestants: Religious Conversion in a Mayan Village," *Social Compass* (forthcoming). For an analysis of Protestantism both as a moral revolution and as a process of class stratification in another Cakchiquel Maya context, see Sheldon Annis, *God and Production in a Guatemalan Town* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987).

6. "Guatemala: The Human Rights Record, 1987" (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1987), pp. 161–68. Not all these killings can be attributed to the army, but local testimony bears out the claim that the army was responsible for the majority of massacres during the period. Indeed, judging from my interviews in the Ixil area of El Quiché Department, numerous army massacres were never reported to human rights agencies, so the actual number of deaths could be significantly higher. For more detailed accounts of Ríos Montt, with differing assessments of his responsibility for human rights violations, see Joseph Anfuso and David Sczepanski, *He Gives, He Takes Away*, republished as *Servant or Dictator?* (Eureka, Calif.: Radiance Publications, 1983). Also David Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant? The Politics of Evangelical Growth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); and idem, "Why They Like Ríos Montt," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 24, no. 4 (January 1991): 4–7.

7. Constitutionally, the Catholic Church has been disestablished in Guatemala since 1871. But the Catholic hierarchy argues that Catholicism is essential to national identity. Evangelicals continue to perceive official favoritism toward it.

8. A recent account of the crisis of the

Catholic Church in Guatemala is Jose Luís Chea, *Guatemala: La cruz fragmentada* (Sabanilla, San Jose, Costa Rica: Editorial Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones y Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, 1988).

9. When parish priests inveighed against costly, inebriated fiestas honoring saints, to the satisfaction of peasants redirecting their surplus from communal rituals to personal accumulation, it offended traditionalists. When Catholic priests tried to placate the traditionalists by blessing traditional ceremonies, it offended parishioners intent on breaking with the old ways and encouraged their exit to fledgling Protestant churches.

10. Virginia Garrard Burnett, draft manuscript.

11. Catholics continue to point out instances in which the army manipulates evangelicals against them. In Chunimá, Chichicastenango, in 1990, Catholics refusing to serve in the army's civil patrols were attacked by evangelicals still in the patrols and under pressure from the army. In the Ixcán region, refugees returning from Mexico to accept the government's amnesty were heavily Protestant, with most of the Catholic refugees remaining in Mexico because they refused to trust the army. As a result, evangelical returnees were being assigned cooperative land which used to belong to Catholics. Even at the height of the violence, however, religion was just one of the many kinds of conflict prompting neighbors to take vengeance on each other. The usual relationship was toleration, with mutual recrimination from competing leaders rather than rank and file, who were too busy keeping food on the table to waste energy over religious differences.

12. John Page, "Brasil Para Cristo: The Cultural Construction of Pentecostal Networks in Brazil" (Ph.D diss., New York University, 1984).

13. Of 1,276 adults, 8.9 percent said they were evangelical and another 1.6 percent identified themselves as Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses, two unorthodox groups whose behavior is sufficiently similar to be often lumped together with evangélicos. Another 8 percent of the sample said they had been evangelical at another time in their lives but not now, suggesting a desertion factor of almost half. Of this latter group of ex-evangelicals, nearly two-thirds identified themselves as Catholic, another third said they had no religion, and the remainder became Mormons, Witnesses, or Jews. Jean B. A. Kessler, "A Summary of the Costa Rican Evangelical Crisis: August, 1989," IDEA/Church Growth Studies Program, Pasadena, California, July 1990, pp. 2, 5–6.

14. The most detailed indictment has been a pastoral letter from Archbishop Próspero Penados del Barrio, "La Iglesia Católica en Guatemala, signo de verdad y esperanza," published in the daily newspaper *La Hora* on 18 January (pp. 16, 22) and 19 January (pp. 16, 22) 1989.

15. For an analysis of the differences between the two, see Smith, "The Gospel according to the United States," pp. 294–95.

16. For a detailed look at evangelical media in Guatemala, see Susan Rose and Quentin Schultze, "The Evangelical Awakening in Guatemala: Fundamentalist Impact on Education and Media," in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds., *Fundamentalisms and Society: Reclaiming the Sciences, the Family, and Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

17. Dennis Smith, "Coming of Age: A Reflection on Pentecostals, Politics and Popular Religion in Guatemala," *Pneuma* (forthcoming).

18. For a description of the prosperity message and the growth of neo-Pentecostal churches in South Africa, see E. S. Morran and L. Schlemmer, *Faith for the Fearful: An Investigation into New Churches in the Greater Durban Area* (Durban: University of Natal, 1984).

19. Cho is such a strict premillennialist that he may not make this claim himself, but the equation was being made by Guatemalan evangelical leaders I interviewed in 1990.

20. For further details on dominion theology, see Stoll, *Is Latin America Turn-*

ing Protestant? and H. Wayne House and Thomas D. Ice, *Dominion Theology: Blessing or Curse?* (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah Press, 1989).

21. For representative interpretations, see John Dawson, *Taking Our Cities for God: How to Break Spiritual Strongholds* (Altamonte Springs, Fla.: Creation House, 1990); and James Robison, *Winning the Real War: Overcoming the Power of Darkness* (Altamonte Springs, Fla.: Creation House, 1991).

22. "Intercession is spiritual defiance of what is, in the name of what God has promised. Intercession visualizes an alternative future to the one apparently fated by the momentum of the current contradictory forces. . . . It creates an island of relative freedom in a world gripped by unholy necessity." Walter Wink, "Prayer and the Powers," *Sojourners*, October 1990.

23. My point is speculative, but groundwork on the topic has been laid by Elizabeth Brusco, "The Household Basis of Evangelical Religion and the Reformation of Machismo in Colombia" (Ph.D diss., City University of New York, 1986).

24. Asociación para el Avance de las Ciencias Sociales en Guatemala, "Por si mismos: Un estudio preliminar de las 'maras' en la Ciudad de Guatemala," in *Cuadernos de Investigacion*, no. 4 (Guatemala City, 1989), pp. 44–53.

25. One told the following story. A lieutenant in the Salvadoran army fell into an ambush and was taken prisoner by guerrillas. Wounded and in danger of execution, he offered his life to the Lord. After being liberated by his army comrades, he found they did not appreciate his witness, which lead to further tests of faith. In battle he was ordered to take the most dangerous positions. When his Christian testimony won over an entire town, he was suspected of making a deal with the guerrillas. Preaching in a church that had been infiltrated, he picked the guerrillas out of the crowd with a question from a Bible quiz. Within ten minutes his message had the guerrillas on their knees, tearful and repentant. Next, even though he had given his guerrilla converts amnesty, an order arrived to execute them. Under suspicion for collaborating with the enemy, he appealed the order up the chain of command. At last he came face to face with a general. On hearing his story, the general ripped up the order, having just accepted Christ at a banquet of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship.

26. Hopes for organizing a political party with a direct line from God continued to percolate. What more sophisticated leaders wanted to avoid was illustrated by the pastor from Quezaltenango who said he had been told to run for president by an angel. The angel healed him of cancer and ordered him to reorganize the long-defunct Liberal Progressive party, associated with a dictator who was overthrown in 1944. *Hechos* (Guatemala City), 14 January 1990, p. 14.

27. Guatemala's first two evangelical presidents have both collided with pastors and fellow elders over their political plans. In the case of Ríos Montt, the Church of the Word discouraged him from running for president in 1981 but enthusiastically supported his dictatorship the following year. Anfuso and Sczepanski, *He Gives, He Takes Away*. As for Serrano Elías, he was forced to leave the Elim Church following his unsuccessful run for president in 1985.

28. The military strongman was a product of national independence in the early nineteenth century, when authoritarian rule from far-off Spain was replaced by a local elite who tried to institute republican norms. Soon political factions were raising armies against each other, only to let power slip into the hands of warlords. The resulting pattern of misrule has continued down to the present. During constitutional interludes, civilian authority becomes associated with corruption and disorder to such an extent that popular sentiment coalesces around military dictators employing the rhetoric of law and order.

29. Recorded by author in Nebaj, Department of El Quiché, 1 September 1990.

30. "Drug Trafficking Increases in Guatemala," *Latin America Press*, 23 April 1992, p. 5.

31. Marco Tulio Cajas, "La guerra es

inmoral: Queremos la paz," *Hechos* (Guatemala City), November 1990, pp. 39–40. The talks were also attended by the Conference of Evangelical Churches of Guatemala (CIEDEG), which supports the same kind of social critique as the Catholic Church, and is affiliated with ecumenical groups in the United States and Europe but represents far fewer denominations than the Evangelical Alliance.

32. Quoted in Marc Cooper, "The Last Rattle on the Snake," *Village Voice*, 24 July 1990, pp. 35–40.

33. Martin, *Tongues of Fire,* pp. 268, 279, 284.

34. Ibid., p. ix. For different interpretations of the Protestant analogy, see Michael Dodson and Laura Nuzzi O'Shaughnessy, *Nicaragua's Other Revolution: Religious Faith and Political Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); and Jean Pierre Bastian, *Breve historia del Protestantismo en América Latina* (Mexico City: Casa Unida de Publicaciones, 1986).

35. A fourth tendency, and the smallest according to Merskey, believes that long-term stability requires the redistribution of income to increase the purchasing power of the lower classes. Marcie Mersky, "Empresarios y transicion politica in Guatemala" (Paper for the project Modalidades de los Procesos de Democratización in Centro América, sponsored by the government of Norway and coordinated by Consejo Superior de Universidades de Centro America, 1988), pp. 16–19.

36. Rose and Schulze, "The Evangelical Awakening."

37. Cf. Timothy Evans on the long-established Church of God in San Francisco El Alto, Totonicapán, which also seemed to experience a high rate of nominalism. "I don't like the old folks' ways," said one youth who belonged to the church but did not attend services. "I'd rather go to the disco." Evans, "Religious Conversion in Quezaltenango, Guatemala" (Ph.D diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1990), p. 246.

38. Ibid., p. 292.