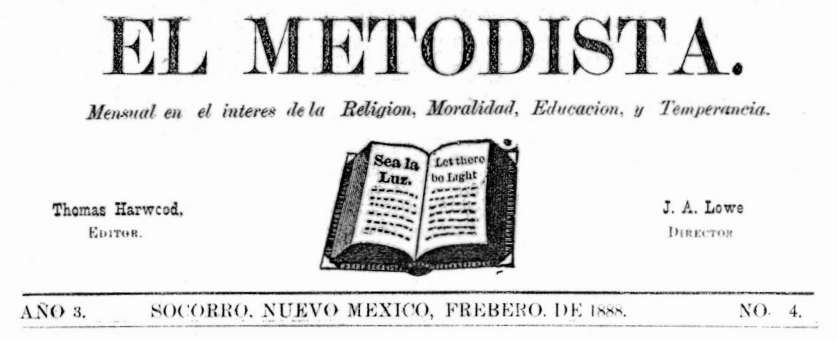
Sea la Luz



EL METODISTA.

Mensual en el interes de la Religion, Moralidad, Educacion, y Temperancia.

Sea la Luz. Let there be Light

Thomas Harwood, Editor.

J. A. Lowe Director

AÑO 3. SOCORRO, NUEVO MEXICO, FREBERO DE 1888. NO. 4.

"Sea la Luz"

"Sea la luz" was a motto on the banner of both the *Metodista Neo-Mexicano* and *El Metodista* published in New Mexico during the 1880s by Thomas Harwood. It is a quote from Genesis 1:3 ("Let there be light") and is a reflection of the Protestant understanding of the role of their message.

Sea la Luz

The Making of Mexican Protestantism in the American Southwest, 1829–1900

Juan Francisco Martínez

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En memoria de:

Ana Gregoria García
Anita García
Juanita Guerra

Tatarabuela, bisabuela y abuela,
mujeres que se convirtieron a la fe evangélica
en México y Texas y que influyeron
en mi propio compromiso de seguir
a Cristo Jesús y de servir a otros en su nombre.

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Abbreviations

BAP	American Baptist Convention (Northern)
BGC	Baptist General Convention (Southern)
MEC	Methodist Episcopal Church
MECS	Methodist Episcopal Church, South
PCUS	Presbyterian Church in the United States (Southern)
PCUSA	Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (Northern)

Preface

THIS BOOK WAS BORN IN THE LATINO PROTESTANT COMMUNITY. Los *aleluyas*, as Latino Protestants were once called, often made their commitment to follow Jesus Christ at great social cost. Because they are a small minority within an ethnic minority, the story of their origins has often been lost, or ignored, by both American Protestants and Latinos. Published works about Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the nineteenth-century Southwest largely ignore Spanish-speaking Protestants, either making no mention of them at all or seeing this population as a very marginal part of the community. The little material that exists is written primarily by Protestants and usually includes only a small section on the nineteenth century as part of a larger work. The few exceptions tend to focus on the Protestant missionaries and not on the converts. Thus, this book began as a dissertation that addressed this gap in the history of Latinos and the Latino Protestant churches of the southwestern United States.[1] At the same time, the gap in the historical accounts is also a gap in my own story. The Mexican American Protestants of the American Southwest are my forebearers and have made me who I am. This is an attempt to tell a part of their story.

The bulk of the statistical data and basic information about church and mission locations and leaders in this book come from the denominational statistical records of the data reported by their missionaries and churches. Other sources include articles in denominational and home mission periodicals, missionaries' reports and memoirs (particularly those by Melinda

Rankin and Thomas Harwood[2]), conference and synodal minutes, home mission publications, and Spanish-language periodicals and tracts. Finally, biographies and biographical notes were written during the first part of the twentieth century about three nineteenth-century Mexican American Protestants: José Ynés Perea, Gabino Rendón, and José Policarpo Rodríguez.[3] This means that the primary sources for understanding nineteenth-century Mexican American Protestants are the Anglo American Protestant missionaries. So, though the goal is to tell the story of the Spanish-speaking converts, it is mostly mediated through the perspective of the missionaries, and their interpretation of the missionary encounter between themselves and the Mexicans of the nineteenth-century American Southwest.

Many scholars have addressed aspects of the encounter between Mexican Americans and Protestant missionaries in the nineteenth-century Southwest. Randi Walker (*Protestantism in the Sangre de Cristos 1850–1920*, University of New Mexico Press, 1991) analyzed Protestant mission work among the Spanish speaking in the Sangre de Cristos Mountains of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. Susan Yohn (*A Contest of Faiths*, Cornell University Press, 1995) studied the work of the Presbyterian missionary teachers in the same region. Others, such as Colin Goodykoontz, Ferenc Szasz, and Mark Banker, have addressed aspects of this encounter within the larger framework of Protestant Home Missions in the Southwest.

Many people were crucial to this effort. Paul Pierson, my dissertation mentor, encouraged me and also gave me the freedom to develop this project. Justo González helped me keep the research within the larger framework of Latino Protestant historiography. Randi Walker´s research and counsel provided important pointers during my research. I am particularly indebted to Minerva and Pablo Garza, longtime Methodist pastors and leaders in Texas, whose extensive experience helped me understand Latino Methodist history. Also, I am grateful to Leslie

Hawthorne Kingler and Susan Carlson Wood for their careful reading and editing of the manuscript.

My parents, Juan and Bertha Martínez, modeled a commitment to pastoral service in the Latino community and to excellence in study, even though their own opportunities for formal education were limited. They taught me to be proud of my Latino and Protestant heritage and of Spanish, the language they taught and nurtured in me. *¡Muchas gracias!*

Most importantly, I am indebted to my wife, Olga, and my children, Xaris and Josué. They encouraged me not to give up when progress was slow, and they sacrificed family time so that I could research and write.

Introduction

THE CONQUEST THAT TOOK FROM MEXICO THE TERRITORY THAT IS today the southwestern United States made approximately 100,000 Spanish-speaking people into U.S. citizens. These new citizens were Roman Catholic and represented American Protestants' first significant opportunity to preach to Spanish-speaking Catholics on the American continent. The tensions and relationships that developed in that interaction continue to this day. As the Latino community continues to grow and as a growing number of Latinos become Protestant,[1] the issues raised during the nineteenth century become even more pertinent. Historians, sociologists, and church leaders will find that the nineteenth-century story seems strangely contemporary. The relationship between conversion to Protestantism and cultural assimilation, the role of religion in cultural identity maintenance and inter-ethnic relations between Latinos and larger American society are all issues that began when the Mexicans north of the Rio Grande became American citizens in 1848. How those issues were addressed in the past speaks volumes to how they are being addressed today.

Latino Protestants, as a distinct ethno-religious group, were born in the midst of this encounter. These converts found spiritual vitality in their new faith, even as they struggled to define their space within both the Latino Catholic and the Anglo American Protestant communities. Their experiences continue to play themselves out in the borderlands of the Southwest as millions of Latinos continue to live in the midst of the legacy of that conquest.[2]

Many Protestants opposed the Mexican-American War (1846–1848) that resulted in the conquest of the Southwest. Others justified it by stating that a U.S. victory would open new evangelistic opportunities in the conquered territories and Mexico. Once the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) placed the Southwest in U.S. control, many Protestant leaders who originally opposed the war also began to see it as the opening of a new mission field. This raised the question of the relationship between the nationalist agenda of a powerful nation and the missional goals of a church that reaps the benefits of being a part of that nation, an issue very much alive in the United States today.

Protestant desires to evangelize these Mexican Catholics who were now U.S. citizens were only a small chapter of a much larger effort by Protestant missionaries. Anglo American Protestants were convinced of the superiority of Protestantism over Catholicism. They were also sure that God was blessing the United States because of its Protestant heritage. The western expansion was a clear sign, for them, that God had a special mission for the United States. Yet the conquest of the Southwest also occurred in the midst of the growing migration of Catholics from Europe. Many Protestants were afraid that Catholics would not be good American citizens and that they would subvert God's blessing. Particularly, they were afraid that the Catholics had a primary allegiance to a foreign potentate (the pope) and that they would never give full allegiance to the United States. Therefore, Protestants had the duty, both as Christians and as Americans, to evangelize Catholics in the United States. Mexican Catholics, they believed, were one more group of people who were now American citizens who did not have the truth of Protestant faith and who could threaten the future of the United States if they did not become Protestants.

Protestant missionaries interpreted Mexican Catholicism in the Southwest within this broader understanding. As one reads how the missionaries understood Mexican Catholicism, it is

clear that they did not understand the distinctives of this faith expression, nor its role in the social structures of the region. Many of their descriptions are clearly wrong, and many more provide a very distorted picture of Mexican Catholicism. Yet they are a faithful reflection of their understanding of the theological and cultural superiority of Protestant Christianity.

Nonetheless, this new evangelistic opportunity brought on by the end of the war with Mexico did not usher in a major mission effort among the Mexicans who remained in the Southwest. The handful of missionaries who went into the Southwest prior to the Civil War either abandoned their work for various reasons or saw little lasting evidence of their endeavors. The Mexican community did not readily accept Protestantism, and there were very few converts during the early years. After the Civil War several denominations pursued mission work in the region, though their efforts were relatively small. Despite some significant results, the end of the nineteenth century showed little possibility that strong Protestant churches would soon develop in the community. By 1900 there were only 150 Spanish-language Protestant congregations with a reported total of 5,632 adult church members in the Southwest. Yet these converts represented the beginning of a Latino Protestant identity and would play an important role in Protestantism's later expansion among Latinos throughout the Southwest and beyond.

During the nineteenth century a complex set of issues influenced Protestant mission efforts among Mexican Americans. These endeavors were shaped by Protestants' view of their mission and role in America, adaptation mechanisms used by the Mexicans to survive as a conquered people, and the influence of the broader American (Protestant) society on the Mexican American population. Each of these elements affected both the motivation and message of the Protestant missionaries, as well as the response to their efforts. But these efforts also took place within the larger context of the conquest of the Southwest that

both provided the opportunity for the Protestant missionaries and limited their impact.

This book examines the Protestant mission efforts among the Mexicans who remained in the territory conquered from Mexico from the time of the first missionary contacts in the late 1820s through the end of the nineteenth century. Though these people became American citizens as a result of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), they were treated as foreigners in their own land. In nineteenth-century Protestant literature they were usually referred to as Mexicans or Spanish speaking. Toward the end of the period a few documents began to refer to them as Mexican Americans. To avoid anachronistic references, the terms *Mexican, Mexican American,* and *Spanish speaking* are used throughout to refer to the nineteenth-century population in general, and *tejano, neomejicano,* and *californio* are used to refer to those from a specific region. The term *Latino* is only used when referring to the larger community in the United States today, consisting partly of the descendants of those conquered during the nineteenth century.

Chapters One and Two offer a historical and social perspective on Protestant mission work among Mexican Americans by reviewing Protestant attitudes toward the U.S. conquest of the Southwest from Mexico and toward Mexicans during the nineteenth century. Chapter Three analyzes Protestant motives for evangelizing Mexicans in the Southwest. Chapters Four through Seven look at the Protestant missionary efforts and their impact in the Mexican American communities of the Southwest. Chapter Eight provides a description of Mexican American Protestants in the nineteenth century based on the limited available original sources. The conclusion places the nineteenth century beginnings within the larger story of the growth of Latino Protestantism in the Southwest.

Early Mexican American Protestant converts were at the margins of both their broader ethnic and religious communi-

ties. Mexican American Catholics rejected them because they had become Protestants. They had little control over the structures and symbols of Protestant faith, yet they began developing an identity that was both Mexican American and Protestant. The new Borderlands of the Southwest created the space for a new religious understanding even as it placed many pressures on its development.

Latino Protestants in the United States no longer have to deal with persecution or overt isolation from the larger Latino community. But the tensions related to being Latino and Protestant in the United States continue. Issues like cultural assimilation, identity maintenance, immigration, and relations with Latino Catholics and with the larger American population continue to be crucial for Latino Protestants in the Borderlands. Being both Latino and Protestant continues to be a dynamic identity whose boundaries are not easily defined nor maintained.

1

"Planting the Institutions of Freedom"

Protestant Attitudes Toward the Conquest of the Southwest

Our country, right or wrong!

1840s popular slogan

The conquered hate the conquerors, and all that belongs to them, and very reluctantly, if ever, will they adopt their religious beliefs, social usages, forms and government, arts and sciences, and methods of advancement, except by stern compulsion.

Abiel Livermore, *The War with Mexico Revisited* (1850)

The Mexican-American War (1846–1848) generated opposition and protest from many Anglo American Protestants.[1] A strong antiwar sentiment in many churches led to denunciations of the United States' aggression against Mexico. Opposition to the war, however, did not necessarily imply disagreement with its principal goal: territorial expansion. Many Protestant leaders strongly opposed the war, but most supported the conquest of the Southwest.

Protestant Views on the Mexican-American War

The war with Mexico occurred during a time of growing tension in the United States. Slavery was dividing the country; Westward migration was moving the center of power from East to West; settlement of the Oregon Territory and the annexation of Texas heightened the possibility of war with Great Britain. All of these events were occurring in the midst of a broader debate about the identity of the United States.[2] Each of these issues colored people's attitudes toward the Mexican-American War and, for many, seemed to overshadow it in importance. For many Protestants the relationship of the war to these other issues was as important as the actual hostilities.

Opposition to the Mexican-American War

The strongest Protestant statements opposing the war with Mexico appear in denominational periodicals and published sermons. These critical and often scathing denunciations reflect a wide range of concerns about the conflict. Nonetheless, few denominations issued official pronouncements against the war. Those that were made usually reflected a pacifist stance. The strongest antiwar declarations came from the Unitarians.[3] Several other groups also published declarations against the war. Baptists in New York stated that "the spirit of war is contrary to, and utterly forbidden by the teaching and spirit of the Gospel."[4] Congregationalists called the war an "unchristian and most pernicious custom."[5] Presbyterians did not condemn the war directly, but called for its quick end due to "the great and dreadful evils of war."[6]

Many individuals, however, made pronouncements against the war. The Unitarian and Quaker periodicals, *Christian Register* and *Friends' Weekly Intelligencer,* published most of them.[7] But antiwar statements were also made by others, including Charles Hodge, who called on the 1846 Presbyterian

General Assembly "to confess before him [God] those nation's sins, which have provoked this national judgment."[8]

Nevertheless, most Protestant opposition to the war was due to its impact on other issues. For Protestants from the North and Northeast the most important issue was slavery. Many saw the war as a Southern effort to obtain new territories that could eventually become slave states. They saw the issue not so much as the war itself, but as the expansion of slavery into the Southwest.[9] The precedent was already set: Texas had been annexed in order to strengthen slavery. Congregationalist pastor Samuel Harris declared in his 1847 Thanksgiving sermon that "the present war [with Mexico], as is well known, is a consequence of that annexation. Therefore it is a war which slavery has brought upon us."[10] Abiel Livermore of the American Peace Society continued to reflect this sentiment after the war ended: "[T]he paramount cause and motive of the war with Mexico, without doubt or controversy, was territorial aggrandizement, under the dominion of domestic slavery and the internal slave trade."[11]

Regional tensions were also involved. New England Protestants like John Morison were concerned by what they saw as a national thirst for territorial expansion.[12] Presbyterian leader Albert Barnes lamented that "the territory [to be conquered] . . . would make seventy-two States of the same dimensions [as Massachusetts]"[13] which would change the states' balance of power. Westward expansion and the new statehood of large territories were diluting the traditional power of New England.

Samuel Harris was also concerned about the effects of the war on the population and the government. He stated that it was creating a love of conquest and pushing the country toward despotism, as reflected in the maxim *Our country, right or wrong*, which had become popular at the time.[14] It was also creating changes in the United States that would negatively impact the country. "[B]y increasing the dissimilarity of our population

and the diversity of our local interest, by leading to a larger standing army, and by the direct and indirect military influence of the conquest, [this] must make our government more difficult to be administered and our liberties more precarious."[15]

Thomas Thomas, another Congregationalist minister, warned that war hostilities were producing a situation where there would be "an end to all law but that which is promulgated at the cannon's mouth."[16] American soldiers were committing atrocities such that an anonymous contributor to the *Christian Register* suggested that it might be better to send convicts to fight with Mexico—their moral conduct would be no worse than that of the soldiers.[17]

Antiwar Protestants argued that, contrary to what many believed, the war with Mexico would not help the "backward" Mexicans or expand republican and Protestant principles. In his 1847 Thanksgiving sermon Congregationalist pastor Burdett Hart stated that instead of encouraging Mexico to model itself after the United States, the war of conquest was providing a bad example.[18] Livermore reminded Americans that "the conquered hate the conquerors, and all that belongs to them."[19]

Support for the War

In spite of the significant opposition, some Anglo Protestants supported the Mexican-American War. Protestant publications did not strongly present the pro-war arguments, however, probably because they were defended in the press and were the government's official position. Nonetheless, there were Protestants who spoke in favor of the war. Most were part of Southern denominations or groups with a large stake in the expansion into the Southwest.

The advocates gave several reasons for the war effort. One of the most persistent arguments was that of self-defense. According to this view, Mexico had started the war with the United

States by killing "American soldiers on American soil."[20] Therefore, the country had the right to defend itself and should have been wary of peace societies that questioned this responsibility. Thomas Smyth, a Southern Presbyterian pastor, denounced "a wild enthusiastic philanthropy which attempts to be wiser and more merciful than God; to mend His ways; and to extirpate by methods of man's devising, evils which arise from the necessary derangement into which sin has plunged the world."[21]

A published review of Smyth's speech stated that a country has a right to declare war against another because the "right of punishment . . . is little more than the right of self-defense, a right belonging alike to individuals and to States."[22] Smyth also stated that participation in the war against Mexico was a Christian duty. War was a necessary evil in our world and true Christians should support their country in war. "True patriotism . . . is, like true politeness, the offspring of piety."[23] The Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MECS) presented the same point of view in their 1851 Annual Report. Reflecting on the "success" of the war with Mexico, the report stated that "victory and conquest have ever followed the preaching of the cross."[24]

Destiny of the Southwest in Protestant Thought

Regardless of their position on the war, virtually all Protestants were in favor of American hegemony in the Southwest. Unitarian pastor A. P. Peabody lamented that "while the fortune of war hung in doubt, there were indeed many ready to denounce it. . . . But now that success has crowned our arms, we find many members and . . . leaders of that party joining in the congratulations and festivities that hail the recent victories."[25] Both during and immediately after the war with Mexico there was very little opposition to U.S. control over the Southwest. Even those who opposed territorial expansion during the hostilities saw it in a more favorable light once the land was conquered.[26]

Most nineteenth-century Protestant leaders seemed to agree with Josiah Strong, who stated in 1858 "that God, with infinite wisdom and skill, is training the Anglo-Saxon race for an hour sure to come in the world's future."[27] Even those who opposed the imperial expansion implicit in Manifest Destiny seemed to accept the idea that Anglo-Saxons had a special place in the world.[28] According to Livermore, a pacifist who opposed the war with Mexico, Anglo-Saxons "have the saving ideas of Science, Freedom, and Christianity, that are able, if diffused, to keep the life-blood flowing, in strong and pure tides through their own hearts, and also to stir the deep sleep of paganism with fresh and waking pulses of regeneration."[29]

Both pro-war and antiwar Protestant leaders held this view. Theodore Parker spoke vehemently against the war with Mexico, yet he described Mexico as "semibarbarous" and "miserable."[30] Sermons published by the American Home Missionary Society recorded this same sentiment. Eskine Mason preached that "the unmeasured superiority of Christian over unevangelized nations, is universally acknowledged."[31] An 1847 Society report contrasted the Pilgrims and Spaniards, drawing the conclusion that Protestants had a much more valuable civilization.[32] In 1848 a Society report stated that because of this superiority, American migration westward would produce "a vigorous and enterprising nation . . . furnished from the start with all the requisites for a state of high civilization."[33]

Several Protestant leaders saw the movements in the Southwest as part of a larger process involving the general advancement of Anglo-Saxons. Read, who condemned the Mexican-American War, stated that Anglo Americans were "planting the institutions of freedom, and displaying the improvements of civilization, and diffusing the benign influences of religion from the Atlantic to the Pacific."[34] According to Strong, the Anglo-Saxon had an "instinct or genius for colonizing . . . [and] pushing his way into new countries."[35] J. J. Miter told the American

Home Missionary Society that Anglo-Saxons in the New World would "not have fulfilled their noble destiny, until they have planted the . . . principles of the Reformation on the shore of the Pacific."[36] The Society also compared the "tent of the [westward] emigrant" to the "cabin of the May Flower" and asked "why may not other *Pilgrims* plant another *Plymouth* on the shore of the Pacific, with the germs of institutions, under whose benign operation their sons for ages, shall rejoice in *'Freedom to Worship God?'*"[37]

Even the Unitarian Morison took for granted that the United States would obtain more territories. He never argued for returning the Southwest to Mexico. His concern was that the West, and other future territorial additions, not be annexed as slave states or territories. He hoped Congress would pass a resolution "declaring the perpetual Independence from the tyranny of slavery, of all territories hereafter added to the United States."[38]

Most Protestants in the United States were convinced that God was working for and through them. Many compared themselves to the Israelites entering the land of Canaan. Richard Storrs told the American Home Missionary Society that "nations have been driven out before us, greater and mightier than we, that we might enter in, and take the land for an inheritance, as it is this day."[39]

Members of the Society saw their commission enlarging because "another of those great migrations that mark the history of the Anglo-Saxon race has begun."[40] According to Miter, this expansion from the Mississippi to the Pacific was inevitable, and "a few more swelling surges of emigration" would complete it.[41]

The only disagreement among Protestants had to do with explaining how God was moving in events such as the Mexican-American War and the subsequent migration into the Southwest. Most of those who opposed the war with Mexico favored U.S. expansion into the Southwest and saw it as part of

God's plan for Anglo-Saxons. Hart was merely concerned that the "conquest would be harmful to fulfilling the mission [of being an example to the world]."[42] Livermore stated that because Mexicans had been conquered, they would now very reluctantly adopt Anglo-Saxon "religious belief, social usages, forms of government, arts and sciences, and methods of governments, except by stern compulsion."[43] Instead of fighting a war, the United States should have negotiated with Mexico to secure "all the territory she wanted."[44] As a Protestant opposed to the war, Read attempted to explain God's work in history by concluding that God had used the Mexican-American War for good. Although war was wrong, "from the hour that the American flag floated over the City of Mexico, a new destiny awaited all those portions which were brought under Anglo-Saxon rule."[45] Those who favored the war spoke of it in much more glowing terms. According to the MECS 1851 Annual Report previously quoted, God working in the conquest of the Southwest was bringing His plan to fulfillment.[46]

A crucial part of God's plan for more religiously motivated Protestants with a missionary zeal included preaching the Protestant message. They were convinced that the United States had a special part in the expansion of Protestant faith. "America was now added to the known domains of the world, *to make room for the church*, and to become in its turn a fountain, from which should go forth streams of salvation to the ends of the earth."[47] Expansion of missionary activity into the Southwest formed part of the larger mission of bringing "other tribes and races under the obedience of God, and [in] harmony with his laws."[48]

Religiously motivated Protestants also had the associated goal of curtailing Catholicism. Hollis Read afterwards saw "the hand of God" in the fact that the war with Mexico had "inclosed vast territories within the domains of Protestantism, and thrown open to the influences of an evangelical Christianity and an Anglo-Saxon civilization a large Romish population."

He believed that the war was "nefarious," but God had used it to wrest away a once Roman Catholic territory "as the wants of the reformed religion have required" and placed it in Protestant control. Victory over Mexico provided an opportunity to cut back "the boundaries of Romanism."[49] The conquest of the Southwest opened the opportunity to extend Protestant faith to the Mexican Catholics who had never before been able to hear the Protestant message.

Protestants also felt that a part of their mission included extending the republican form of government in the Southwest and throughout the world. For some, preaching the Protestant gospel and promoting republicanism were part and parcel of their task. Baptist J. N. Granger thanked God because he was seeing the day "when this infant state of ours [will] give lessons in civil and religious liberty to the despotisms of the old world."[50] In his message to the American Home Missionary Society, Barnes referred to "the better influences of our Protestant and Republican institutions."[51] Read believed that God had given Anglo Americans the task of extending Protestantism and republicanism because they were a "progressive race." God had chosen people like the Puritans (and their descendants) for this task because they were "men who hated oppression, abhorred ignorance and vice—who were, in their very souls, *republicans* and *Christians*—these were the men, chosen out by sovereign Wisdom, to control the destinies of the new world."[52]

Protestant mission agencies also felt that they had a responsibility toward the people they had conquered. According to Livermore, the Mexicans of New Mexico and California were a "mongrel race" who had cheapened the "American birthright" by being given American citizenship.[53] These people had inherited "the cruelty, bigotry, and superstition that have marked the character of the Spaniards from the earliest times."[54] Therefore, Mexicans were doomed to "ignorance, degradation, and misery."[55] Episcopalian leader H. Forrester declared that Protestants

had a responsibility to preach a message that could free and regenerate them by bringing them in contact "with American ideas and customs."[56]

Anglo-Saxons were a "strong race, which absorbs many others."[57] They needed to purify the Mexicans who were "indolent" and lacked "consistency" as a people.[58] Protestant missionaries would preach the gospel and extend their efforts to include "civilization, the introduction of the arts, and the establishment of good government among [the Mexicans]."[59] "A strong infusion of the American race would impart energy and industry gradually to the indolent Mexicans,"[60] as would the introduction into this "pagan" nation of a "Christian language" (English).[61] If Protestant missionaries were successful in converting the Mexicans into Protestants and good Americans they would fulfill an important part of their God-given task in the Southwest.

U.S. imperial expansion into the Southwest and Protestant support of that process created the framework for the Protestant evangelistic efforts among the conquered Mexicans. Victorious Protestants would proclaim the superiority of their faith to defeated Catholics and call them to become good U.S. citizens by accepting the Protestant faith. The takeover of the Southwest made conquest, and the need to adapt to it, an important component in the Mexican Catholic response to the Protestant message in the Southwest.

2

"Unfit for the Duties and Privileges of Citizens"

Anglo American Protestant Attitudes Toward the Mexicans of the Southwest

None but people advanced to a very high state of moral and intellectual improvement are capable, in a civilized state, of maintaining free government.

John C. Calhoun, "The Government of a White Race" (1848)

[The New Mexicans are] not fond of work, but when it is absolutely necessary to buy candles and whiskey, and pay the musicians for a dance, you can rely on . . . [them] for working as long as the necessity lasts.

W. M. Thayer, "The New Mexican" (1890)

From an Anglo American Protestant perspective, the conquest of the Southwest was a mixed blessing. The United States had obtained land for expansion, but it now had the responsibility of dealing with three "exceptional populations"—Native

Americans, Mexican Americans and Mormons—the latter two of which were American citizens.[1] The latter presented a particular source of difficulties for the United States because these new citizens had a "foreign" language and religion. Anglo American Protestants viewed Mexican Americans as Catholic outsiders, who were unfit for the privileges of citizenship. Before going into the Southwest and meeting any Mexicans, Protestants already had a very negative view of the Mexican population. When they started moving into the area they saw no redeeming qualities in the Mexicans. The derogatory statements they made of the people demonstrate that they did not understand the religious, cultural, and social reality of the people. The missionaries' descriptions were often distorted and sometimes completely false. Nonetheless, by hearing their voices one understands what motivated them and why they were so surprised when their efforts did not produce the results they expected.

Strangers in Their Own Land[2]

The most telling Anglo American Protestant comment about the conquered Mexican Americans was that the new Anglo immigrant population labeled them as "foreigners." Though they were there when the Americans arrived, the conquest had changed their status. The conquerors failed to acknowledge that this group had lived on the land for several centuries and that the Spanish-speaking people were not the immigrants in the land. From the first time they came into contact with Mexican Americans, Protestant missionaries adopted this perspective. William C. Blair, a Presbyterian missionary to the Spanish-speaking in Texas when it was an independent republic (1836–1845), stated that "although this mission is for the present located in Texas, it is properly a mission to Mexico."[3]

This perspective became the established understanding after

the U.S. government gained control of the Southwest. Missionaries to the Mexican Americans in the 1870s described them as "foreign." In an 1872 letter, Thomas Harwood stated that ninety-six percent of the New Mexican population spoke a "foreign language (Spanish)." Throughout his many years of ministry, Harwood emphasized the "foreign character of the work . . . save the fact that it lies within the limits of our happy Republic."[4] Another Methodist worker in New Mexico called the Territory "the land of Montezuma."[5]

Because the Mexicans were "foreigners," Protestant missionaries and mission boards faced a dilemma. Since the Southwest was now a part of the United States, work among the people there, including the Spanish speaking, was the responsibility of denominational home mission boards. But these boards were not ready to take on this task. "Home missions" meant a focus on English-speaking Americans. "Different" peoples were the task of foreign mission boards—which officially had no jurisdiction in the United States.

Home mission boards responded differently to this dilemma. For example, PCUSA home mission agencies worked with the Spanish speaking though they considered that ministry "foreign" work. They hoped the day would come when Mexicans would be recognized as U.S. citizens, no longer "strangers or foreigners." They knew work among them would be difficult and the results slow because "the native population does not welcome us," and the Mexicans were strongly tied to Catholicism. Yet Protestants could not ignore these communities "and do nothing for their salvation." Progress and westward migration was making them more accessible, increasing the responsibility of Home Mission Boards.[6] The PCUSA home missions board wrote:

> We must begin the work among the Indians, the Mexicans and the Mormons, very much as we would in Persia or India; very much as foreign missionaries

> begin their work in foreign lands . . . we must begin among the children—open Schools and Sunday Schools, and through these expect to reach parents and the adult population, and with this new material at length build up Christian congregations, and prosecute the work of evangelization among the people.[7]

The MECS took the opposite approach. During the early years, their work among *tejanos* fell under the jurisdiction of the West Texas Conference. But in 1884 all Spanish-language ministry in Texas (and later Arizona) was placed under the foreign mission board. Spanish-language MECS congregations in the Southwest became part of conferences in Mexico, a situation that did not change until the early twentieth century.

However, deciding who was responsible for work among the Spanish-speaking people did not make the task any easier. Most Protestant missionaries and mission boards, whether under home or foreign mission boards, found that Anglo American Protestants could not get excited about work that was "neither foreign nor home." It was easier to find missionaries and raise funds for work in Mexico than for work among Mexican Americans in the Southwest. Protestant missionaries felt this ambivalence limited their evangelistic capabilities.[8]

Reasons for Rejecting the New Citizens

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) guaranteed American citizenship to all former Mexican citizens who chose to remain in the States. This created a dilemma for Anglo American Protestants. Some were fully convinced that non-Anglos could never be useful U.S. citizens. Others saw Mexican Americans as a people who could eventually be made good citizens, but only with a great deal of work.[9]

For those convinced that Mexican Americans could never be good U.S. citizens, race was a chief concern. According to

most Anglo Americans, only "white" people were capable of self-government. They discounted the potential of Spanish-speaking people because they were mixed race. There was "good" Spanish blood in them, but it was mixed with Indian blood. According to Senator Calhoun, one of the major mistakes made by the Spanish in America was "placing these colored races [indigenous peoples and mestizos] on an equality with the white race." Not all peoples could maintain civil and religious liberty. "None but people advanced to a very high state of moral and intellectual improvement are capable, in a civilized state, of maintaining free government."[10] Yet the view of Mexican Americans as non-white was often applied inconsistently. In many places Anglos differentiated between "pure" Spanish and "mixed bloods," usually based on both skin color and economic standing. For example, Anglos often called the Spanish-speaking elite "white," where Anglos were a minority and wanted the support of the *ricos* to maintain control over the "cholos" or mestizos (of Spanish and Indian descent).[11]

Anglo American Protestants were also concerned about the perceived "Catholic threat." They considered Mexican Americans particularly problematic because they were mixed race, spoke a different language, were American citizens, *and* were devoted Catholics. If Mexican American Catholics were to join with other American Catholics who were already citizens they could wreak havoc on the "American way of life" and the institutions of liberty held dear by Protestant America.

Those who opposed U.S. citizenship for Mexican Americans argued that it cheapened the value of being an "American." They wanted to limit citizenship to Anglo Protestants—the only ones who could be "good Americans." This view was not held by merely fringe elements in American society; it was the dominant opinion of the day. Even Livermore, who strongly opposed the war with Mexico, maintained a similar perspective.[12]

Americanization of the New Citizens

When the Mexican Americans became U.S. citizens, many Protestants considered the task of Americanizing them indispensible. Mexican Americans had never received the tools necessary for becoming "law-abiding, industrious and thrifty citizens" of the United States.[13] They were now members of the "national family," yet in their current state, they were still "unfit for the duties and privileges of citizens."[14] The goal was to make Mexican Americans "American citizens such as will bless the land."[15] According to MEC missionary David Moore

> the necessity of making good citizens out of the Mexicans who have become an integrate part of our nations, would be sufficient even without the higher Gospel motives, to cause benefaction to that end to flow in deep and constant streams.[16]

If Spanish-speaking people were to become good citizens, the missionaries were convinced that they needed to help them correct many things. According to the missionaries Mexicans did not have "the spirit of progress" that motivated the North American.[17] They also needed to adopt Anglo American technological advances and eating and dressing habits—then they would be able to enjoy "more of the comforts of civilized life."[18] Mexican Americans also needed to become "moral and upright men and women, with cultured minds and upright principles"[19] by removing "popular superstition and ignorance."[20] It was also indispensable that they learn English.[21] Not only were American Protestants convinced that Mexican Americans needed to make these changes, they also believed that they wanted such changes for themselves and their children.[22]

Anglo American Protestants interested in helping Mexican Americans become good citizens linked this task to evangelistic and educational efforts. Protestant missionaries wanted them to form good Christian (Protestant) homes where the Bible was read, people prayed and praised God, and the Sabbath was

kept.[23] According to Thomas Harwood, missionaries needed to evangelize Mexican Americans by educating them in American schools.[24] Education and evangelization were almost synonymous terms for the missionary teachers sent to start schools in northern New Mexico.[25] They believed that the Protestant educational process would help Mexican Americans realize that they were being enslaved by the Catholic priesthood and would show them the importance of becoming "more enlightened and civilized."[26] It would also remove the prejudices of the people toward an Anglo American style of education[27] and prepare the Spanish speaking (particularly of New Mexico) for the task of becoming citizens of a state in the Union.[28]

Anglo Protestant Assumptions about the Mexican American Population

Most Anglo American Protestants held the general assumption that Mexican Americans were morally degenerate. A fellow Anglo American informed Melinda Rankin, one of the first Protestant missionaries in Texas after 1848, that "stealing was inherent among those people, and could not be eradicated." She assumed the first part of the statement to be true, but found that they could learn to abandon the practice.[29] Alexander Darley, a Presbyterian missionary in southern Colorado, stated that

> they [Mexican Americans] are a very degraded people, in many respects. They think a violation of the seventh commandment is bad before marriage, but not afterwards. They think that a thing is not wrong unless found out. That is one of the strongest elements of the Mexican character too often.[30]

The missionaries also considered Mexican Americans "mentally weak," unable to think for themselves, because their religion had never encouraged intellectual activity.[31] They lived in a "sorrowful state of ignorance" in which only a few men

were educated, and practically no women could even read Spanish. From the missionaries' perspective, the "Mexicans" were at the mental level of children, since only thirty percent could read and write.[32] The responsibility for this situation was laid directly at the feet of the Catholic Church. According to the Protestants the priests had no interest in seeing the people advance with the help of Protestant missions and schools; they were convinced that Catholic priests wanted to keep their people illiterate.[33]

This distorted view of Mexican Americans affected how Protestant missionaries understood their work. A BGC missionary in Texas described *tejano* Baptist ministers as "pitifully illiterate, ministering to a membership of some two hundred of the most illiterate poor people."[34] A Methodist in New Mexico admitted that working in Spanish-speaking communities did not "require that degree of native and acquired ability that is required of those engaged in religious work among the more highly cultured classes."[35]

Anglo American Protestants also described Mexican Americans as lazy. *Neomejicanos* were "slow and quaint, primitive and picturesque in spite of [themselves], with a Rip Van Winkle air, as one taken by surprise—just awaking from a dreamy siesta. To the active, nervous, ambitious American, he seems out of date, a relic of a past age."[36] Closely related to this laziness was a "lack of initiative" which put them in tension with Americans. This passivity was not necessarily due to an inherent inability, "for in their veins ran the blood of the greatest pioneers the world has ever known." Instead, Protestants attributed the Mexican American lack of initiative to Roman Catholicism, "a system of intellectual and spiritual servitude that crushed the individual mind and aspirations."[37]

According to American Protestants, this laziness created dependency in the Mexican population. "Mexicans" lacked "firmness and strength of purpose." This made it difficult for

missionaries to organize strong churches among them, because "they require constant training and support. Their churches fall easily into disorder, and need constant encouragement."[38] Mexican Americans were also economically dependent. Too many were "living off the charity of Christians who have to practice self-denial in order to help the idle and thriftless."[39] The missionaries needed to teach them self-reliance.

The missionaries linked this perceived lethargy to cultural inferiority. Anglo Americans were coming face to face with a people who had "fallen behind" while "the march of civilization had taken grand strides, almost everywhere else." From their perspective, the reason for this was that Spanish-speaking communities had no "Bibles, schools [or] proper instruction."[40] Mexican American customs "proved" their culture's inferiority to the missionaries. They lived in very primitive dwellings with only rudimentary furniture. Their homes were filthy and they ate on the ground, often surrounded by "hungry dogs and naked children."[41]

Anglos also considered Mexican Americans primitive technologically. For example, their agricultural methods had not changed for hundreds of years.[42] Thomas Harwood, an early Protestant missionary in New Mexico, noted in 1870 that the few bridges or public roads in the territory had been built by the government or Protestant pioneers, and "hardly an American plow, wagon or buggy could be found" in New Mexico.[43] He was convinced that the region needed railroad steam whistles "to break the silence of a slumbering people."[44]

This negative analysis all tied back, in the missionaries´ understanding, to the fact that Mexican Americans were Catholics and that the vast majority remained Catholic even after they heard the Protestant message. The missionaries saw Catholicism at the heart of all of the other problems faced by Mexican Americans, including illiteracy, ignorance, and irreligion.[45] It had "fettered the intellect" of the Spanish-speaking people.[46] They were

"the most bigoted Papists—as bigoted as they are ignorant," who lived in "a most benighted condition."[47] According to the missionaries the Catholicism practiced by Mexican Americans in the Southwest was not really a form of Christianity. It encouraged idolatry, extensive use of money on feast days, and in New Mexico, invited people to beat "themselves during Lent to atone for their sins."[48] Catholicism had made New Mexico

> one of the darkest corners of the world. As if the clouds of the dark ages, receding from the eastern skies of infallible Romanism growing thicker and darker in their flight, had culminated over the intellectual skies of the Mexican people and drenched their soil with the polluting floods of Jesuitical traditions, superstitions and ignorance.[49]

Furthermore, Protestant missionaries felt that the new priests sent into the Southwest by the U.S. Catholic Church were not helping the people change. They continued the practices of demanding excessive tithes and charging exorbitant prices for baptisms, the Eucharist, and other so-called sacraments (e.g., marriages, extreme unction and prayers for the dead at extortionate prices).[50]

Protestants accused the Catholic hierarchy of keeping the Bible out of the people's reach and attempting to maintain their bondage to "the dreadful tyranny of papal laws." To work among Mexican Americans was to enter "the enemy's camp." According to Melinda Rankin, one of the earliest Protestant missionaries, giving out Bibles was like shooting missiles into Satan's territory. The few she was able to place in the hands of Spanish-speaking people had done "essential damage . . . in this kingdom of darkness, where Satan had so long reigned with undisputed sway."[51]

From a Protestant perspective, Catholicism was also the cause of physical poverty among Mexican Americans. The "awful condition of the Mexican, who traverses our own Texas

plains" was directly attributed to the control of the Catholic Church. Yet, concluded the Blanco Baptist Association (BGC), because of the Mexicans' "former deeds of treachery" against the United States, there was "no eye to pity him, no God to save." Their actions had "closed the doors of charity against him, and therefore we take no notice of him or his wants."[52]

Based on this very skewed analysis of the Mexican population, Protestant missionaries went into the Southwest convinced of the importance of their mission. Theirs was a continuation of the battle between Protestantism and Catholicism and Protestantism had to win. Their task seemed clear and the motivations for it right. The conquered Mexicans were a people with no hope for a future in the U.S. Southwest unless they Americanized and became Protestants. Once the missionaries started preaching they believed the Mexicans would soon recognize this reality and readily accept Protestantism.

Because of this perspective the missionaries did not have the tools to recognize the distortions and fallacies in their understanding of the Spanish speaking. Once they began work in the Southwest any lack of "success" would be blamed on the Mexican population and the Catholic Church. It would not be until the twentieth century when some Protestant missionaries would begin to question whether their initial analysis might have been wrong.[53]

3

"Making Good Citizens Out of the Mexicans"

Motivations for Protestant Mission Work Among Mexican Americans

We hold the key to Mexico's evangelization and to the redemption of the whole Southwestern frontier of the United States . . . [because] Methodism appears first on the field in most of this territory.

Texas Christian Advocate (1885)

The work of educating these people in the knowledge of Christ Jesus is a great work. The Spanish speaking people know more about saints and images than they know about Christ. Nothing but the Spirit of God can lead them to see that God is to be worshipped without an image, and that they can pray to Christ without the aid of a saint.

John Menaul (1891)

[P]atriotism and home missions are inseparably united. Neither can stand, in the mind of the Christian citizen, without the other.

Sherman H. Doyle (1905)

The previous chapter described the "problem" as perceived by American Protestant mission agencies: Mexican Catholics had been accepted as U.S. citizens and these people were not fit for the privilege. This situation served, in turn, as the chief motivator for Protestant mission work among the Mexicans of the Southwest. The Mexican population needed to hear the Protestant message to be freed from Catholicism. Closely tied to this message was Anglo American culture, perceived by Protestant leaders to be the logical result of living out the Protestant message. To preach a Protestant understanding of the gospel was also to promote the best of Anglo American cultural, social, political, and economic values. Both theological and cultural understandings of Anglo American Protestantism motivated missionaries to evangelize Mexican American Catholics.

Doubts about Evangelizing Mexican Americans

The rhetoric used to justify the conquest of the Southwest did not translate into a strong missionary enterprise, however. Many Protestants questioned whether there should even be a missionary effort among the Mexican American population. Many home missions leaders were convinced that mission agencies should focus their energies on the Anglo American immigrants entering the newly conquered Southwest. When Melinda Rankin visited churches in the eastern United States to raise funds for her missionary efforts in Texas, she found that many Protestant leaders and members were not interested in reaching the Mexican American population. She reported that "the prejudices existing against the Mexicans, engendered during the late war, often proved great barriers to my success." One Presbyterian leader told her that "the Mexicans were a people just fit to be exterminated from the earth." Another person, a Presbyterian minister, even stated, "We had better send bullets and gunpowder to Mexico than Bibles."[1]

Nonetheless, Protestant mission agencies did send out a few missionaries to work among Mexican Americans during the 1850s. The MEC and MECS sent missionaries to New Mexico and Texas, respectively. Northern (American) Baptists entered New Mexico, and Melinda Rankin represented the PCUSA in Texas (though she was not officially sent by any mission agency). John McCullough, another Presbyterian missionary, also worked in San Antonio for a short period. The American Bible Society sent a colporteur, Robert Thompson, to distribute Spanish Bibles and Testaments in south Texas. These initial efforts were mostly short lived and produced few long term results, apart from two small congregations in Peralta and Socorro, New Mexico, and a few *tejanos* who joined the MECS congregation in Corpus Christi, Texas. These initial lackluster results caused some Protestant leaders to question whether there was any possibility of missionary success among "such a hopeless race" as the Mexican.[2]

Another reason that Protestant mission leaders questioned whether their mission agencies should work among the Mexican population was that the conquest of the Southwest opened large amounts of new land to settlers from the eastern United States and Europe. Anglo Americans and Northern Europeans had been migrating into Texas since the 1820s, and the Gold Rush of 1849 caused rapid migration into California. By 1850 Anglo Americans and European immigrants represented the overwhelming majority of the population in northern California.[3] People were also migrating into other regions of the Southwest. This migration accelerated after railroads penetrated the region in the early 1880s. These new settlers had many spiritual needs, and home mission societies felt it was important to send workers among them. New communities lacked churches, and children were growing up with little or no religious instruction. There was a strong desire to reach out to these "white" settlers. This desire limited interest in reaching the Spanish-speaking

population.[4] Mission boards and many individuals recognized the importance of preaching the gospel to the "Mexicans," but

> to train the American children in our midst—those who have come from our eastern homes, who are our own flesh and blood—is an even greater responsibility and as grand a calling. Without our New West schools, scores, yes, hundreds, of eager children would not have any means of education save those afforded by the few schools of the sisters, nuns, and monks of the Roman church.[5]

Motives for Mission

Although many Anglo American Protestants were indifferent, and efforts before the Civil War yielded limited success, some felt a strong motivation to work among Mexican Americans in the Southwest. A review of the literature produced by Protestant missionary societies during the nineteenth century and the missionaries' own writings reveal a broad range of motives for ministry among Mexican Americans.

The Gospel Mandate

Since the Protestant missionaries were convinced that Mexican American Catholics were not "fully" Christian, they often mentioned preaching the gospel so that people could be saved from their sins, and other biblical themes related to Jesus' Great Commission of making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18–20) when referring to the need to reach Mexican Americans in the Southwest. Many early missionaries and some mission agencies made direct or indirect references to this biblical mandate in their writings. The BGC of Texas made the most references to Jesus' evangelistic mandate in relationship to Mexican Americans in the Southwest. At least eight different references to the Great Commission appear in various BGC re-

ports. Within the BGC, the Blanco Baptist Association, an association of Baptist churches in south Texas, is the group that most often mentions the biblical mandate as the reason for preaching the gospel in the Spanish language. The association's "Mexican and Colored Population Committee" reports of 1880, 1881, 1882, 1890, and 1895 all refer to the gospel, Christ's mandate, or non-Christians' need of salvation.

> All that is necessary . . . is to give them the Gospel in their own language,[6]
>
> It devolved upon us in a great measure as a denomination to teach them how to obey these great commands, that we should avail ourselves of every opportunity to instruct them and render them all the assistance we can.[7]
>
> Just now is a more favorable time to effect good in the name of Jesus among the Mexicans than any time in the past.[8]
>
> May the God of heaven in His own good time, may that time be soon, devise some means by which these perishing thousands shall be brought to Christ. Let us reward them for all their mistakes of the past by giving them the Gospel of the Son of God.[9]
>
> They [*tejanos*] are here at our doors, and that they have souls to be saved or to be lost admits of no doubt.[10]

Despite this rhetoric, the churches of the Blanco Association did not make a serious commitment to work among Mexican Americans during the nineteenth century. An 1881 report mentions work in Laredo, but no other documents of the period make reference to Spanish-language ministries in that city until the following decade. An 1895 report laments that "what to do with the Mexicans in our midst is a problem that has vexed our Baptist brotherhood for the past years."[11]

The annual reports of the Baptist General Association of Texas likewise make at least three references to the Great Com-

mission mandate. They relate specifically to reports of the work that began among *tejanos* in San Antonio in 1887. The reports describe the work there and in other parts of Texas in light of God's call, highlighting the opportunity for Texas Baptists to reach *tejanos* with the gospel.

> God hath set before us an open door in this work and we have entered and have been blessed.[12]
>
> God has opened to us the door of their hearts and the work done among them has been graciously blessed.[13]
>
> We have also some very needy fields among our Mexican population elsewhere in the state. . . . We ought to heed their Macedonian cries.[14]

The first two long-term Presbyterian missionaries among *tejanos*, Melinda Rankin and Walter Scott, refer to the biblical mandate to persuade Presbyterians to support their ministry. In her book *Texas in 1850*, Melinda Rankin attempts to convince New England Presbyterians of the need to send workers to Texas. She quotes Jesus' statement about leaving all for the kingdom of God and contrasts the eternal value of reaching *tejanos* for Christ with the earthly treasures being sought in the mines of California and Mexico: "Are there not Christians to be found among the highly favored portions of our country, who can be influenced by such heaven-born principles, to come out upon that mission of mercy which brought the Son of God from the bosom of his Father?"[15]

More than thirty years after Rankin, Walter Scott began his ministry in the San Marcos, Texas, area. As he sought to challenge the PCUS to minister to *tejanos* he stated:

> It is for us, as a people charged with the high commission to evangelize the world, to meet it calmly and resolutely and discharge our Christian obligation. . . . We have seen too many instances of the efficacy of the precious word of God and of the work of the Holy Spirit among them to doubt for a mo-

> ment their need of the Gospel and our duty to give it to them.[16]

Many other Protestant missionaries alluded to Jesus' call when trying to convince people to support their work. Matilda Allison, a Presbyterian teacher in New Mexico, quotes Jesus' words "the field now seems ripe for the harvest" (John 4:35) when referring to work among *neomejicanos*.[17] Methodists in California also made indirect allusions to a divine mandate in relationship to *californios*: "To neglect this field longer is rendering us liable of incurring the Divine displeasure."[18] And a report in the minutes of the (Southern) California Conference sees God's hand as "clearly providential" in initial efforts to reach *californios* in Los Angeles.[19]

The Importance of Reaching Mexico

Another motivation for working among Mexican Americans in the Southwest was their potential as a bridge to reach Mexico with the Protestant message. At the time of the U.S. takeover of the Southwest the Mexican government did not allow Protestant missionaries to enter Mexico. Therefore, some missionaries saw work among Mexican Americans not as an end in itself but as a means of making contact with people from Mexico, indirectly influencing the Mexican population, and practicing evangelistic skills among Mexican Americans until there was freedom to preach in Mexico. Many Protestant missionaries in Texas had this perspective. Though Mexico remained closed, south Texas provided a better opportunity for preaching to the Spanish-speaking population than had ever existed before the U.S. takeover of the Southwest.

When Texas became an independent country in 1836, Old School Presbyterians sent two missionaries, Sumner Bacon and William Blair, to work among the Mexicans there. Due to the unstable situation (e.g., Mexican attempts to reconquer the ter-

ritory and Indian attacks) neither spent much time working among the Spanish-speaking people. Both of them considered their work in Texas to be temporary. They went to the Republic of Texas to learn Spanish and to wait for an opportunity to enter Mexico. They "saw their activity in Texas as provisional and secondary to missionary endeavors in Mexico itself."[20]

The first Protestant missionary in south Texas, Melinda Rankin, went to Brownsville after the end of the Mexican-American War (1848) to reach the people of Mexico. She continued working in Texas until the Mexican government allowed Protestant missionaries to enter the country. Her book, *Texas in 1850*, describes the need in Texas but also refers to the opportunities the location provided for reaching Mexico. Her desire in writing the book was "to enlist Christian sympathy and cooperation in aid of evangelizing a country [Texas] which is destined, evidently, to exert an important influence over other contiguous countries [Mexico]."[21] Rankin saw that Brownsville had extensive ties with various parts of Mexico. Because of this, she felt that the city should be "regarded an important medium of communication by which Protestantism may be introduced into Mexico, and hence appears the necessity of a strong influence of that sort being concentrated at this point." Rankin also considered that the border communities of Roma, Rio Grande, Laredo, and El Paso were important locations that should be "secured with strong Bible influences" so that the (Protestant version of the) gospel could enter Mexico.[22]

Rankin was particularly interested in the indirect effect that evangelizing *tejanos* would have on Mexico. When she arrived in Brownsville in 1850 she focused on ways of indirectly influencing Mexico from the U.S. side of the border. She believed that if Texas could be elevated to a "high point of moral power and efficiency," it would have a positive influence in "the moral elevation of degraded Mexico." According to Rankin, Texas needed the efforts of Protestant missionaries because of the des-

titution of its own people, Spanish-speaking and otherwise. But the missionaries were also necessary because Providence had pointed out "Texas as an agent to operate upon the Papal power in Mexico."[23]

The relationship between reaching *tejanos* in southwest Texas and the evangelization of Mexico was also an important consideration for the Blanco Baptist Association. They recognized the importance of reaching the Mexican Americans of their area because it "would be an important step toward evangelizing the border states of Mexico."[24] If there were enough money to support missionaries there might soon be Baptist churches among *tejanos*, which "would honor and advance the cause of truth even beyond our borders."[25]

Presbyterians in Texas viewed their ministry among Mexican Americans in the same light. The first Presbyterian Church formed in San Antonio in the 1840s transmitted the following resolution to its Foreign (Mission) Board:

> Whereas the town of San Antonio, in Western Texas, contains a population of more than two thousand Mexicans, and whereas this town carries on considerable trade with Eastern Mexico and affords facilities for distributing Bibles, etc., among that deluded people, Therefore, Resolved that, should Texas be transferred to the Domestic Board, that town be recommended to the Foreign Board to be continued under their care as a suitable station for operating upon the population there and also for introducing the gospel into Mexico.[26]

Walter Scott, called the "Father of Spanish-speaking Presbyterianism" in Texas, approached ministry among the Spanish-speaking communities of that state from a similar perspective. For him, the presbytery of western Texas had "no western boundary—it can take in the entire republic of Mexico." Because of the constant comings and goings of Mexicans across the international border, evangelizing both *tejanos* and Mexi-

can immigrants in Texas contributed indirectly to the evangelization of Mexico. According to Scott, "the Gospel leaven is being carried to their native land where it has borne fruit in a number of instances."[27]

A Response to Roman Catholicism

As mentioned earlier, what most preoccupied Protestant missionaries among Mexican Americans was Roman Catholicism, a major concern of all Protestant denominations during the nineteenth century. They saw Catholicism as a direct threat to Protestant America. Protestants were afraid that the Roman Catholic Church would gain control of U.S. institutions through the growing influence of Catholic immigrants from Europe. Protestants needed to convert Catholics in the U.S. because the Catholic Church was sending missionaries to convert North American Protestants. If Catholics were ever to become a majority in the United States, the Protestants believed that the results would be disastrous for the Anglo American way of life and the institutions of liberty held dear by Protestant America.[28] Making the Mexicans of the Southwest U.S. citizens only exasperated the situation.[29]

Home Mission Monthly, a Presbyterian magazine, was one of the home mission periodicals most concerned with the perceived threat posed by Roman Catholicism in the United States. When it reported on the work among Mexicans in the Southwest it usually referred to the dangers of a Catholic majority in New Mexico as one of the reasons for Protestant missionary efforts. Missionary reports often focused on the negative effects of Catholicism on the Mexican American population. Editorial comments often pressed the issue beyond the specifics in New Mexico to the perceived dangers to all of the United States.[30]

Many Protestant leaders feared that, if their missionary efforts failed, a Roman Catholic majority would vote to destroy

democratic American institutions. To "prove" their point, missionaries to New Mexico reminded their supporters that Bishop Lamy of Santa Fe was French and that he had brought many French priests into the diocese. They claimed that the diocese in Santa Fe was pervaded with a "spirit foreign to American views." These priests there were "not in sympathy with republican ideas and institutions, and are bold in their opposition to them."[31] Because they were foreigners, the priests did not see the need to obey the laws of the [32]United States and seemed to encourage *neomejicanos* not to obey them.[33] And as late as the beginning of the twentieth century, Emily Harwood, a pioneer Methodist worker in New Mexico, still had her doubts about whether Congress should admit New Mexico as a state in the Union. She was concerned that the Jesuits might be able to gain control of the state government and "overthrow our free American institutions."[34]

Protestant missionaries also wanted to convert people from Catholicism because they were sure that it kept Mexican Americans under spiritual bondage and turned them away from the true gospel. A common adjective used by many missionaries and mission agencies in reference to the Spanish-speaking people of the Southwest was "superstitious." They were not only "in a state of unregeneracy, but [they] are also trammeled with many superstitions."[35] When the missionaries spoke of superstitious practices they were most often referring to the Mexican American Catholic religious devotion to the Virgin Mary and the saints. Several published articles describe the "Romish superstitions" and "idol" worship of the Spanish-speaking population. Most Protestant missionaries shared Walter Scott's perspective that

> they [the Mexicans] do not pray; they do not come unto God by Christ; they know not the joy of drawing near with boldness unto a throne of grace. They have a pagan's idea of sin and repentance; they know

> nothing of regeneration, nor of the indispensable work of the Spirit. In a word, they are without God, and without hope in the world.[36]

Protestant missionaries also described Roman Catholicism as a dead faith; it could not lead Mexican Americans toward a vibrant personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Its teachings and worship were empty, and many Mexicans were "crying out for the Living Bread,"[37] something they would find only in the Protestant message. Therefore, the missionaries did not see their work in the Southwest as proselytizing. They were drawing people away from a dead religion to a living faith.

Spiritual bondage was another common theme. Mexican American Catholics were "shut up in the prison-house of papal power"[38] that controlled every area of their lives and kept them from understanding their situation. Though there were few Catholic priests in the region, Protestant missionaries were convinced that Mexican Americans in the Southwest were "oppressed and priest-ridden"[39] "as much as in Mexico, or Spain, or South America."[40] It was the priests' job to keep the people in ignorance so that they would blindly accept the Vatican's instructions.

Specifically, the missionaries claimed that the priests prohibited the people from reading the Bible or the tracts given to them by the Protestant missionaries.[41] A Congregational missionary reported that the priests told the people, "you have no power to read the Bible. It belongs to the priests. If one of you read it, you cannot understand, because you are ignorants [*sic*], and besides that your church does not allow you to read it."[42] The priests also attempted to control what was taught in the public schools where Catholics were a majority. They did not want the people to have access to an education that might open their minds to the falseness of Catholicism. This created a situation where "little is taught in these [public] schools [controlled by Catholics] except prayers, and the superstition of the Romish Church."[43]

Priestly control was so complete that the people were not even able to discern that they needed the Protestant gospel. They were "intensely bigoted" against the Protestant message.[44]

Since Protestant missionaries were convinced of the superiority of their message and the potential effectiveness of their strategy, the Mexican Americans' lack of response to their message could only be explained by the Catholic Church's control over them. The Catholic hierarchy adversely affected Protestant mission work in several ways. First, it claimed an "exclusive right to teach and guard the oracles of God" and prohibited Catholics from even listening to the Protestant message.[45] Most Mexican Americans heeded their warning. Second, Catholic priests often actively opposed Protestant missionary teachers who attempted to start village (plaza) schools in areas of New Mexico where there was no public education.[46] The schools were a part of the larger Protestant mission strategy, although the missionaries presented them as opportunities for all children to gain an education. The priests suspected proselytism and, to the chagrin of the missionary teachers, often prohibited parents from sending their children to these schools.

Another common adjective used by the Protestant missionaries to describe Mexican Americans in the Southwest was "degraded." The missionaries believed that the Roman Catholic religious system not only deceived the Spanish-speaking population but also encouraged them to live in a degraded condition. In their eyes, the Church encouraged the people to practice vices, such as drinking and dancing during feast day celebrations, because it used them as a means of raising money for the Church. The priests were inducing the people "to follow the road of error and vice, themselves being the principal actors in the labyrinth of iniquity."[47]

The Protestant missionaries also claimed that because of the lack of proper teaching by the priests, adultery was openly practiced in Mexican American communities and was not con-

sidered wrong "unless found out."[48] Many families began "with no marriage at all."[49] Missionaries also reported that some Mexican American priests had mistresses at the time of the American takeover (1848). Because the Church encouraged vice, and its leaders did not provide good examples, it could not call the people to a higher moral standard.

Missionaries reported that the Church also robbed the people of "all progress and enterprise attendant upon diligent labor."[50] Mexican Americans could not advance socially or economically because of the demands placed on them by the Catholic religious system. Priests charged for all their services, including masses, prayers, and bell ringing. They even charged extra at weddings if the couple wanted to enter through the front door. Not only did they charge for their services, they forced the people to use their services, for example, by not allowing them to bury unbaptized children in consecrated ground.[51] Services were not cheap. "It often requires a year's earnings to have a priest present at a burial of their dead."[52]

Protestant missionaries in New Mexico often focused on a specific Catholic lay society, the *Penitentes*. They were a religious penitential society that had existed in New Mexico for several centuries. They served an important religious and social function during the Spanish and Mexican periods because there were few priests in the region. But the Catholic hierarchy, both in the Mexican and American periods, tried to curtail their practices because of their penitential practices. By the time of the U.S. takeover of the Southwest they had gone underground. *Penitentes* practiced various forms of physical penitence during Holy Week, including floggings, cutting, and, occasionally, crucifixions. Most *neomejicanos* did not practice these rituals and few missionaries ever actually saw much of what the *Penitentes* did. Nonetheless, Protestant missionaries described these penitent practices to prove that *neomejicano* Catholicism was essentially pagan and superstitious. Many missionaries in New Mex-

ico considered these penitential practices the epitome of the enslaving practices of Mexican American Catholicism.[53]

Protestant missionaries were overjoyed whenever a Mexican American left Catholic "enslavement" and became a Protestant. The 1886 Annual report of the Congregational Church in New Mexico and Arizona describes the people's joy as three early *neomejicano* converts accepted baptism. "Tears were in many eyes as three of these brown sons and daughters of New Mexico, brought up in the thralldom of Romanism, bowed to receive the ordinance of baptism, not being satisfied with the Romish rite."[54] The joy of the missionaries was confident because Mexican Americans who had been freed from the spiritual bondage of the Catholic Church "seldom go back to Romanism."[55]

Demonstrating the Superiority of Protestantism

Connected with the motive of counteracting the Catholic Church, many early missionaries wanted to prove that Protestantism was a superior form of Christianity. The issue was not merely doctrinal; they felt it was crucial to show that Protestantism produced a better society and economic order. Catholicism kept the people tied to a semi-pagan religion. The Protestant Church offered people freedom from that religious thralldom. Protestantism also gave them the opportunity to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience. The intelligent portion of the Spanish-speaking population would be able to see the difference between the two and would be drawn to the Protestant faith.[56]

The missionary also strove to demonstrate the superiority of Protestantism in the area of morality. Protestantism, they taught, encouraged a personal moral code far superior to that taught and practiced by Catholicism. Moral superiority, Protestants believed, would also help further the gospel in Mexico. A strong faith and morality developed along the border would produce

such a contrast with the practices of the Mexican population that it would clearly demonstrate the superiority of Protestantism over Catholicism. The result would be to "constrain the degraded Mexicans to yield to the influence of that system of faith, which might elevate them to the like happy condition."[57]

Another way to show the "superiority" of Protestantism over Catholicism was by comparing the technological advances of American and Mexican American societies. Protestants considered Mexican Americans very primitive. Under Roman Catholic control they had not made the technological advancements that would have been possible under a system that encouraged free expression such as Protestantism, which now, the missionaries believed, was changing all of that. Protestant churches and mission schools were encouraging people to learn to use technology brought by American Protestant civilization. Although Mexican Americans tended to be reluctant, they slowly began to adopt North American tools, modes of construction, dress, and food. They now had more of the comforts of civilized life than their ancestors ever had.[58] The missionary pointed to these changes with pride.

From the perspective of the missionaries, Protestantism was also superior as a facilitator of literacy and education. When Protestant missionaries first entered the Southwest they found "gross illiteracy, debasing immorality, and a low plane of intellectual development." Few of the people could write, and the Catholic Church worked hard to keep education from "spreading its enlightening influence" over the people.[59] Despite Catholic opposition, Protestants developed public and private schools where people could learn and enjoy the benefits of the technologically advanced and enlightened Protestant civilization. Slowly, the Catholic population seemed to recognize the superiority of the Protestant schools—whether private or "public."[60] Missionaries were glad to see that Mexican Americans who became Protestants fared even better than Spanish-

speaking Catholics educated in Protestant or public schools. A representative of the home mission board of the MEC reported that in Peralta, New Mexico, the first community where the Methodists started a church,

> The larger portion of the people are Protestants, and over seventy of these are members of our Church. They are by far the most cultivated of the town. Their superiority is seen in their general appearance, in their home comforts, and in their evident intelligence. Books and papers are seen in every one of their homes.[61]

Denominational Rivalry

All early Protestant missionaries found a common enemy in Roman Catholicism. But the missionaries of the various denominational groups were also motivated by the challenge to prove the superiority of their particular form of Protestantism. Although denominational rivalry was never an overt issue, it occasionally showed up in various writings. Baptist leaders and missionaries in particular often mentioned the superiority of their doctrine as a reason for ministry among the Spanish-speaking population. Two pre-Civil War Baptist missionaries to New Mexico, Hiram Read and Lewis Smith, were convinced that their denomination's teaching transcended all others. Smith was convinced that only the Baptists could provide a clear religious alternative to Catholic hegemony in New Mexico.

Baptists in Texas used similar reasoning to motivate their denomination to reach out to *tejanos*. An 1880 report on the "Colored and Spanish-speaking Population" to the Blanco Baptist Association includes a description of MECS work in the region. The committee chair was convinced that because many Methodist converts were "Baptist in principle, and would unite with us if an opportunity were offered," a Baptist missionary should be sent to them as soon as possible.[62] An 1894 report to

the Association once again refers to what the Methodists were doing: "The Methodists have been very energetic in this matter, and I think we could accomplish much if we would only try."[63]

Emily Harwood (MEC) made several references to Presbyterian work in the area of education in New Mexico. She often compared Methodist and Presbyterian efforts, recognizing that the latter had done more. Nonetheless, she made it clear that the reason for the latter's success was that Presbyterians had better funding. If the Methodist missionaries had received the same amount of support, she ventured, they would have been equally successful.[64] Presbyterian George Darley, a missionary in southern Colorado, wrote that each presbytery wanted to have home mission ground on which to work because each wanted to participate in "the conquest of the border land for God and Presbyterianism."[65]

Americanization and the American Mandate

Another motivation for preaching to Mexican Americans in the Southwest had to do with the responsibility conferred on Anglo Americans by conquering Mexican Americans. Anglo Americans, considering themselves a superior race, felt a responsibility toward more "backwards" peoples, particularly those whom they were displacing. Melinda Rankin felt that Anglo Americans should commiserate with "the helpless condition of these perishing millions of souls [Mexicans in the Southwest and Mexico] under the iron heel of papal power, with all its soul-destroying influences." The United States had "conquered them and subjugated them to its own terms." Americans could not ignore the plight of the Spanish-speaking people. They had to give them the gospel message.[66] Native Americans and Mexican Americans would soon be "overwhelmed and debauched, and put aside by the incoming of a more stalwart and enterprising race." An effort should be made to reach them with the

gospel message, so that "a remnant may be saved" before they disappeared under the advancing Anglo American migration.[67]

Protestant missionaries working among Mexican Americans in the Southwest also saw their work as their part in the realization of the "American Mandate" or "Mission." Protestant America felt a great responsibility in relationship to the rest of the world. The missionaries wanted to convert people to a Protestant understanding of the Christian faith and to disseminate the social, economic, and political values of the United States, which they considered a logical extension of Protestantism. This was particularly important for the people who became U.S. citizens as a result of the Mexican-American War. Protestant ethical, moral, economic, and political values would help them become productive citizens of their new country.

Many considered the United States a land of unique gospel privileges and institutions. They believed that God had prepared the country for a great task. As with Israel in Canaan, God drove out other nations and gave the land to Anglo Americans.[68] But this blessing meant that the United States should be instrumental in "blessing our land and [the] world,"[69] by entering the Southwest with wealth and railroads,[70] for example, and doing away with "the thriftless, unprogressive, and fatalistic mode of life of the native Spanish speaking." Only through evangelization "in the fullest sense of the word" would this new area of the country be established on a "firm and safe political, moral and Christian basis." This task was particularly important among Mexican American U.S. citizens because they were now a part of "our National family."[71] In this effort "patriotism and home missions are inseparably united. Neither can stand, in the mind of the Christian citizen, without the other." New believers were important, but the indirect effects of evangelization "upon the social life, the intellectual spirit, the moral tone, and the public policy, of [all] our western communities are beyond measure."[72]

Toward the end of her life, Emily Harwood lamented the

fact that more had not been done for the "Mexicans" and "native" peoples. She was convinced that the government should have participated in the evangelistic and "enlightenment" process: "There was not the slightest effort made by the government to educate or enlighten them. They were left entirely to the control of the church in matters of education, religion and morals. They must have believed that our nation was a Roman Catholic nation." Her reflections go on to wonder how different things would have been if the government had "entered this field with the schoolmaster, and encouraged the missionary to enter with an open Bible, as has been done in our New Possessions." If the American government had taken the task more seriously, "how different would have been the results of missionary labor" among the Mexicans.[73]

For "Americanization" to be successful, the missionary needed to work in two areas. One was evangelistic. If Christian—that is, Protestant—homes could be developed, where the Bible was read, people prayed and praised God, and the Sabbath was kept, it would be possible to make "the Mexicans good citizens."[74] In his memoirs, Thomas Harwood laments that the "Americanization" process had not been fully successful in New Mexico, because "while the march of civilization had taken grand strides" almost everywhere, a scarcity of Bibles had left that territory behind.[75]

Nonetheless, the Americanization process could not be accomplished merely by evangelizing. Most Protestant missionaries believed that preaching the gospel had to be closely tied to education. For some of the missionary teachers sent to start schools in the small towns of northern New Mexico, education and evangelization were almost synonymous terms. "The work for the evangelization of this people is gaining ground, as may be seen in the good our mission schools are accomplishing."[76] The teachers and those who sent them expected that as children became educated, they would be able to see that they were be-

ing enslaved by the priesthood and would throw off that yoke and become "more enlightened and civilized."[77] The missionary schools also aimed to remove the prejudices of the people toward an Anglo American style education. According to Emily Harwood, mission schools were crucial in convincing the people of New Mexico to pass a public school law.[78]

In the eyes of many, these efforts, along with a growing Anglo American population, were preparing the former Mexican territories for statehood. The Christian church and school were working alongside advanced technology, a public school system, and growing American political and commercial control to train "the children of the native population . . . for future citizenship."[79] As statehood became imminent for New Mexico, the mission agencies saw a need to redouble their efforts. Mexican Americans would soon be voters who would influence all of the United States. It was indispensable that Protestants educate and "Americanize" them quickly.[80]

Missionaries also reported successes in "Americanization" of Mexican Americans on an individual level. Thomas Harwood expressed pride in the fact that the few *neomejicanos* who had converted under Methodist missionaries before the Civil War remained loyal to the Union during the war. Three converts joined the Union Army in the Territory.[81] And during the war against Spain (1898), MEC *neomejicanos* again demonstrated strong patriotism. There were "some twenty-five Spanish-speaking ordained Methodist preachers in this mission who would like to go in the U.S. Army as chaplains in the war."[82]

In 1895, the BGC made a detailed analysis of a challenge they attributed to *tejanos* and new immigrants from Mexico and called it one of the most serious problems faced by the Anglo American population of that state. Anglo Americans in Texas, the convention insisted, had to recognize that foreigners entering Texas were there to stay, were gaining control in government, were buying the best agricultural land, and would

marry the sons and daughters of the Anglo Americans. Their grandchildren would be of mixed race. "For the sake of the homes and souls of our children and grandchildren," it was crucial that the gospel be preached among these people. It was imperative that the missionaries evangelize immigrants so that Texas would be a good place for their descendants.[83]

Protestant missionaries were particularly concerned about the Territory of New Mexico. Congress had accepted California, Colorado, and Texas as states in the Union because a large number of Anglos had migrated there and the Anglo population was in complete control of the social, economic, and political structures. In New Mexico *neomejicanos* continued in the majority at the end of the nineteenth century. The possibility that New Mexico would gain statehood created concern among the missionaries and provided an important motivation for reaching the *neomejicanos* with the gospel. The "ignorant and bigoted Papists" would soon have a seat in Congress and a place among the sisterhood of states. If a change did not soon occur, New Mexico would enter the Union with all its "illiteracy, ignorance and irreligion."[84]

John Menaul clamored for the Presbyterians of the East Coast to send more missionaries to New Mexico and the West. No American in the East, Menaul insisted, could be indifferent to the situation. The Mexican Americans in the Southwest would influence Anglo Americans migrating west. Sending missionaries to the West was a form of "Gospel Life Insurance." The East was "simply and really providing against a time of need for their children, if not for themselves." The Anglo American Protestant "knows, or should know, that he must either give them his Christianity or they will force their heathenism on him or his posterity."[85]

This fear became greater after Utah became a state in 1896 and Mormons gained a voice in Congress. Protestant leaders felt serious concern about Mexican American Catholics gaining

a similar influence. There were 130,000 "bigoted Romanists" in New Mexico, southern Colorado, and Arizona. These people were U.S. citizens, with the right to vote, even though they could not read an English ballot. Because of this, the priests would easily sway them.[86] Toward the end of her life Emily Harwood stated that "the example of Utah since it became a State, is causing us to believe that it is safer for New Mexico to remain a territory for some time yet."[87] Another Presbyterian missionary stated that "this dark plague-spot of moral pollution [New Mexico] must be cleansed, or it will, like its twin sister of Utah, infect the whole body politic."[88]

Americanization stood out as the overarching motive among Protestant missionaries for working with Mexican Americans in the Southwest during the nineteenth century. Missionaries were confident that freeing Mexican Americans from Roman Catholicism would help make them good U.S. citizens, as would a Protestant education and the adoption of North American technology and socioeconomic mores. The Americanization task drew out missionaries and teachers ready to spread the "good news" as they perceived it. Their work was similar, yet different, from that of Protestant missionaries to other countries of the world. Protestant missionaries carried an "Americanized" gospel to other parts of the world. But in the United States, the task of Americanizing converts was overt. For many of the Protestant missionaries, the future of the United States as they knew it depended on the success of their efforts.[89]