

Anticlericalism and Resistance: The Diocese of Huajuapam de León, 1930–1940*

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Abstract. This article looks at the response to government anticlericalism in the diocese of Huajuapam de León, Oaxaca. In particular it examines how the dynamic relationship between bishop, priests and parishioners established during the early twentieth century produced a religious culture, which wove itself into the cultural, ethnic, political and economic identities of the indigenous Mixtecs. This religious culture proved key to resistance to post-revolutionary anticlericalism and socialist education in the 1930s and led to the failure of the state project.

In February 1935 in the village of Tezoatlán, Oaxaca, a group of federal teachers found four of their municipal counterparts painting the wall of the local school with a mural of the Virgen del Perpetuo Socorro. The federal educators, who claimed to be ‘young and not contaminated with anything’ religious, alleged that the local priest, Avelino de la J. Mora, obeying the dictates of the bishop, had ‘befriended certain schoolteachers in the area’. These, using the cover of their municipal position, were flouting the law and adapting the fashionable visual methods of modern Mexican education to the teaching of Catholic doctrine.¹ This article recounts the interaction of priests, prelates, parishioners, municipal teachers and local authorities in the defence of a common Catholic culture in the diocese of Huajuapam de León, in the 1930s. The essay not only aims to extend understanding of the failure of the post-revolutionary anticlerical campaign, it also offers new insights into the relationship between the Catholic Church and indigenous

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¹ Archivo General del Poder Ejecutivo de Oaxaca (AGPEO), Gobernación, Manuel López to Governor Anastasio García Toledo, 13 Feb. 1935.

parishioners, and it attempts to redraw the traditional map of Mexico's clerical religiosity.

During the 1930s the Mexican state, like many revolutionary governments, endeavoured to enact a 'veritable cultural revolution'.² As Plutarco Elías Calles announced in Guadalajara on 20 July 1934, 'we must ... take possession of the consciences of the children and of the young people, because the young people and the children do, and must, belong to the Revolution'.³ A central tenet of this project was anticlericalism, the removal of a Catholic culture which was held to be profligate, to cause ignorance and superstition and to engender a greater loyalty to the local priest than to the state.⁴ Churches were closed, sacred festivals prohibited and worshippers intimidated.⁵ Most importantly, the government attempted to remove religion from the sphere of education. Although Mexico's Marxist minister for education, Narciso Bassols, had enacted some anticlerical reforms in the early 1930s, the project reached a crescendo in December 1934, when the government changed Article 3 of the Constitution.⁶ It now read that education should be 'socialist ... and exclude all religious doctrine' and 'combat fanaticism and prejudices' so that children would be given a 'rational and exact concept of the universe and social life'.⁷ In response the Mexican

² Adrian A. Bantjes, 'Idolatry and Iconoclasm in Revolutionary Mexico: The De-Christianization Campaigns, 1929–1940,' *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, vol. 13, no. 1 (1997), p. 87.

³ Lyle C. Brown, 'Mexican Church-State Relations, 1933–1940,' *Journal of Church and State*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1964), p. 205.

⁴ Matthew Butler, *Popular Piety and Political Identity in Mexico's Cristero Rebellion: Michoacán, 1927–1929* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 80–104. For elite views of *campesino* popular and religious culture, see Guillermo Palacios, 'Postrevolutionary Intellectuals, Rural Readings and the Shaping of the "Peasant Problem" in Mexico: El Maestro Rural, 1932–34,' *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 30, no. 2 (1998), pp. 309–39; Guillermo Palacios, *La pluma y el arado: los intelectuales y la construcción sociocultural del "problema campesino" en México 1932–1934* (Mexico City, 1999); Marjorie Becker, 'Black and White and Color: Cardenismo and the Search for a Campesino Ideology,' *Comparative Study of Society and History*, vol. 29, no. 3 (1987).

⁵ Adrian A. Bantjes, *As If Jesus Walked the Earth: Cardenismo, Sonora and the Mexican Revolution* (Wilmington, 1998); Bantjes, 'Idolatry and Iconoclasm in Revolutionary Mexico'; Adrian A. Bantjes, 'Religión y revolución en México, 1929–1940,' *Boletín de Fideicomiso Archivos*, no. 15 (1994); Adrian A. Bantjes, 'The Eighth Sacrament: Nationalism and Revolutionary Political Culture in Mexico,' in Wil G. Pansters (ed.), *Citizens of the Pyramid: Essays on Mexican Political Culture* (Amsterdam, 1997); Alan Knight, 'Popular Culture and the Revolutionary State in Mexico, 1910–1940,' *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 74, no. 3 (1994); Alan Knight, 'Revolutionary Project, Recalcitrant People,' in Jaime E. Rodríguez O., *The Revolutionary Process in Mexico: Essays on Political and Social Change, 1880–1940* (Los Angeles, 1990).

⁶ Belinda Arteaga, *A gritos y sombrerazos: historia de los debates sobre educación sexual en México, 1906–1946* (Mexico City, 2002); John A. Britton, *Educación y radicalismo en México* (Mexico City, 1976), (2 volumes), I, pp. 30–45.

⁷ Josefina Z. Vázquez de Knauth, 'La educación socialista de los años treinta,' *Historia Mexicana*, vol. 28, no. 3 (1969), p. 413.

church and the religious masses employed all possible means to defy the post-revolutionary government.

Despite the prevalence of Catholic resistance to the anticlerical campaign, accounts of the cultural panorama of 1930s Mexico have concentrated on the nature of the government project. In particular, historians have focused on the effects of the reform of Article 3 of the Constitution and the introduction of ‘socialist education’.⁸ Victoria Lerner has noted that for a comprehensive study of regional reactions to the state programme, it would be necessary to look to the ‘response of the bishop and above all the parish’, but very little has been written on the religious culture of the period.⁹ As Paul Vanderwood has argued, although ‘religion provided some spectacular flashpoints in this drama’, it ‘only earns a few tantalising but unelaborated, over-arching conclusions’ in the literature.¹⁰ The few studies of the era’s Catholic culture have concentrated on the episcopacy’s reaction to the series of laws, edicts, and repressive measures that composed the campaign. Early examples of this genre included shrill martyrologies wherein the legal and natural rights of religious toleration and freedom were successively sacrificed to the ambitions of the atheist government, and even recent works are still founded on the thrust and counter-thrust of the elite.¹¹ As for the many accounts of the

⁸ For a full bibliography see Susana Quintanilla and Mary Kay Vaughan, ‘Presentación,’ in Susana Quintanilla and Mary Kay Vaughan, *Escuela y sociedad en el periodo cardenista* (Mexico City, 1997).

⁹ Victoria Lerner, *Historia de la Revolución Mexicana 1934–1940 17: La educación socialista* (Mexico City, 1979), pp. 35–6. One important exception is Salvador Camacho Sandoval, *Controversia educativa entre la ideología y la fe. La educación socialista en la historia de Aguascalientes, 1876–1940* (Mexico City, 1991).

¹⁰ Paul Vanderwood, ‘Religion, Official, Popular and Otherwise,’ *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, vol. 16, no. 2 (2000), p. 432. See, for example, Vaughan’s very brief discussion of the priests’ involvement in the Mayo rebellion or her minimising of church involvement in moves against anticlericalism in Puebla: Mary Kay Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930–1940* (Tucson, 1997), p. 63; Mary Kay Vaughan, ‘The Implementation of National Policy in the Countryside,’ in Eric Van Young, Ricardo Sánchez, Gisela von Wobeser, *La ciudad y el campo en la historia de México. Memoria de la VII Reunión de historiadores mexicanos y norteamericanos* (Mexico City, 1992) (2 volumes), II, pp. 893–904, 895–6.

¹¹ Rev. Francis C. Kelly, *Blood-drenched Altars* (Milwaukee, 1935); Charles S. MacFarland, *Chaos in Mexico: The Conflict of Church and State* (New York, 1935); J. Lloyd Mecham, *Church and State in Latin America: A History of Politico-Ecclesiastical Relations* (Durham, NC, 1966); Marta Elena Negrete, *Relaciones entre la Iglesia y el Estado en México, 1930–1940* (Mexico City, 1988); Roberto Blancarte, *Historia de la Iglesia Católica en México* (Mexico City, 1992); Peter Lester Reich, *Mexico’s Hidden Revolution: The Catholic Church in Law and Politics since 1929* (Notre Dame, 1995); Alicia Olivera de Bonfil, ‘La Iglesia en México, 1926–1970,’ in James W. Wilkie, Michael C. Meyer, Edna Monzon de Wilkie, *Contemporary Mexico* (Berkeley, 1976); Brown, ‘Mexican Church–State Relations’; Elwood Rufus Godshall Jr, ‘Catholicism and Catholic Action in Mexico, 1929–1941: A Church’s Response to a Revolutionary Society and the Politics of the Modern Age,’ unpubl. PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1970; Harriet Denise Joseph, ‘Church and State in Mexico from Calles to

Cristero revolt, 'the hierarchy's wranglings with the regime' have tended 'to overshadow the labours of priests and their parishioners under persecution'.¹² Although during the 1970s revisionist historians made the first attempts to penetrate the mental and spiritual worlds of peasant actors, these works tended to view popular Catholic culture of the period as something separate from, and often in opposition to, the episcopal hierarchy.¹³ Building on the work of Jean Meyer and anthropological accounts of popular religion, contemporary descriptions of peasant reactions to state anticlericalism have tended to stress their autonomy from the Church, which, in general, is seen to have supported landowners and suppressed popular forms of Catholicism.¹⁴

However, new research has offered a more complex appreciation of the mechanics of Catholic religiosity in Mexico. Recent studies of the colonial and modern Mexican church have painted more sophisticated portraits of both bishops, who were previously portrayed as overweening autocrats, and parish priests, hitherto depicted as 'grasping, randy tyrants or selfless servants and trusted fathers'.¹⁵ At the same time, patient archival research and oral testimony have been used to deepen our understanding of the complex ideological matrix of the country's Catholic parishioners and popular religious practice.¹⁶ Historians have come to question the traditional division between 'official/elite religion' and 'popular religion' and view local religious practice as hinging on the relationship between the

Cárdenas, 1924–1938,' unpubl. PhD diss., University of Texas, 1976; María Kelly, 'A Chapter in Mexican Church–State Relations: Socialist Education, 1934–1940,' unpubl. PhD diss. University of Washington, 1977.

¹² Matthew Butler, 'Keeping the Faith in Revolutionary Mexico: Clerical and Lay Resistance to Religious Persecution, East Michoacán, 1926–1929,' *The Americas*, vol. 59, no. 1 (2002), p. 9.

¹³ Jean Meyer, *La Cristiada*, 11th edn (Mexico City, 1993) (3 volumes); Luis González y González, *Pueblo en Vilo. Microhistoria de San José de Gracia* (Mexico City, 1972).

¹⁴ Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*, pp. 31, 45–7, 79–81, 91, 122; Marjorie Becker, *Setting the Virgin on Fire: Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán, Peasants and the Redemption of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley, 1995), p. 38, 45–7, 79–81.

¹⁵ William Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred: Priests and Parishioners in Eighteenth-century Mexico* (Stanford, 1996), p. 12. Christopher Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos: Politics, Identity and Agrarian Struggle in Postrevolutionary Michoacán, 1920–1935* (Stanford, 2003) pp. 53–4; Roderic Ai Camp, *Crossing Swords: Politics and Religion in Mexico*, (New York and Oxford, 1997); Martín Sánchez R. 'Los Católicos, un grupo de poder en la política michoacana, (1910–1924),' *Relaciones*, vol. 13, no. 51 (1992), pp. 195–222; Miguel J. Hernández Madrid, 'Después de los arreglos. Complicidad o secularización de las conciencias? La pastoral cívica del Obispo Manuel Fulcheri y Pietra Santa en Zamora, Michoacán, después de 1929,' *Relaciones*, vol. 16, no. 60 (1994), pp. 141–66.

¹⁶ Paul J. Vanderwood, *The Power of God against the Guns of Government: Religious Upheaval in Mexico at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century* (Stanford, 1998); Edward N. Wright Rios, 'Pilgrims and Progress: Apparition and Image, Shrine and Society in Oaxaca, 1867–1930,' unpubl. PhD diss., University of California, 2004.

two.¹⁷ Contemporary historians have moved away from understanding Catholicism as an imbedded and inert set of beliefs and practices. They now stress how the religion was dynamic, malleable and ‘refashioned over time in response to political and economic imperatives.’¹⁸ The present article on the diocese of Huajuapam de León adds to that body of literature and shows that post-revolutionary Catholicism was more complex than the ideological window-dressing of an oppressive upper class and more vibrant than the static imaginings of the peasant. It was a complex and dynamic mix of high-church ideology, popular belief and local custom presided over by an array of clerical and lay cultural intermediaries.

The following piece also enhances our understanding of indigenous religiosity during the Mexican Revolution. Although colonial historians have often examined the relationship between Indians and the Catholic Church and anthropologists have busily searched for the idols behind the altars of Mexico’s indigenous parishes, there are virtually no studies of early twentieth-century Catholicism among this section of the population.¹⁹ Drawn to areas of conflict, historians of post-revolutionary Mexico have concentrated their studies on the predominantly mestizo areas of open *Cristero* revolt like Michoacán and Jalisco.²⁰ By examining the diocese of Huajuapam, which is in a predominantly Mixtec Indian area spanning parts of the states of Oaxaca and Puebla, this essay attempts to deepen comprehension of the relationship between indigenous Catholics and the church hierarchy.

The article is divided into four sections. It begins with a discussion of the first stage of the diocese’s establishment, the efforts of the first bishop to establish a resilient church and lay culture, the limited effect of both the Revolution and the *Cristiada* and the prevalence of ethnic conflict. This is followed by a brief consideration of the anticlerical campaign in Oaxaca in the 1930s. The bulk of the article then examines a second stage in the diocese’s history, as the state’s anticlericalism triggered the joint resistance of the clergy and the Huajuapam inhabitants and led to the subsequent renegotiation of the region’s religious economy and culture.

¹⁷ Butler, ‘Keeping the Faith,’ p. 12; Vanderwood, ‘Religion, Official, Popular and Otherwise,’ pp. 414–6; N. Z. Davis, ‘Some Tasks and Themes in the Study of Popular Religion,’ in C. Trinkaus and H. Oberman (eds.), *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion* (Leiden, 1974).

¹⁸ Matthew Butler, *Popular Piety*, p. 8.

¹⁹ Pace Wright Rios, *Pilgrims and Progress*.

²⁰ González y González, *Pueblo en vilo*; Meyer, *La Cristiada*; Butler, *Popular Piety*; Jennie Purnell, *Popular Movements and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico: The Agraristas and Cristeros of Michoacán* (Durham, NC, and London, 1999); Jim Tuck, *The Holy War in Los Altos: A Regional Analysis of Mexico’s Cristero Rebellion* (Tucson, 1982).

I. *The creation and development of the diocese of Huajuapam de León, 1903–1930*

During the first three decades of the twentieth century the church in Huajuapam de León constructed a powerful diocesan structure and a devout local Catholic culture. The creation of the diocese of Huajuapam formed part of the great expansion of the Porfirian church, which François Xavier Guerra compared to the ecclesiastical growth of the sixteenth century.²¹ At the same time, it was connected to Pope Leo XIII's attempt 'to place the church firmly on the side of the people', by answering the social problems of the period through the propagation and pursuance of his encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, and the introduction of the church's answer to socialism, Social Catholicism.²² Despite earlier attempts to establish a diocese in the Mixteca during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, it was not until 1902 that Pope Leo XIII issued the bull *Sedes Apostolica* that formed the diocese. The new diocese comprised almost the entire Mixteca Baja, being carved from the archdioceses of Oaxaca and Puebla and containing the *vicariatos* of Juxtlahuaca, Tamazulapam, Huajuapam, Silacayoapam, Acatlán and Piaxtla.²³ It comprised just less than 200,000 inhabitants spread over a series of highland, rural, Mixtec Indian settlements and a handful of mestizo and Spanish-dominated commercial towns. The canonical erection of the diocese took place in April 1903, Rafael Amador y Hernández (1903–1923) was consecrated bishop the following month. At first the diocese was called Las Mixtecas and came under the immediate jurisdiction of the Holy See. However, within a year the name had been changed to Huajuapam de León,

²¹ François-Xavier Guerra, *Le Mexique: de l'ancien régime à la Révolution* (Paris, 1985); Alfonso Alcalá Alvarado, 'La Iglesia camina por nuevos senderos (1873–1900),' in Enrique Dussel (ed.), *Historia general de la Iglesia en América Latina, México*, vol. 5 (Mexico City, 1984); José Gutiérrez Casillas, *Historia de la Iglesia en México* (Mexico City, 1974); D. A. Brading, *Mexican Phoenix, Our Lady of Guadalupe: Image and Tradition Across Five Centuries* (Cambridge, 2001); Meyer, *La Cristiada*, II, pp. 43–53.

²² Bernard Aspinwall, 'Rerum Novarum in the Transatlantic World,' in Paul Furlong and David Curtis (eds.), *The Church Faces the Modern World: Rerum Novarum and its Impact* (Hull, 1994), p. 209. See also Paul Furlong and David Curtis (eds.), *The Church Faces the Modern World: Rerum Novarum and its Impact* (Hull, 1994); Paul Misner, *Social Catholicism in Europe, From the Onset of Industrialization to the First World War* (London, 1991). For Social Catholicism in Mexico see Jorge Adame Goddard, *El pensamiento político y social de los católicos mexicanos, 1867–1914* (Mexico City, 1991); Manuel Ceballos Ramírez, *El catolicismo social: un tercero en discordia. Rerum Novarum, la cuestión social y la movilización de los católicos mexicanos, 1891–1911* (Mexico City, 1991); Manuel Ceballos Ramírez, 'La encíclica Rerum Novarum y los trabajadores católicos en la Ciudad de México, (1891–1913),' in Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru, *Iglesia y religiosidad, Lecturas de 'Historia Mexicana'*, vol. 5 (Mexico City, 1992).

²³ The Mixteca Baja consists of all the lands under 2000 m in altitude inhabited by Mixtec speakers. María de los Angeles Romero F., 'Comercio y crédito: la relación entre la Mixteca Alta y la Ciudad de Puebla en el siglo XVII,' in Ricardo Sánchez, Eric Van Young and Gisela Von Wobeser, *La ciudad y el campo en la historia de México. Memoria de la VII Reunión de Historiadores Mexicanos y Norteamericanos* (Mexico City, 1992) (2 volumes), II, p. 473.

and it became the suffragan to the archdiocese of Puebla.²⁴ The diocese had some natural advantages. It was relatively small, most inhabitants spoke one of two languages and secular governance was spread over two states, allowing the church to take advantage of the inconsistencies in state-level policies.²⁵ In addition, the first bishop initiated an organisational and cultural policy that sought to reinforce the bonds between church and society. Like the small new dioceses of Zamora and Huejutla, the amalgam of old and new characteristics produced a resilient church structure.²⁶

The first bishop, Rafael Amador y Hernández, was born in Chila, Puebla, in 1856, inside the borders of what would become the diocese. A son of poor parents, he drifted into the life of a travelling merchant before being taken up by his local parish priest and sent to the Palafoxiana seminary in Puebla. From there he was sent to the Colegio Pío Latino Americano in Rome in 1885, returning to Mexico after three years. Named the vicar of Huajuapam de León in 1892, Amador became bishop a decade later.²⁷ In his twenty years as bishop he instituted a successful policy of church development through the creation of a patriotic Catholic alternative to the liberal hegemony, the institution of a series of charitable lay organisations and the expansion of Catholic schooling. Producing a tough clerical Catholic culture that proved extremely hard to erode.

Although, as Guy Thomson argues, Mexican patriotic festivals were suffused with a religious element throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, in the post-Reform era Catholic politicians began to construct a divergent national identity.²⁸ Despite Bishop Amador's recruitment of some Spanish priests who were acquainted with the new doctrines of Social

²⁴ Interview with Luis Martínez, Sept. 2003; Archivo del Obispado de Huajuapam (AOHL) Circular 1, 18 Sept. 1903; AOHL, Circular 2, 23 Oct. 1903; Eulogio Gillow, *Reminiscencias del D. Eulogio Gillow y Zavalza, Arzobispo de Antequera (Oaxaca)* (Los Angeles, 1920), p. 194; Alfredo Galindo Mendoza, *Apuntes geográficos y estadísticos de la Iglesia Católica en México* (Mexico City, 1945), pp. 63–4.

²⁵ In fact, inhabitants of the diocese spoke Spanish, Mixtec and Triqui. However, speakers of the latter were ignored by the Church, which described them as thieves, drunks and pagans. One priest in 1935 claimed that he 'never thought' he 'was so much in hell' as when he visited the Triqui village of San Juan Copala. AOHL, Parish records, Santiago Juxtlahuaca, Report, 13 Aug. 1935.

²⁶ Eitan Ginzburg, *Lázaro Cárdenas, Gobernador de Michoacán, (1928–1932)* (Zamora, 1999), pp. 41–3.

²⁷ Emeterio y Alverde Tellez, *Bio-Bibliografía Eclesiástica Mexicana (1821–1943)* (Mexico City, 1949), pp. 103–7; José Cantú Córro, *In Memoriam Ilmo. Y Rvdmo Sr. Dr. D. Rafael Amador y Hernández, Primer Obispo de Huajuapam de León*, (Huajuapam de León, nd); AOHL, Carpeta 'Historia de Huajuapam,' 'Biographia del Ilmo. Y Rvdmo. Sr. Dr. D. Rafael Amador y Hernández.'

²⁸ Guy Thomson, 'Liberalism and Nation-Building in Mexico and Spain during the Nineteenth Century,' in James Dunkerley (ed.), *Studies in the Formation of the Nation-State in Latin American* (London, 2002), pp. 192–4, 209; Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos*, pp. 158–66.

Catholicism, he also encouraged the celebration of a patriotic Catholic mythology, complete with heroes and symbols, which was designed to counteract those of the liberal tradition rather than promote political unification. In his seventh pastoral letter Bishop Amador explained to the faithful the need ‘as citizens and Catholics’, to celebrate the centenary of Independence. In fact, their involvement was essential as ‘our adversaries are now contradicting History, making every effort to distort, hide and even deny the beneficent influence that the Catholic religion exercised in the origins of our nationality and its development and survival’.²⁹ Central to the Catholic celebrations was the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe, which Amador greatly encouraged throughout his tenure as a symbol of national and Christian unity, heavily subsidising pilgrimages to the Basilica, solemnising the 12th of every month, recommending the establishment of an altar to the Virgin in every church and establishing fiestas in Huajuapam on 12 December that ‘are still remembered as animated and popular without precedent’.³⁰ According to one prominent parishioner, by the 1920s the Virgin of Guadalupe was ‘more important than all the saints in Huajuapam’, and prayers were offered up to her on all possible occasions.³¹ Similarly Alfredo Galindo Mendoza, in his 1945 review of the Mexican church, claimed that the diocese was ‘distinguished for its *guadalupanismo*’ and contained 25 churches dedicated to the Virgin.³² Over the next half century the cult, now entrenched in the local religious space and appropriated by local religious groups, would serve as the *lingua franca* of Catholic resistance in Huajuapam.

Claudio Lomnitz-Adler argues, ‘nationalism was a sacralised defense of intimate cultures’, and Amador’s creation of an organising ideology was not limited to the commemoration of exclusively national symbols.³³ Although the patriotic Catholicism of the central states was Hispanic or mestizo in tone, there is evidence that Amador attempted to combine the ideology with ethnic pride.³⁴ This is surprising, given the general failure of the *Rerum*

²⁹ *Septima Carta Pastoral del Ilmo. Y Rvdmo. Señor Obispo de Huajuapam de León, Dr. D. Rafael Amador y Hernández con Motivo de su Jubileo Sacerdotal o Bodas de Plata y Programa de Las Fiestas Jubilares* (Huajuapam de León, 1909).

³⁰ AOHL Circular, 12 Feb. 1904. The pilgrimage cost 0.25 pesos in all. *Octava Carta Pastoral del Ilmo. Y Rvdmo. Sr. Dr. D. Rafael Amador y Hernández, Obispo de Huajuapam de León* (Huajuapam de León, 1910); AOHL Circular, 3 May 1908; Cantú Córro, *In Memoriam*, pp. 20–1. This is obviously linked to the coronation of the Virgin in 1895. Brading, *Mexican Phoenix*, pp. 288–310.

³¹ Interview with Procopio Martínez Vásquez, Aug. 2003; Procopio Martínez Vásquez, *Relatos y Vivencias de Huajuapam* (Mexico City, 2000), p. 30.

³² Galindo Mendoza, *Apuntes geográficos y estadísticos*, p. 63.

³³ Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, *Exits from the Labyrinth: Culture and Ideology in the Mexican National Space* (Berkeley, 1992), p. 289.

³⁴ Hector Hernández, *The Sinarquista Movement, with Special Reference to the Period 1934–1944* (London, 1999), pp. 377–8.

Novarum era church to provide for indigenous believers apart from a few exceptional cases.³⁵ Central to the attempt in Huajuapam was the celebration of the Mixteca, its inhabitants and their customs. According to José Cantú Córro, a local priest of Huajuapam, Bishop Amador,

professed an exceptional affection for his Patria Chica ... the climates of the region, its natural products, its history, uses and customs always enthused him and converted him into a panegyrist of that region.³⁶

His attitude seems to have been that of the paternalistic romantic, who saw in his 'hijitos' the Mixtecs, a prelapsarian innocence: 'their decency and modesty are only equalled by their simple Christianity ... their desire to hear the word of God is comparable to that which the primitive Christians had'.³⁷

Connected to this attempt to reinvigorate church discourse among the Indians was an attempt to gear Catholicism to the local religious and cultural environment. Amador pushed for the recruitment of Mixtec-speaking priests and nuns 'to communicate with the great mass of the diocese', and he even proposed the teaching of the indigenous language in the local seminary.³⁸ He also encouraged the local cult of the Virgen de las Nieves in Ixpantepec Nieves, offering money to the shrine and organising pilgrimages there during the Revolution.³⁹ Finally, he introduced the rain prayer, 'ad petendam pluviam',⁴⁰ which proved extremely popular. During years of bad harvests, villages implored the local priest to come and offer up prayers for rain. In 1921 the men and women of San Jerónimo Silacayoapilla wrote to Bishop Amador to visit their community himself and confer blessing on their parched fields.⁴¹ This creation of an alternative culture that linked ethnicity and religion to localism and patriotism would provide the Catholic

³⁵ In particular, many historians point to the failure of the Congreso Católico held in Oaxaca in 1909 and designed specifically to deal with the 'indigenous problem'. Manuel Esparza, *Gilow durante el Porfiriato y la Revolución en Oaxaca, 1887–1922* (Tlaxcala, 1985), pp. 107–17; Meyer, *La Cristiada*, II, p. 51; Ceballos Ramírez, *El Catolicismo Social*, pp. 216–29. However, as Ceballos Ramírez points out, the bishop of Yucatán did utilise arguments of the *Rerum Novarum* to explain the ill effects of liberalism on the Maya and hence the causes of the Caste War. Ceballos Ramírez, *El catolicismo social*, pp. 69–70. In Chiapas, Bishop Francisco Orozco y Jiménez also appears sensitive to the indigenous of the region, and concentrated his work in this area. Antonio García de León, *Resistencia y utopía, memorial de agravios y crónica de revueltas y profecías acaecidas en la Provincia de Chiapas durante los últimos quinientos años de su historia* (Mexico City, 1997), pp. 226–7.

³⁶ Cantú Córro, *In Memoriam*, p. 10.

³⁷ *Primera Carta Pastoral que Dirige al Venerable Clero el Primer Obispo de Huajuapam, Doctor Rafael Amador con Motivo de su Consagración Episcopal* (Oaxaca, 1903), pp. 3–4.

³⁸ AOHL, Bishop Amador to José Cantú Córro, 9 Aug. 1921.

³⁹ AOHL, Bishop Amador to Porfirio López, 2 Jan. 1912; AOHL, Parish records, Silacayoapam, Report, 19 March 1915.

⁴⁰ AOHL, Bishop Amador to clergy, March 10 1915.

⁴¹ AOHL, Efren García to Bishop Amador, 21 Aug. 1935. Also see, AGPEO, Gobernación 1934, Municipal President of Tezoatlan to Governor García Toledo, 26 Sept. 1933; AOHL, Sociedad Agrícola of Mariscala to Bishop Amador, 2 Sept. 1921.

Church and the parishioners with the fundamental framework for future resistance.⁴²

Within this ideological structure, Amador strengthened the church by safeguarding the *cofradía* lands, forming agricultural societies and linking them to a wider programme of lay organisations. After the 1859 nationalisation law, the church attempted to regain its lost wealth. In Guadalajara the church hierarchy employed *arreglos de conciencia*, or contracts, which allowed private owners of church lands to attain salvation in return for reasonable financial reimbursements.⁴³ In Huajuapam de León the church used alternative methods, at least with regard to the lands of the region's *cofradías*. These lands were handed over to individual *mayordomos* who could profit from the land but were also responsible for the funding of fiestas, church repairs, and even the payment of the priest.⁴⁴ However, the system had obvious risks. *Mayordomos*, often 'for fear of the laws of alienation and the anti-religious propaganda', had the land officially adjudicated in their name and refused to hand over the profits to the villagers or the priest. In order to resolve this problem and reconnect the whole pueblo to the administration of the lands, the church hierarchy pushed the creation of Catholic agricultural societies to usurp the role of the *mayordomos*.⁴⁵ Standard agricultural societies were convenient legal fictions, which had been formed throughout the Mixteca by indigenous communities during the late nineteenth century, to prevent the exploitation of communal lands.⁴⁶ Bishop Amador and the local priests of the diocese saw the benefits of these hybrid landowning organisations, and realised that Catholic agricultural societies could protect the *cofradía* lands. In Tamazulapam the *mayordomos* had become implacable enemies of the local priest and were continually threatening to denounce former church lands. As a result, in 1910 a Catholic society was founded with two representatives from each *barrio*. After the society was legally established

⁴² Ronald Spores has observed that the Mixteca has never thrown up any social movement beyond those linking a few villages for a limited period. However, I would suggest that by looking for syndicates and agrarian groups he is looking in the wrong places. These were fragmented and fractured, principally because of the overlying identity described above. Ronald Spores, 'Local Issues, Intergroup Conflict and Ethnicity and the Formation of Mixtec regional Coalitions,' in Howard Campbell (ed.), *The Politics of Ethnicity in Southern Mexico* (Nashville, 1996), pp. 33–40.

⁴³ José Roberto Juárez, *Reclaiming Church Wealth: The Recovery of Church Property after Expropriation in the Archdiocese of Guadalajara, 1860–1911* (Albuquerque, 2004), pp. 51–68.

⁴⁴ John K. Chance and William B. Taylor, 'Cofradías and Cargos: An Historical Perspective on the Mesoamerican Civil-Religious Hierarchy,' *American Ethnologist*, vol. 12 (1985), pp. 1–26, 17–20.

⁴⁵ AOHL, Parish records, Santa María de la Natividad Tamazulapam, Claudio García to Bishop Amador, 16 Jan. 1908.

⁴⁶ For the legal status of the agricultural societies, see John Monaghan, 'Mixtec Caciques in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,' in Maarten Jansen and Luis Reyes García (eds.), *Códices, caciques y comunidades* (Amsterdam, 1997), p. 265–81.

as an agricultural society by the local judge, the members then forced the nominal renters of the *cofradía* lands to swear before ‘God, the priest, the village and the Catholic Society ... to watch over and care for the lands that they were entrusted, always dedicating their products to the cult of the Saint and handing over the lands when the Catholic Society wanted them.’⁴⁷

The societies were not only designed to fortify the financial security of the church and the Catholic festivals; they also made material improvements ‘in favour of the pueblos and the workers’.⁴⁸ Bishop Amador encouraged the spending of the societies’ funds on ‘those things that the village needs’, including schools, church repairs and the purchase of candles and writing materials.⁴⁹ The Catholic agricultural society of Zapotitlán Lagunas was in charge of the appointment of *mayordomos*, the upkeep of *cofradía* lands, the restoration of the church altar and the administration of the local school.⁵⁰ The societies offered a link between the church and the parishioners, as well as a network of Catholic activists imbued with aspects of the corporatist *Rerum Novarum* ideology. They also reinvigorated the religious and political significance of the increasingly conflictive *mayordomo* structure by reiterating and strengthening the *mayordomos*’ sacred and communal charge to guard the *cofradía* lands. This in turn protected against the disappearance of the organisational system, as occurred in the Sierra Juárez, or its transference to the state schooling system, as Elsie Rockwell has observed in Tlaxcala.⁵¹

Amador also encouraged the operation of more orthodox church organisations, such as the Asociación de la Propagación de la Fe, the Apostolado de la Oración, the Asociación de la Doctrina Católica, the Asociación del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús and the Conferencia de San Vicente de Paul.⁵² The local branches of the charity organisation, the Conferencia de San Vicente de Paul, were particularly important. Although the Conferencia relied on traditional notions of Christian generosity, it was

⁴⁷ ADH, Parish records, Santa María de la Natividad Tamazulapam, Margarito Guerrero to Bishop Amador, 12 March 1909. ⁴⁸ Cantú Córro, *In Memoriam*, p. 25.

⁴⁹ ADH, Bishop Amador to Luis R. Martínez, 3 Nov. 1906.

⁵⁰ ADH, Parish Records, Zapotitlan Lagunas, Sociedad Católica of Zapotitlan Lagunas to Bishop Méndez, 28 March 1905.

⁵¹ C. M. Young, ‘The Social Setting of Migration: Factors affecting Migration from a Sierra Zapotec Village in Oaxaca, Mexico,’ unpubl. PhD diss., University of London, 1976, pp. 248–53; Florencio Cruz Cruz, ‘Surgimiento de la escuela rural en la Sierra Juárez,’ in *Los maestros y la cultura nacional, sureste*, vol. 5 (Mexico City, 1987), pp. 155–86; Elsie Rockwell, ‘Schools of the Revolution,’ in G. M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent (eds.), *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham, NC, 1994), pp. 191–3. See also Raymond Buve, ‘Compadrazgo, Local Politics, and the Revolution in Tlaxcala (1910–1917), Some Questions,’ in Maarten E. Jansen and Ted J. Leyenaar (eds.), *The Indians of Mexico in Pre-Columbian and Modern Times* (Leiden, 1982), p. 277.

⁵² AOHL, Carpeta ‘Historia de Huajuapam,’ ‘Biographia del Ilmo. Y Rvdmo. Sr. Dr. D. Rafael Amador y Hernández.’

strengthened with the *Rerum Novarum* idea of class harmony relying on social justice and charity.⁵³ Founded in Huajuapam de León in 1896, by 1904 there were six offices of the Conferencia in the diocese, in Huajuapam, Acatlán, Chila, Tonalá, Petalzingo and Silacayoapam under the stewardship of Amador's right hand man, the Jesuit Antonio de Jesús Castillo. Like the Damas Católicas Mexicanas of Mexico City, the all-female groups were active in educational and charitable work.⁵⁴ Between 1903 and 1904 the 67-strong Huajuapam de León group organised a catechism programme for over 500 children, made 635 house visits to the sick, raised 1388 pesos and a large amount of rice, beans and maize for distribution among the poor.⁵⁵ By 1910 they had also built a hospital in the town and were supporting two Catholic primary schools.⁵⁶ In fact, 'the Conferencia of Huajuapam was so notable that the annual reports were admired in the headquarters in Paris'.⁵⁷

Finally, Bishop Amador implemented a relatively broad-based educational system: 'A truly Christian instruction and formation was the slogan of his work for the humble classes.'⁵⁸ His pastoral letters and circulars are replete with exhortations to the faithful to set up schools in response to what he saw as 'pernicious doctrines that are divulged with such rapidity in the books, pamphlets and impious newspapers that penetrate the home [and] hurt the religious sentiments that should be inculcated in the children'.⁵⁹ Some schools were paid for by devout parishioners. In 1908 N. Solana gave 1000 pesos for the maintenance of a Catholic school 'for the spiritual, intellectual and material good of the children' of Tlacotepec Nieves.⁶⁰ Others were paid for by the Catholic societies, as in the case of the Mariscala school for girls set up in 1905.⁶¹ At the same time, the Porfirian governor, Gregorio Chávez,

⁵³ Archivo del Arzobispado de México (A AM), Caja 1 192, 2 'Breve Reseña de la Fundación y Desarrollo de la Sociedad de San Vicente de Paul en la Republica Mexicana,' 1932.

⁵⁴ Patience A. Schell, 'An Honourable Vocation for Ladies: The Work of the Mexico City Unión de Damas Católicas Mexicanas, 1912–1926,' *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 10, no. 4 (1999).

⁵⁵ *Memoria del Consejo Central de Señoras de la Caridad de Huajuapam* (Huajuapam de León, 1904).

⁵⁶ AOHL, Bishop Amador to Antonio de Jesús Castillo, 2 Feb. 1910.

⁵⁷ Cantú Córro, *In Memoriam*, p. 11.

⁵⁸ Cantú Córro, *In Memoriam*, p. 40. There was a general expansion of Catholic schooling in the Porfiriato, Valentina Torres Septién, *La educación privada en México 1903–1976* (Mexico City, 1997), pp. 53–84.

⁵⁹ *Quinta Carta Pastoral del Ilmo. Y Rvdmo. Señor Obispo de Huajuapam, por la que Convoca al Clero de la Diócesis a la Celebración del Primer Sinodo Diocesano* (Huajuapam de León, 1906), p. 5. This is typical of Porfirian Catholic reactions to positivist lay education. Valentina Torres Septién, 'La Unión Nacional de Padres de Familia: la lucha por la enseñanza de la religión en las escuelas particulares,' in Ricardo Sánchez, Eric Van Young and Gisela Von Wobeser (eds.), *La ciudad y el campo*, II, pp. 927–35.

⁶⁰ AOHL, Parish records: San Miguel Tlacotepec Nieves, Juan L. de Nava to Bishop Amador, 10 April 1908.

⁶¹ ADH, Parish records: Mariscala, Celsio Solano to Bishop Amador, 3 Feb. 1905.

issued regulations banning religious teaching in official schools. These were widely flouted, sometimes openly, sometimes ‘in secret so as not to alert the liberals’.⁶² As these state-run public schools were lay in name only, priests encouraged their charges to pay their municipal education taxes and send their children there.⁶³ By the end of Amador’s tenure, and despite the disruption caused by the Revolution, Catholic private schools and state-run municipal schools were widespread.⁶⁴ A report from Teposcolula in 1925 revealed that there were 598 children at school in the parish in eight private establishments. At the same time there were only three official schools, all run by the municipalities and all teaching religious doctrine despite the Constitution’s prohibitions.⁶⁵ Bishop Amador also deemed the teaching of catechism very important, organising a network of Congregaciones Catequistas around the diocese.⁶⁶ In keeping with the ‘Roman’ attitude of many of his peers, he saw in education as a means to maintain discipline over the clergy as well as to recruit local Mixtecs and to introduce them to the new ideas of social Catholicism.⁶⁷ By setting up the two seminaries in Huajuapam he hoped to ‘enforce discipline on the priests’ who are the ‘basic defence of the Christian faith’.⁶⁸

Although during the Revolution the Constitutionalists and the Zapatistas did affect some of the largest local haciendas, the Mixteca Baja as a whole was marked by its support for the Oaxacan Sovereignty movement and its fierce defence of regional (and probably religious) independence.⁶⁹ Over the

⁶² Víctor Raúl Martínez Vásquez, *Historia de la educación en Oaxaca, (1825–1940)* (Oaxaca, 1994), p. 67; ADH, Parish records: Huajuapam de León, Antonio de Jesús Castillo to Bishop Amador, 23 Aug. 1907.

⁶³ AOHL, Parish records: San Miguel Amatitlán, Report, 2 July 1925.

⁶⁴ In 1929 the ex-district of Huajuapam had more municipal schools than any other district bar Juchitan and had more students than any other ex-district. The persistence of religious support for these municipal-funded public schools could also have been due to their control by a state school inspector with alleged affiliations with the Caballeros de Colón. Javier Sánchez Pereyra, *Historia de la educación en Oaxaca 1926/1936* (Oaxaca, 1995), p. 155, 224.

⁶⁵ AOHL, Parish records: Santa María de la Natividad Tamazulapam, Report, 7 Dec. 1925.

⁶⁶ AOHL, Instrucciones al clero, nd.

⁶⁷ Laura O’Dogherty, ‘El ascenso de una jerarquía eclesial intransigente, 1890–1914,’ in Manuel Ramos Medina, *Historia de la Iglesia en el Siglo XIX* (Mexico City, 1998), pp. 179–98.

⁶⁸ *Quinta Carta Pastoral del Ilmo. Y Rvdmo. Señor Obispo de Huajuapam, por la que Convoca al Clero de la Diócesis a la Celebración del Primer Sínodo Diocesano* (Huajuapam de León, 1906).

⁶⁹ The Oaxacan Sovereignty movement (1915–1920) was what Knight has classed as a *serrano* revolutionary movement centred on the Mixteca and Sierra Juárez areas of Oaxaca. It fought a guerrilla campaign against the Carranzistas on the basis of decidedly local aims. Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution* (Cambridge, 1986) (2 volumes), II, pp. 240–4; Paul Garner, ‘Federalism and Caudillismo in the Mexican Revolution: The Genesis of the Oaxaca Sovereignty Movement, (1915–1920),’ *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1 (1985), pp. 111–33; Paul Garner, ‘A Provincial Response to the Mexican Revolution, State Sovereignty and Highland Caudillismo,’ unpubl. PhD diss., University of Liverpool, 1983;

following decade Oaxaca also saw little religious persecution.⁷⁰ The next Bishop, Luis María Altamirano y Bulnes (1923–1933), continued the programme of Bishop Amador, encouraging Christian education, Catholic nationalism, priestly discipline and lay involvement in church groups.⁷¹ The *Cristiada* saw small rebellions throughout the diocese in 1926 and 1927, but these quickly disappeared and were replaced by a policy of passive resistance and continued religious practice similar to that advised by Leopoldo Ruíz y Flores and Manuel Fulcheri y Pietra Santa.⁷² Priests and seminary students were urged to persist in attending their flocks while laymen were advised to create communal prayer groups and classes of Christian doctrine.⁷³

Nonetheless, in the 1920s Huajuapam did witness its own brand of ethnic and political conflict. This reinforced the peculiar formation of Catholicism in the area by solidifying the church's connection to the local Mixtec population. During the early nineteenth century there had been a series of ethnic rebellions in the Mixteca Baja that pitted Mixtecs and Triquis against the rich Spanish and creole merchants and landowners of the *cabeceras*. The church seems to have been instrumental in the negotiations between the two sides and the subsequent rapprochement.⁷⁴ However, during the 1920s renewed tensions over the balance of power again caused a cleavage along ethnic lines. The Spanish and creoles or '*Científicos*', under Rodolfo Solana Carrión, held power in Huajuapam de León and opposed all moves to allow the indigenous ranchers ('*Chirundos*' or 'those without clothes') a measure of municipal power despite the part they had played

Paul Garner, 'Oaxaca, The Rise and Fall of State Sovereignty,' in Thomas Benjamin and Mark Wasserman (eds.), *Provinces of the Revolution: Essays on Regional Mexican History, 1910–1929* (Albuquerque, 1990); Francisco José Ruíz Cervantes, 'Movimientos Zapatistas en Oaxaca, una primera mirada, 1911–16,' in Ma. de los Ángeles Romero Frizzi, *Lecturas históricas del Estado de Oaxaca, 1877–1930, IV, Siglo XX* (Mexico City, 1990), pp. 273–88; Francisco José Ruíz Cervantes, *La Revolución en Oaxaca: El Movimiento de la Soberanía (1915–1920)* (Mexico City, 1986).

⁷⁰ Not all states suffered equal anticlericalism during the late 1920s. For example Chiapas also avoided the worst excesses. Stephen E. Lewis, 'Revolution and the Rural Schoolhouse: Forging State and Nation in Chiapas, Mexico, 1913–1948,' unpubl. PhD, University of California, San Diego, 1997.

⁷¹ AOHL, Circular 91, 2 Aug. 1932; AOHL, Luis María al Venerable Cabildo, Clero y a Los Fieles de La Diócesis, 25 Oct. 1931; AOHL, Circular 24, 17 May 1925.

⁷² AGPEO, Período Revolucionario, 229.52, Chief of Military Operations to Governor Vásquez, 20 Feb. 1927; Hernández Madrid, 'Después de los Arreglos'; Butler, 'Keeping the Faith'.

⁷³ AOHL, Circular 35, 26 July 1927; AOHL, Circular 52, 6 Jan. 1930; AOHL, Circular 30, nd. There was a small uprising in 1926, but neither was it of major importance nor longevity. María Eugenia García Uguarte, *Génesis del porvenir: sociedad y política en querétaro (1913–1940)* (Mexico City, 1997), p. 291.

⁷⁴ Francisco Abardía M. and Leticia Reina, 'Cien años de Rebelión,' Ma. de los Angeles Romero Frizzi, *Lecturas Históricas del Estado de Oaxaca, III, Siglo XIX* (Mexico City, 1988), pp. 440–56.

in the defence of the city against the Constitutionals and Zapatistas.⁷⁵ Animosity translated into the ritualised annual violence of Independence Day, which the *Chirundos* celebrated by breaking the windows of the wealthy merchants' houses.⁷⁶ The ethnic division also spread among the clergy. By 1923, some of the *Chirundos* complained that the minority of Spanish immigrant clergy, led by Guillermo López García and Doriteo Fernández, had insulted the local church by removing those of the cathedral's art works 'done by local artisans' and had even forced the flight of Mixtec-speaking priests like José Cantú Córro, Odilón Vásquez, Juan Ramírez and Eugenio Martínez.⁷⁷ However, by 1929 the division among the clergy had come to an end. The Spanish clergy were expelled, and Solana Carrión betrayed the local Church by agreeing to repress rebellious Cristeros in the region in return for political power and the retention of his extensive lands.⁷⁸ The church now shifted away from support of the *Científico* merchant class and towards that of the indigenous *rancheros*, cementing the institutional framework of Bishop Amador and the process of local recruitment of priests.⁷⁹

The diocese that emerged in Huajuapam by the 1930s was built on recently constructed but firm foundations. The vision of Bishop Amador encouraged the formation of a practical relationship between Church and society based on charitable groups and education. Unlike many other churches in southern Mexico, it had also brought indigenous Catholics into the ambit of the regular Church through a dynamic ideology of patriotic Catholicism, sensitivity to certain religious syncretic practices, the recruitment of locals as priests and the adaptation to peculiar political circumstances. Furthermore, it had survived the revolutionary and post-revolutionary anticlerical crusades relatively unscathed.

II. *Anticlericalism in the state of Oaxaca in the 1930s*

Although the diocese of Huajuapam de León spanned the states of Puebla and Oaxaca, it was the policies of the Oaxacan government, which

⁷⁵ Luis de Guadalupe Martínez, *La lucha electoral del PAN en Oaxaca*, Tomo I (1939–1971) (Mexico City, 2002), p. 10; Interview with Angel T. Mora, Jan. 2004.

⁷⁶ AGPEO, Periodo Revolucionario, 192.2, Municipal President of Huajuapam de León to Governor Vásquez, 15 Sept. 1925; Interview with Angel T. Mora, Jan. 2004.

⁷⁷ AGPEO, Periodo Revolucionario, 140.4, Men of Huajuapam to Governor Vigil, 25 June 1923. These clergymen were genuine Spanish immigrants who probably came over with the influx of Spanish immigrants to Huajuapam in the late 1890s. Interview with Luis Martínez, Sept. 2003; Cristina Steffen Riedemann, *Los comerciantes de Huajuapam de León, Oaxaca, 1920–1980* (Mexico City, 2001), pp. 33–56.

⁷⁸ AGPEO, Gobernación, Secretario General de Despacho, Asuntos Relacionados con el Ayuntamiento de Huajuapam de León, 1929; Steffen Riedemann, *Los comerciantes de Huajuapam de León*, p. 45.

⁷⁹ Interview with Angel T. Mora, Jan. 2004.

most directly affected the region since the diocesan seat and three-quarters of the diocese's area was located in the southerly state. The uneasy peace signed to terminate the Cristero revolt in 1929 ended as the regional cacique and governor of Oaxaca, Francisco López Cortés, was forced into a series of anticlerical decrees in the early 1930s. Without a popular base he was forced to rely on his personal relationship with Calles and his close advisers.⁸⁰ Consequently, despite his parallel reliance on the pious upper class of the central valleys of Oaxaca, complaints about his clerical sympathies obliged him to enact various pronouncements against the Church in response to the Guadalupe festivals of 1931.⁸¹ The measures included the reduction of priests to one every 10,000 inhabitants and the establishment of Committees for the Fight Against Fanaticism in each municipality.⁸² These were designed to enforce a four-part campaign of observation, dissemination, education and the transference of religious feeling to secular idols. Members were ordered to watch over the municipal and educational authorities to ensure their ideological integrity and to introduce the civic calendar, cultural Sundays and night schools into their communities. They were also to act as adjuncts to the lay schools of the area, holding talks on historical topics such as Independence, Reform, Maderismo, the Conquest and the role of the clergy in class warfare. Finally, López Cortés demanded that the committees attempt to replace the dominant Catholic culture and practices with the rituals of the modernising, national, secular Revolution.⁸³ In Circular 2 he stipulated that members 'procure in an able and intelligent manner that religious festivals are substituted by fairs, open-air dances and popular fiestas'. These should be dedicated 'to promote agricultural, industrial, commercial and school activities'. Similarly, they should 'ensure that fanatical activities like the catechism, kermises and religious fiestas are suspended and replaced by sports, social acts and book

⁸⁰ Francisco López Cortés was governor of Oaxaca from 1928 to 1932. He was a staunch *Callista* who attempted to create a power base in the state. Without adequate labour reforms or land distribution this made little headway and he was forced to rely for support on Calles himself. Anselmo Arellanes Meixueiro, 'Un general y un periodo en la vida oaxaqueña,' *Cuadernos del Sur*, vol. 4, no. 11 (1997); Anselmo Arellanes Meixueiro, *Oaxaca: reparto de la tierra, alcances, limitaciones y respuestas* (Oaxaca, 1994); Benjamin Smith, 'El suicidio de un diputado (la inestabilidad del régimen posrevolucionario),' *Agenda Política, Periodismo de Investigación y Análisis*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2004), pp. 8–9.

⁸¹ Negrete, *Relaciones entre la Iglesia y el Estado en México*, pp. 67–73. Francisco López Cortés was accused by the more radical anticlericals of Oaxaca of not doing enough to stop local expressions of the Catholic cult. AGPEO, Asuntos Católicos, Policarpo T. Sánchez to Governor López Cortés, 12 Jan. 1932; Sánchez Pereyra, *Historia de la educación en Oaxaca*, p. 155.

⁸² Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), Ramo Dirección General de Gobierno, 2.340 (17) 62, 10566, Governor García Toledo to Secretaría de Gobierno, 22 March 1934.

⁸³ Marjorie Becker, 'El cardenismo y la búsqueda de una ideología campesina,' *Relaciones*, vol. 8, no. 29 (1987), p. 10; Bantjes, 'Idolatry and Iconoclasm in Revolutionary Mexico'.

festivals.⁸⁴ The *mayordomía* system of intertwining civil and religious posts and church-sponsored fiestas was also attacked as overtly religious, profligate and regressive.⁸⁵ The new culture envisaged by the Oaxacan elite was overlaid by ideas of secular nationalism and *indigenismo*, above all, the need to “mexicanise” the indigenous.⁸⁶ Fundamental was the celebration of the figure of Benito Juárez within the context of a post-Revolutionary discourse ‘as a patriot, a citizen, a functionary, a statesman and a son of his race’. The indigenous people of Oaxaca were urged to ‘follow the example of this extraordinary man, on a basis of study, work, struggle and honour’.⁸⁷

By 1934 Calles’ anticlericalism had returned to the levels of the mid 1920s. Perhaps pressured by the increasingly vocal Jacobinism of Calles and a growing cohort of radical masons and teachers, López Cortés’ successor, Anastasio García Toledo, was obliged to enforce more stringent limits on the church and moved from ‘constructive’ to ‘destructive’ anticlerical measures. On the appointment of the third bishop of Huajuapam de León, Jenaro Méndez del Río, the governor delayed his permission to enter the state before withholding it completely.⁸⁸ On 6 June 1934 the state government warned municipal authorities of punishments if unregistered priests were not denounced.⁸⁹ On September 11, decree 213 limited the number of priests to one for every 60,000 persons. Theoretically this left 18 priests in the state, and only three in the diocese of Huajuapam de León.⁹⁰ The Gran Logia of Oaxaca backed the national Bloque de Acción Masónica and called for masons to enforce the decree and expose disobedient clerics.⁹¹ At the same

⁸⁴ *La Voz del Sur*, 5 Feb. 1932; AGN, Ramo Abelardo Rodríguez, 514.1/2-84, Circular 2, 12 Oct. 1932.

⁸⁵ Olga Montes García, ‘Las políticas indigenistas y educativas en la Sierra Juárez: 1930–1940,’ Paper given at UABJO seminar on the history of Oaxaca; AHSEP, 176.2 Annual report of Ramón Robles, 9 Dec. 1933; ‘Informe del Profesor Francisco Hernández y Hernández, Ixtlan, Marzo – Julio 1932,’ Secretaría de Educación Pública, *Las misiones culturales* (Mexico, 1933), p. 215; AHSEP, 181.1, Report of Ramón Robles, 5 Aug. 1935.

⁸⁶ Vaughan, ‘The Implementation of National Policy in the Countryside,’ p. 903; María Berteley Busquets, ‘Educación indígena del siglo XX en México,’ in Pablo Latapi Sarre, *Un siglo de educación en México* (Mexico City, 1998), pp. 74–110, p. 79.

⁸⁷ AGN, Ramo Abelardo Rodríguez, 514.1/2-84, Circular 2, 12 Oct. 1932.

⁸⁸ AGN Dirección General de Gobierno, 2.340 (17) 65, 27908, Jenaro Méndez del Río to Secretaría de Gobierno, 13 Sept. 1937.

⁸⁹ AGPEO, Gobernación 1934, Circular 10 to Municipal Presidents.

⁹⁰ Archivo del Arzobispado de Oaxaca, (AAO), Diócesis, Gobernación, Autoridades Civiles, Article 213; *Periódico Oficial*, 11 Sept. 1934; *Periódico Oficial*, 27 Oct. 1934.

⁹¹ The role of the masons in the ‘defanatisation’ campaigns of the 1920s and 1930s still awaits proper treatment. Perhaps it was the Catholic mythology of the masons that had more weight than the action of the masons themselves, e.g. Blancarte, *Historia de la Iglesia Católica en México*, pp. 122–4; Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*, pp. 90, 111, 120, 135. After informal support for the campaign, Cárdenas called for their official support at the Tamaulipas meeting of the Gran Logias of Mexico in April 1934, which created the idea emergent for the Bloque de Acción Masónica to publicise the ideology and practical works

time, educational activists like the Confederation of Socialist Teachers of Oaxaca and the Defanaticisation Committee of the Normal School of Oaxaca demanded the ‘purification of the countryside’ and the ‘destruction of religious prejudices and dogmatisms’. They proposed the creation of a law that banned the teaching of catechism and the administering of baptism, an outright veto on any practising priests in the state, the closing of all Catholic schools and the prevention of minors entering churches.⁹² Although the state government avoided some of the more extreme suggestions, with Calles’ ‘grito’ of Guadalajara, and the acceptance of socialist education in October 1934, Toledo García announced an ambitious plan to implement the anticlerical aspect of the new programme. At the end of July he sent out circular 9, which quoted Calles and demanded that all teachers implement Defanaticisation Committees. Any teacher who was unable to fulfil his obligations regarding socialist or non-religious education should resign.⁹³ SEP circulars continued the purification of the teaching body. The head of federal education in the state, Luis G. Ramírez, announced that it was ‘indispensable to undertake a careful selection among the teachers so that their ideology is well defined, as although the majority of the teachers sustain socialist ideas, there are still today some that are wholly clerical’.⁹⁴ Private schools were banned from 1 February 1935 as education was to become the ‘exclusive job of the state’.⁹⁵ Lastly, the government attempted to spread socialist education throughout the state, designating two groups of federal school inspectors responsible for its propagation, as well as organising a series of compulsory teacher meetings in Cuilapam, Zaachila and Oaxaca City and the formal announcement of Article 3 in the pueblos at a specially designated fiesta.⁹⁶

Owing to the continued resistance, Huajuapam also merited the special attention of the president. In April 1937 Cárdenas arrived in Huajuapam de

of the masons to a dubious public. Despite the belief of some masons that the Bloque threatened their lodges’ independence and was an exclusively political body, the Oaxacan Gran Logia established the local branch in Sept. 1934. Influenced by the work of the Bloque, circulars were distributed to the other lodges in the state, demanding that masons support the government anticlerical campaign. My analysis of membership of the lodges of Oaxaca 1934 to 1937 indicates that many teachers belonged to or joined the lodges during the period, in part due to the influence of Policarpo T. Sánchez, a prominent mason and head of state education under López Cortés. Archivo de la Gran Logia de Oaxaca (AGLO), 1934–1937; *El Oaxaqueño*, 25 Nov. 1934; *El Oaxaqueño*, 7 Jan. 1935; *El Oaxaqueño*, 6 April 1935.

⁹² *El Oaxaqueño*, 5 June 1934; *El Oaxaqueño*, 14 June 1934; *El Oaxaqueño*, 30 Sept. 1934.

⁹³ AGPEO, Gobernación 1934, Circular 9; *El Oaxaqueño*, 21 Aug. 1934.

⁹⁴ Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Educación Pública, (AHSEP), Caja 179 240.3; AHSEP Caja 168, 241.4, Luis G. Ramírez to SEP, 8 May 1935.

⁹⁵ *El Oaxaqueño*, 7 Feb. 1935; *El Informador*, 6 Jan. 1935.

⁹⁶ *El Oaxaqueño* 6 Dec. 1934; *El Oaxaqueño*, 10 Dec. 1934; *El Oaxaqueño*, 16 Dec. 1934; AHSEP, 173.28, Luis G. Ramírez to SEP, 23 Jan. 1935; *El Informador*, 20 Jan. 1935.

León and announced the federalisation of all education in the state of Oaxaca. Previously, municipal authorities, which funded many of the state's schools, could force teachers to avoid the excesses of socialist education through the threat of withholding payment. Now, as all education was to be funded by the federal government, it could have more control of the teaching syllabi of the rural schools. At the same time as removing control of education from the municipal authorities, the president engaged in direct confrontation. While he was in Huajuapam de León, he declared that the Ixcaquixtla-Huajuapam railway would stop at Petlalzingo in Puebla, and he refused to attend the dance in his honour as a protest against internecine disputes among the municipal authorities over socialist education.⁹⁷ At the local level, in the diocese of Huajuapam de León, caciques like Rodolfo Solana Carrión, federal and some state teachers attempted to prescribe measures, denouncing priests and municipal authorities, demanding the intervention of federal troops, pamphleting, fining and haranguing Indians.

Thus the state government of Oaxaca, bowing to the ideological contortions of Calles and his more radical supporters, implemented an increasingly aggressive campaign of anticlericalism, that not only acted to substitute the secular for the religious but also eventually attempted to extirpate the influence of the church *per se*. However, although President Cárdenas attempted to intervene personally in the region's education the inhabitants of Huajuapam refused to integrate their children into the state-sponsored schools well into the 1940s.

III. The bishop and the priests

The resistance to the state crusade was partly due to the equitable distribution of land in the region, which prevented the common union of *agrarismo* and anticlericalism.⁹⁸ But its primary cause was the establishment

⁹⁷ AOHL, Rafael Gutiérrez Maza to Bishop Méndez, April 6 1937; *Oaxaca en México* (revista), 13 April 1937.

⁹⁸ It appears that although some Spanish landowners did own large haciendas, these were few and far between. Most Mixtecs retained their land as small property owners, communal villagers or members of agricultural societies. Francie R. Chassen-López, *From Liberal to Revolutionary Oaxaca: The View from the South, Mexico 1867–1911* (University Park, 2004), pp. 77–131; Manuel Esparza, 'Los Proyectos de los Liberales en Oaxaca (1856–1910),' in Leticia Reina, *Historia de la cuestión agraria mexicana, Estado de Oaxaca, Prehispanico-1924* (Oaxaca, 1988); Steffen Riedemann, *Los Comerciantes de Huajuapam de León*, pp. 56–87; M. T. De la Peña, *Oaxaca económico* (Mexico City, 1950), p. 36; Rodolfo Pastor, *Campesinos y reformas: La Mixteca, 1700–1856* (Mexico City, 1987) pp. 442–7; AGPEO, Gobernación 1938, Recaudador de Rentas to State Treasury, 2 Jan. 1938; *Periódico Oficial*, 1934–1946; John Monaghan, 'El PAN y las comunidades de la Mixteca Baja,' Paper presented at the American Anthropological Meeting, Oaxaca, 2002; Monaghan, 'Mixtec Caciques in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries'.

of a common front of bishop, priests, parishioners and private schools and their ability to negotiate within a shared cultural tradition. It was the ecclesiastical government that appeared to direct the effort. The strategy was partly delineated by the failure of the attempted armed uprising of the Ejército Nacional Reconstructor in Huajuapam in November 1932.⁹⁹ Utilising the discourse of social Catholicism, the group's manifesto warned of the dangers of 'extreme radicalism' which would 'cause the disappearance of all the sources of wealth of the country' and instead promoted 'the harmony of the classes' under the Mexican flag.¹⁰⁰ Although the main instigators, General Adalberto Mejía, Enrique Jiménez and Francisco Roa, were from outside Huajuapam, the local and state governments pointed to the involvement of the clergy in the promoting of the revolt. In particular, a Huajuapam priest, Francisco Gómez, was accused of encouraging the congregations of Tequixtepec, Silacayapilla and Amatlán to rebel.¹⁰¹ The municipal authorities led by José Peral Martínez forced the Bishop of Huajuapam to declare that all Mexicans who took up arms would be 'disobedient to the supreme Pontiff'. However the pastoral letter was not only a cautionary apology; it also offered a template for passive resistance, recommending a course of acceptable action to the counter the 'tribulations and difficulties' of the present that included prayer, the practice of a religious life, education and Acción Católica.¹⁰²

With Altamirano's move to Tulancingo in 1933, Jenaro Méndez del Río (1933–1952) was appointed bishop. In spite of his enforced exile in Mexico City until 1937, he organised an efficient if quiet resistance to the encroachment of anticlericalism and socialist education, maintaining contact with the local clergy through weekly letters delivered by his chauffeur.¹⁰³ With the order to reduce the priests to one for every 60,000 persons, Méndez ordered all priests to refrain from seeking registration and from abandoning their parishes. He demanded that, 'in all cases they conserve the divine cult in the temples', or if not 'move the parish services to private houses'. Furthermore, priests were to gather the municipal authorities together, inform them of the government initiative and petition them for aid 'as it will

⁹⁹ Although it formed part of a second wave of *Cristero* revolts in the early 1930s, the revolt is not to my knowledge mentioned in any secondary literature.

¹⁰⁰ AGPEO, Asuntos Católicos, Agente del Ministerio Público of Huajuapam to Governor López Cortés, 25 Nov. 1932.

¹⁰¹ AGN Dirección General de Gobierno, 2.347 Caja 10 15696, José Peral Martínez to Secretaría de Gobierno, 24 Nov. 1932; AGPEO, Gobernación 1934, José Peral Martínez to Governor López Cortés, 24 Nov. 1932.

¹⁰² AOHL, Carta Pastoral of Bishop Altamirano, 26 Nov. 1932.

¹⁰³ AOHL, Bishop Méndez to Zenón Villagómez Amador, 22 May 1935.

be the only guarantee that they have a priest'.¹⁰⁴ In late 1934 the priest of Tecomaxtlahuaca asserted,

we are in our places, kind-heartedly confident in our citizens ... Besides it is neither just nor decorous that the priest abandons his field of struggle in times of persecution, as it is not personal persecution but that of the sacred religion. Furthermore, we should give an example to the faithful.¹⁰⁵

Despite the continued denunciations by teachers and federal employees, the bishop maintained around 60 priests in the 39 parishes of the diocese during the entire period.¹⁰⁶ In December 1934 the vicar-general, Rafael Gutiérrez Maza, claimed that:

In all parishes of the state of Oaxaca the priests continue in their places, with more or less difficulty; in the state of Puebla there is general suffering but they have not had the kind of treatment that they have had to leave their posts.¹⁰⁷

They appeared to have maintained the observance of religious practices often in an overt manner. The SEP inspector for Huajuapam de León, Arcadio Lozano, complained that,

From five in the morning to ten at night the liturgical songs that the voices sing in chorus are heard even in the park, while the bells and the fireworks ring out and explode in the air and bands of music are stationed in front of the atrium of the church, mocking the precept of the constitution.¹⁰⁸

However, religious practice was not only designed for show. Méndez's 1935 New Year message to the clergy reminded them of the 'serious obligation that each one of us has of attending at least the most urgent spiritual needs of the faithful with whom we live, even at the cost of certain sacrifices'.¹⁰⁹ Government archives are replete with accusations of 'clandestine marriages and baptisms' and priests practising 'despite the removal of their licence'.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ AOHL, Bishop Méndez, Instrucciones al clero, 15 Nov. 1934.

¹⁰⁵ AOHL, Parish Records, Santiago Juxtahuaca, Report, 1 Dec. 1934.

¹⁰⁶ AOHL, Bishop Méndez to Dr Guillermo Piani, 23 June 1935. Another of his letters reveals why such low estimates of priests have been made throughout the period. Rafael Gutiérrez Maza confessed to the bishop that when the *Washington Post* correspondent, Mr Murray, asked how many priests remained in the diocese, he lied and claimed that there were only four as per government regulations. ADH, Rafael Gutiérrez Maza to Bishop Méndez, 20 May 1936.

¹⁰⁷ AOHL, Rafael Gutiérrez Maza, Report, 20 Nov. 1934.

¹⁰⁸ AHSEP, 180 240.11, Arcadio Lozano to SEP, 11 May 1935.

¹⁰⁹ AOHL, Bishop Méndez to clergy of Huajuapam, 1 Jan. 1935.

¹¹⁰ AGPEO, Gobernación 1934, Secretario de Gobierno to Governor García Toledo, 26 Oct. 1935; AGPEO, Gobernación, O. Rodríguez, Manuel M. León, Honorario Cruz Flores and Sidonio G. Suarez to Governor García Toledo, 5 Feb. 1935; AGPEO, Gobernación 1934, Men of Cosolotepec to Governor García Toledo, 29 May 1935.

As explained above, the success of the Huajuapam de León diocesan structure was due in part to the recruitment of local men as priests. During the period of persecution, as Enrique Guerra Manzo's work on Michoacán demonstrates, these clerical intermediaries with their links to the local community became particularly important.¹¹¹ Unlike Tlaxcala, where as Rockwell points out teachers often assumed the role of intermediary due to the lack of priests, the surfeit of clergy in Huajuapam allowed them to retain this role, 'becoming part of the community through *compadrazgo* and participation in local affairs'.¹¹² Owing to the establishment of the diocesan seminary and contacts made by Bishop Amador, many of the priests were from Huajuapam and were linked to the major families in the region. Bishop Amador's sister had married Huajuapam's most powerful pre-revolutionary cacique, and two of their sons, Uriel and Zenón Villagómez, were important priests during this period.¹¹³ Relatives of the priests also often formed the anti-socialist groups in the villages. José Cubas Solano, brother of the rector of Huajuapam de León led the 'fanatics' in Tonalá, while the 'Catholic caciques' of Miltepec, Cipriano Cruz and Felipe Suárez, were both fathers of priests.¹¹⁴ Familial ties and local connections would override ideological considerations. Even an anticlerical iconoclast who allegedly stole the crown from the saint at Tamazulapam wanted the local priest to be godfather for his child's baptism.¹¹⁵

Although the archbishop of Mexico advised the diocesan clergy to maintain a low profile and 'let the parents talk', they played a vital role in the organisation of the campaign against socialist education.¹¹⁶ The clergy were the principal propagandists against the socialist school. Following the norms laid down by the Mexican episcopate, Bishop Méndez ordered them to instruct their parishioners not to send their children to the schools, as 'there they will inculcate atheism'. They were to threaten excommunication for non-compliance.¹¹⁷ This message was repeated time and again from the

¹¹¹ Enrique Guerra Manzo, *Caciquismo y orden público en Michoacán, 1920–1940* (Mexico City, 2002).

¹¹² Rockwell, 'Schools of the Revolution,' p. 202. However, in Jalisco priests were very much connected to the communities, David Brading, *Mito y profecía* (Mexico City, 1988), p. 169.

¹¹³ AGPEO, Ricardo D. Sánchez to Governor, 30 Jan. 1936. It might be interesting to speculate that the system of indigenous caciques which Arij Ouwenel notes in the eighteenth century and the consequent indigenous loyalty to the cacique was transferred in this case to the Church in the form of the cacique's sons. Arij Ouwenel, *Shadows over Anáhuac: An Ecological Interpretation of Crisis and Development in Central Mexico, 1730–1800* (Albuquerque, 1996), pp. 248–52.

¹¹⁴ AGPEO Asuntos Agrarios, 27.1, Juan Flores to Secretario del Despacho, 5 Feb. 1927; AHSEP, Caja 8, Juan I. Flores to Governor Vásquez, 27 Jan. 1927.

¹¹⁵ AGPEO, Gobernación 1940, Unsigned to Governor Chapital, 11 March 1940.

¹¹⁶ Archivo Histórico del Arzobispado de México (AHAM), Diocesano, Gobierno, Correspondencia, 10 Feb. 1934, Archbishop of Mexico to Archbishop of Oaxaca.

¹¹⁷ AOHL, Bishop Méndez, Instrucciones al clero, 20 Dec. 1934.

pulpit as priests like Manuel Cubas Solano in Huajuapam, Avelino de la J. Mora in Tezoatlan and Vicente Arroyo in Mixquixtlahuaca, ‘denigrated the principles of the revolution’ and ‘advised the parents not to send their children to the official schools’.¹¹⁸ One priest explained to his flock that socialism was ‘hatred against Our Lord God and the Catholic church, destruction of paternal authority and the right of property and the complete dissolution of society’.¹¹⁹ Cubas actually read from a textbook of socialist education in order to forewarn the citizens of Huajuapam of the potential dangers.¹²⁰ The priests also handed out the printed propaganda of the church, which the bishop often sent down from Mexico City with his chauffeur. This included the pamphlets of the right-wing organisation, Acción Cívica Nacional, magazines like *La Lucha* and *Christus* as well as printed flysheets that could be posted on the walls of the municipal buildings.¹²¹ The posters were designed to instil fear and intransigence in the *padres de familia*. One warned that socialist education would ‘tear religion and the existence of God from the soul of the child’.¹²² They proved to be extremely popular, and Cubas demanded up to 4,000 per month.¹²³ Not only were they read in private, but also plastered over municipal palaces at night and read out, like the penny press during the English Civil War, at community meetings and in private homes.¹²⁴ The propaganda effort caused one SEP inspector to remark that the Indians only knew of the socialist schools ‘through the opaque prism of the viperous preaching of the priests’.¹²⁵

Although it was parents who fronted the 1935 strike against the socialist school, it was principally the priests who organised it. At the end of December 1934, Padre Mauro Ramírez suggested to the bishop that they should start to organise a strike against the official schools.¹²⁶ Bishop Méndez approved of the idea, and the next six months saw priests and

¹¹⁸ AGPEO, Gobernación 1937, School Inspector to Governor Chapital, 19 May 1937; AGPEO, Gobernación 1934, Rosendo Mendoza to Governor García Toledo, 10 Sept. 1934; AGPEO, Gobernación 1934, Eloy Bautista to Governor García Toledo, 14 May 1935.

¹¹⁹ ADH, Porfirio López Alavez to Bishop Méndez, 12 Aug. 1935.

¹²⁰ Archivo del Municipio de Huajuapam de León, (AMHL), Honorio Cruz to Governor Chapital, 2 Feb. 1937.

¹²¹ AOHL, Bishop Méndez to Gutiérrez Maza, 18 Oct. 1935; ADH, Cubas to Bishop Méndez, 9 April 1936; John W. Sherman, ‘Reassessing Cardenismo: The Mexican Right and the Failure of a Revolutionary Regime, 1934–1940,’ *The Americas*, vol. 54, no. 3 (1998), pp. 362–3.

¹²² AGPEO, Gobernación 1934, Aviso Importante.

¹²³ AOHL, Manuel Cubas Solano to Bishop Méndez, 9 April 1936.

¹²⁴ AGPEO, Gobernación, Luis Ramírez to Director of Federal Education in Oaxaca, 23 May 1936; ADH, Manuel Cubas Solano to Bishop Mendez, 23 April 1936.

¹²⁵ AHSEP, 176.10 Aurelo Lonzano to Luis Ramírez, 4 Nov. 1935.

¹²⁶ AOHL, Jesús Villagómez to Bishop Méndez, 26 Dec. 1934.

seminary students travelling the diocese attempting to instigate the action.¹²⁷ In April 1935 Cubas walked north out of Huajuapam towards Chazumba collecting the signatures of men and women who refused to put their children in the official schools. He acquired 1,056 signatures from the pueblos of Rancho Espinal, Camotlán, Cuyotepeji and Suchiltepec.¹²⁸ The groups of parents in each village were often formed from already existing church groups. In Amatitlán, the priest, Rufilio Flores Ayala described how he welded together the congregations of Josefina, la Vela Perpetua al Santísimo Sacramento, El Apostolado de la Oración and Carmelitana into the female branch of the parents' group. All 'swore against the diabolical teaching' of the regime.¹²⁹ Not only did priests propagate information about the socialist school, organise the parents and persuade municipal authorities to cease all payments to municipal teachers who concurred with the federal campaign, they also provided the backbone for the strike and remained intransigent in the face of government negotiation.¹³⁰ Bishop Méndez ordered that, regarding the strike, 'the priest should be inflexible and should not tolerate abuses that betray and affect his conscience'.¹³¹ When the state authorities closed Huajuapam cathedral in an attempt to force greater school attendance, the bishop ordered that any offer to reopen the cathedral in return for the end of the strike should be refused.¹³² Unfortunately, much of the information on the strike was lost the following year when diocesan documents were burnt to prevent them falling into the hands of suspicious federal employees.¹³³ As well as organising the strike, priests also offered alternatives to the official schools in the form of catechism classes, private and home schools. In 1934 one priest reported that he was organising catechism classes 'to counter the secularist ideas of the official schools'.¹³⁴ Bishop Méndez wrote that to 'offset the labour of the government and attend to the education of the children, private colleges and various centres of instruction have been established ... under the vigilance of the respective parish'. In Huajuapam de León itself the church even managed to keep open an academy for girls run by Carmelite nuns.¹³⁵ In the villages some priests contributed their own salaries to maintain the private schools, while others organised branches of the Asociación de San Vicente de Paul to give 'cereals

¹²⁷ AOHL, Bishop Méndez to Gutiérrez Maza, 23 Jan. 1935.

¹²⁸ AOHL, Manuel Cubas Solano to Bishop Méndez, 25 April 1935.

¹²⁹ AOHL, Parish records, San Miguel Amatitlán, Rufilio Flores Ayala to Bishop Méndez, 7 March 1934.

¹³⁰ AGPEO, Gobernación 1934, Gustavo B. Mendoza to Pacido Zarate, 19 Oct. 1933.

¹³¹ AOHL, Bishop, Instrucciones a los Señores Parrocos y Clero de la Diócesis, 26 July 1935.

¹³² AOHL, Bishop Méndez to Zenón Villagómez, 28 March 1935.

¹³³ AOHL, Gutiérrez Maza to Bishop Méndez, 26 March 1936.

¹³⁴ AOHL, Jesús Villagómez to Bishop Méndez, 23 Feb. 1935.

¹³⁵ AOHL, Bishop Méndez to Dr. Guillermo Piani, 23 June 1935.

and other materials for life' to the struggling teachers, who were often the relations of the priests.¹³⁶ Zeferino Villagómez, a famed private school teacher in Huajuapam itself was brother of priests Uriel and Zenón and nephew of Bishop Amador.¹³⁷

The priests also often used their connections within communities to assume important roles in the negotiations between federal officials, municipal authorities and the parents. In November 1936 the school inspector forced the municipal president of Huajuapam de León to close a private school that was allegedly disseminating anti-socialist propaganda. Cubas explained to the bishop how, 'I talked with the actual president, with whom I have good relations, and we came to the agreement that they would close for some days until the inspector left and then would continue. He agreed and now they are working again'.¹³⁸ The priests particularly attempted to sway the municipal schoolteachers, who tended to be older, more attached to their communities and less enamoured of socialist education than their federal counterparts. In October 1934 Flores Ayala claimed that,

none of the teachers that work in the parish have put in practice any of the official teachings of the government and there is no danger that they will establish systems like 'the socialist school' and 'sexual teaching' as the teachers are natives of the region and born in a Christian atmosphere.¹³⁹

However, persuasion was not always enough, and the priests were forced into blackmail. Porfirio López Alavez explained how the federal school of Santiago Naranjas had started to launch attacks on the priest. In retaliation the priest had 'pretended to be very afraid of the teacher and did not administer any sacrament to the faithful'. Within a month the villagers had caused the teacher to flee.¹⁴⁰

The priests were persecuted by the state authorities because of their role in opposing the socialist school. Vicente Cruz López was fined 100 pesos for a series of particularly inflammatory speeches in Santa Catalina, announcing that he was 'loyal to his religion and would die for the cause of God'.¹⁴¹ Another priest was imprisoned in Tlaxiaco for allegedly allowing a rebel to escape police custody. He was allowed out after also paying 100

¹³⁶ AOHL, Zenón Villagómez to Bishop Méndez, 23 July 1936.

¹³⁷ Telesforo Mendoza Guerrero, *Monografía del Distrito de Huajuapam* (Mexico City, 1992), p. 91.

¹³⁸ AOHL, Manuel Cubas Solano to Bishop Méndez, 28 March 1936; AMH, Arcadio Lonzano to Governor García Toledo, 18 March 1936.

¹³⁹ AOHL, Parish records, San Miguel Amatitlán, Rufilio Flores Ayala to Bishop Méndez, 1 Oct. 1934.

¹⁴⁰ AOHL, Parish Records, Santiago Juxtlahuaca, Porfirio López Alavez to Bishop Méndez, Report, 12 Aug. 1935.

¹⁴¹ AGPEO, Gobernación 1934, men of Cosolotepec to Governor García Toledo, 29 May 1935.

pesos.¹⁴² However, the federal and state authorities were most concerned with the actions of Manuel Cubas Solano in Huajuapam whom they believed (rightly) to be coordinating resistance in the absence of the bishop. His case demonstrates not only the importance of certain priests in the government's eyes, but also their significance for the parishioners. Cubas was one of only two priests in the diocese who actually asked for permission to administer to his flock after September 1934, but his request was turned down in December.¹⁴³ It was eventually accepted in February 1935, and he continued to practise until, a year later, the state government banned his ministry for infringing the constitution and using subversive tactics against the socialist school. The incident accordingly 'caused much indignation in society'.¹⁴⁴ Antonio Niño de Rivera, who led the small group of anticlericals in the town, offered to restore his licence if Cubas filled the schools of the diocese with children.¹⁴⁵ The response was immediate. The bishop wrote letters to businessmen and politicians, while the men and women wrote to governor and president of their 'disgust at the stopping of cults' in the town.¹⁴⁶ Children circulated news-sheets against socialist teachers in general, two men knocked on Niño de Rivera's door at night with their pistols demanding he come out, and three men shot up the official school the next day.¹⁴⁷ Police now surrounded the houses of the schoolteacher and the inspector and they were escorted to school by armed soldiers. Cubas himself recounts how 'the whole pueblo' came out 'to mock and jeer' them.¹⁴⁸ Posters threatened fines and imprisonments if parents did not send their children to school but were immediately torn down.¹⁴⁹ In fact, such was the display of unity between priest and pueblo and the concomitant inefficacy of Niño de Rivera's attempt to force the issue that by August 1936 Cubas was preaching openly if not legally.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴² AOHL, Parish records, Santiago Juxtahuaca, Porifirio López Alavez to Bishop Méndez, 28 Aug. 1936. ¹⁴³ ADH, Jesús Villagómez to Bishop Méndez, 26 Dec. 1934.

¹⁴⁴ AOHL, Rafael Gutiérrez Maza to Bishop Méndez, 6 June 1936.

¹⁴⁵ AOHL, Manuel Cubas Solano to Bishop Méndez, 7 June 1936.

¹⁴⁶ AOHL, Bishop Mendez to Manuel Salazar y Aguilar, 13 June 1936; AGPEO, Gobernación 1936, Men of Huajuapam to Governor García Toledo, 12 June 1936, women of Huajuapam to Governor García Toledo, 14 June 1936.

¹⁴⁷ AOHL, Zenón Villagómez to Bishop Méndez, 21 June 1936; AOHL, Jesús Cruz to Bishop Méndez, 22 June 1936; AOHL, Ecclesiastico Ramírez to Bishop Méndez, 24 June 1936; AGPEO, Gobernación 1937, Ignacio M. Cruz to Director of Antonio de León school, 12 June 1936.

¹⁴⁸ AOHL, Manuel Cubas Solano to Bishop Méndez, 12 June 1936.

¹⁴⁹ AOHL, Zenón Villagómez to Bishop Méndez, 23 July 1936.

¹⁵⁰ AGPEO, Gobernación 1937, Ignacio Cruz to Director of Federal Education in Oaxaca, 3 Sept. 1936.

IV. The parishioners and the private schools

As argued above, priests were integral to the process of resistance to state education, acting as propagandists, organisers, negotiators, fundraisers and scapegoats for the effort. However, they were unable to act without the concerted support of both the parents and the private religious schools. According to Bishop Méndez,

the heroic parents have been in front of the titanic struggle to defend the honour of God against the enemies that try to prostitute the children and convert them into pariahs and degenerates.¹⁵¹

The effect of the school strike against the socialist school by the parents was dramatic. Although no exact figures are available, it appears that, outside a few small *agrarista* enclaves, attendance from 1934 to 1938 was effectively nil. In the town of Huajuapam de León, although there were over 500 children on the school census, attendance, according to the SEP, never rose above 60, and, according to the church, never bettered 30. Both agreed that the only children to attend were those of federal employees and their servants.¹⁵² In Mixtlahuaca only five or six children attended out of 60 on the census. In May 1936 the sub-inspector of schools, Isidro Velasco, wrote in exasperation to the director general of federal education of the ‘utter lack of support for the socialist school’ in the area. In the past month he had traversed the northern part of the district. He found that in Cuyotepeji, Suchiltepec, Miltepec, La Luz, El Espinal and Llano Grande the parents ‘did not accept the new school, refused to support the teacher or inscribe their children’. In Guadalupe Tezoatlán the school was open but the locals refused to pay the teacher. In the *ejido* of Tacahe de Mina the teacher had to close the school, as the authorities gave no guarantees and offered no payment. In Ayuquillila the school proved impossible to run as the municipal president had to pay for it out of his own pocket. Only in Las Piñas was the school functioning; however, the inspector’s enthusiasm was dampened by the news that the teacher was only being paid eight pesos and continued to teach ‘fanaticism’.¹⁵³ Time after time state and SEP representatives singled out Huajuapam as uniquely resistant to socialist education in Oaxaca. The director of federal education wrote to the SEP director in 1935 to complain that Huajuapam was the ‘most difficult zone in the state’. His only suggested solution was the removal of all priests and all municipal authorities.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ AOHL, Bishop Méndez to Don José Acevedo, 20 June 1936.

¹⁵² AOHL, Manuel Cubas Solano to Bishop Méndez, 24 April 1936; AHSEP 180, 240.11 Arcadio Lonzo to Director of Federal Education in Oaxaca, 21 May 1935.

¹⁵³ AGPEO, Gobernación 1937, Isidro Velasco to Director of the SEP, 16 May 1936.

¹⁵⁴ AGPEO, Educación, Luis G. Ramírez to Director of the SEP, 4 March 1936.

Parents did not rely only on the school strike to avoid the dangers of the government education programme. Unlike the central areas of Mexico, murder was not used as a regular means of resistance although two teachers were killed in the diocese.¹⁵⁵ The most used tactic was that of petition. These often revealed the measure of intractability of the parents, and the problems with any negotiated settlement. On 5 March 1935 the municipal president of Huajuapam, José Peral Martínez and the tax collector, Manuel Díaz Chavez, met with 200 parents to discuss the problem of school attendance. The parents were represented by a group of 11, four of whom were women. They agreed to send their children to school if: there was liberty of teaching; the teachers appointed were trusted by the pueblo; and there was absolute liberty for the establishment of private schools. Given government policy, none of the demands could be met and the strike continued.¹⁵⁶

Other less formal means of disrupting the official school system were also employed. Broadly falling under the category of ‘weapons of the weak’, these included foot-dragging, feigned incomprehension, drunkenness, mockery, laughter and minor acts of vandalism and violence.¹⁵⁷ In particular, before the federalisation of schools in 1937, many villages refused to contribute the monthly payment of 24 centavos for the municipal teacher’s wage. The school inspector informed the state government representative in Huajuapam in November 1936 that four teachers had passed through Dinicuiti since May that year. All had left because of the refusal to pay their salaries and the ‘general indifference of the people’. When the inspector had interviewed the municipal president about the non-payment, he had claimed to have no knowledge of the matter.¹⁵⁸ Fiestas, especially the annual carnivals, offered an excellent opportunity to ridicule and intimidate the socialist schooling system. Not only were most residents fortified by alcohol, they were often disguised, and customarily had used the festival, like the early modern carnival, to mock the richer members of the village with impunity.¹⁵⁹ In April 1938 the rural teacher of Dinicuiti, Justo Ramírez, complained

¹⁵⁵ David L. Raby, ‘Los maestros rurales y los conflictos sociales en México (1931–1940),’ *Historia Mexicana*, vol. 18, no. 2 (1968), pp. 190–226. Onosimo Cruz was killed in Texcalcingo, (*El Oaxaqueño*, 17 Nov. 1934). Efrén Miranda was murdered in Chayuco (*Oaxaca Nuevo*, 6 April 1938).

¹⁵⁶ AGPEO, Gobernación 1937, José Peral Martínez to Governor García Toledo, 5 March 1935. Also see petition from parents of Suchixtlahuaca, Coixtlahuaca regarding mixed education. AHSEP, Caja 8, parents of Suchixtlahuaca to Governor García Toledo, 17 Sept. 1935.

¹⁵⁷ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, 1985).

¹⁵⁸ AMHL, Arcadio Lonzano to Manuel Díaz Chavez, 12 Nov. 1936.

¹⁵⁹ Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 178–204. For carnivals in a Mexican context see William Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club and Other Episodes of Porfirian Mexico* (Lincoln, NE, 1987), pp. 97–108; Terry Rugeley, *Of Wonders and Wise Men: Religion and Popular Cultures in Southeast Mexico, 1800–1876* (Austin, 2000), pp. 85–6.

that the municipal authorities had permitted the carnival procession. The villagers, dressed in the traditional Jewish masks, had shouted, ‘Long live religion, death to the government, death to the state governor and death to the bad president of the republic’, before banging on the school doors, declaiming, ‘Death to the masons, long live religion’, only then to descend into various distasteful speculations about the teacher’s mother.¹⁶⁰ It was often women and children who opposed the government’s anticlericalism unmasked. Government reports abound with instances of their involvement in demonstrating, stone-throwing, graffiti, name-calling, window-breaking and even beating. Both saw involvement in the resistance effort as a welcome opportunity for political participation. In addition they took advantage of the patriarchal justice system and often escaped with a stern reprimand and a warning to their husband/father to take more care of them next time.¹⁶¹

Though Huajuapam parents refused to send their children to the official schools, this did not mean that they regarded education as an anathema. As Rockwell has demonstrated there was a genuine demand for schooling at all levels of Mexican society.¹⁶² The 1950 census shows that a refusal to assimilate into the federal system did not mean parents would allow their children to grow up illiterate. While in the state of Oaxaca as a whole, 36.04 per cent of the population were literate, in the ex-district of Huajuapam, 46.72 per cent could read and write.¹⁶³ In Huajuapam the need for education was fulfilled by the extensive network of private and home schools. Although the state government had ordered private schools to be assimilated into the federal schooling structure, many managed to avoid the dragnet. Some, like the school for girls run by the Carmelite nuns in Huajuapam, were permitted to remain open despite their overtly religious teaching.¹⁶⁴ Some continued regardless of the cycle of denunciation, closure, relocation and reopening. The director of the Morelos private school, Manuel González Gatica, moved the school from private house to private house throughout the 1930s.¹⁶⁵ Others disguised themselves as ‘art schools.’ The Academia de Corte, Costura y Música ran by Rosario Sandoval was condemned as merely the new incarnation of what had previously been the Leóna Vicario school for

¹⁶⁰ AGPEO, Asuntos Católicos, 1940, Justo Ramírez to Luis G. Ramírez, 16 April 1938. The Jewish masks are part of a tradition, which holds that the Jews chased Christ through Mexico. Rugeley, *Of Wisdom and Wise Men*, p. 21.

¹⁶¹ AGPEO, Asuntos Católicos, 1936, Ignacio Cruz to Arcadio Lonzano, 13 March 1936; AMHL, José Peral Martínez to Director of Federal Education in Oaxaca, 23 Nov. 1935; Arcadio Lonzano to Director of Federal Education in Oaxaca, 12 Dec. 1936.

¹⁶² Rockwell, ‘Schools of the Revolution,’ p. 188.

¹⁶³ *Censo de Población, Estado de Oaxaca* (Mexico City, 1956).

¹⁶⁴ AOHL, Bishop Méndez to Dr Guillermo Piani, 23 June 1935.

¹⁶⁵ AMH, Director de la Escuela Primera Antonio de León to Director of Federal Education in Oaxaca, 7 Feb. 1935.

girls.¹⁶⁶ In 1936, at the height of the anticlerical campaign, Bishop Méndez claimed that there were 100 schools for boys and 100 for girls. Together they catered for 10,000 children in the diocese.¹⁶⁷

The lessons given in the private schools were markedly different from those offered by the state. The ideology of Social Catholicism infused the classes, and teachers often read from the pamphlets handed out by the church leaders.¹⁶⁸ The lessons on citizenship stressed the importance of the family as the ‘base of the moral building of society’, and emphasised the responsibility of the state to its citizens as ‘the representative of the interests of society’. Under the title ‘Politics’, teachers at the Ignacio Rayón school taught the ‘importance of popular suffrage’ and the ‘independence of the municipality and its council.’ At the same time the schools proposed a different version of history to the official vision of liberal anticlericals and class-warfare revolutionaries. Their heroes were Hidalgo, Morelos and Iturbide, nationalism ‘an expression of our unity under the Catholic religion’.¹⁶⁹ In all, the syllabus offered a challenge to the attempted cultural hegemony of the revolutionaries; a political theory that combined a demand for free suffrage and the sovereignty of the municipality with classic Catholic ideas of the importance of the family, all under an alternative teleology of Catholic nationalism.¹⁷⁰

Resistance to the state project of anticlericalism and socialist education was organised by a conjunction of church and lay forces, which together formed a bulwark against the socio-cultural project of the state, buttressed by a mixture of intransigence and legal manoeuvre, private schools, lay groups and petty violence. However it would be mistaken to view the relationship between the church and the inhabitants of a diocese as either one of unified action or blind obedience. Although Bishop Amador’s sensitive construction of the diocesan culture indicates that there was a degree of dialogue between local Catholic hierarchy and the Mixtec peasantry before the 1930s, state anticlerical pressure certainly led to intensification of this process of negotiation as peasants used their increased bargaining power as potential

¹⁶⁶ AMHL, Ernesto Zárate López to Director of Federal Education in Oaxaca, 6 Nov. 1936. Torres Septién, *La educación privada en México*, p. 150–2.

¹⁶⁷ AOH, Report of Bishop Méndez, 12 May 1937. Britton claims that there were only 67 private schools in the whole country in 1937. The divergence of opinions presumably arises not only from the existence of clandestine schools but also the definition of school itself. Britton, *Educación y radicalismo*, II, p. 15.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Ángel T. Mora, Jan. 2004.

¹⁶⁹ AMHL, Reports of the Ignacio Rayón school. For a comparison see Torres Septién, *La educación privada en México*, p. 72, 142.

¹⁷⁰ For another vision of alternative Catholic teaching see, David Espinosa, ‘Restoring Christian Social Order’: The Mexican Catholic Youth Association (1913–1932),’ *The Americas*, vol. 59, no. 4 (2003), p. 458.

anticlericals to redefine the local formation of church and cultural practice.¹⁷¹ As Daniela Traffano has demonstrated for the nineteenth century, the debate frequently centred on the position of the parish as parishioners tried to play ‘an active part in the construction of their religious space’.¹⁷² In the 1930s villages tried to usurp the position of parish *cabecera* by highlighting the actual *cabecera*’s tacit acceptance of socialist education in comparison with their own intransigence. In 1935 the inhabitants of San Marcos Arteaga asked for the establishment of a parish in their pueblo, explaining that not only were there now 1,300 inhabitants, but also that ‘the village is not in agreement with Tezoatlan with regards their political and religious party allegiance’.¹⁷³ Other rearrangements focused on lay financial support for the church. In his eighth pastoral letter, Bishop Altamirano reminded parishioners to ‘pay tithes religiously’ and to ‘cooperate in the material sustaining of the church’. He explained that tithes were not ‘alms that the faithful can give or omit’.¹⁷⁴ The proffering of the bishopric’s begging bowl was motivated by villages’ growing opposition to payment of tithes, which they saw as superfluous to the needs of the priests who were now as much reliant on the villagers as they were on him. The residents of Ayuquililla complained that their priest ‘lives and eats well and has no need for that money’.¹⁷⁵ Huajuapam’s villagers also renegotiated other charges. In San Jeronimo Xayacatlan communists insisted that the priest demand only 50 centavos for baptism and 2 pesos for marriage.¹⁷⁶ There was also fiscal reorganisation on the individual level as the official owners of *cofradía* lands sought to break free from their rental obligations to the church. In San Miguel Tlacotepec Nieves, Juan Maldonado, owner of 1,400 pesos worth of former *cofradía* land and nominal head of the Catholic society, refused to give any money towards the village fiestas or the rebuilding of the church. When pushed, he threatened to denounce the lands to the agrarian authorities.¹⁷⁷

However, it was not only the intricacies of Church power and economy that were open to dispute. During the 1930s the inhabitants of Huajuapam attempted to renegotiate religious practice. As the Church demanded greater

¹⁷¹ ‘Seemingly hegemonic doctrines such as colonial Catholicism almost always function as a field of negotiation where everyone plies his interests,’ Rugeley, *Of Wisdom and Wise Men*, p. 44.

¹⁷² Daniela Traffano, ‘Indios, curas y Nación. La sociedad indígena frente a un proceso de secularización: Oaxaca, siglo XIX,’ unpubl. PhD diss., Colegio de México, 2000, pp. 85–92. ¹⁷³ AOHL, men of San Marcos Arteaga to Bishop Méndez, 14 July 1935.

¹⁷⁴ *Octava Carta Pastoral del Ilmo. Y Rvdmo. Señor Obispo de Huajuapam de León, Luis María Altamirano* (Huajuapam de León, 1932).

¹⁷⁵ AOHL, Men of Ayuquililla to Bishop Méndez, 23 July 1935.

¹⁷⁶ AOHL, Avelino Mora to Bishop Méndez, 1 June 1936.

¹⁷⁷ AOHL, Parish records, Santa María Tlacotepec Nieves, José Soriano to Bishop Méndez, 9 Aug. 1934.

moral standards from the faithful, so the Mixtecs required better behaviour from the clergy. Víctor and Marcos Arellano of Mariscala complained to the bishop that the local priest had taken advantage of their sister. They asked indignantly, 'Why does the church allow such individuals? Why does it not stop their immorality? Is it not surprising that the official schools teach sexual education? What shame without limits.'¹⁷⁸ At the same time, the villages and the church redrew the boundaries of Catholic acceptance of social and religious mores. One of the key issues was the age of marriage. Although Bishop Amador had tacitly accepted the practice of underage marriage, the post-revolutionary church was less lenient.¹⁷⁹ In 1927 Rufilio Flores Ayala, the priest of San Miguel Amatitlán, enraged his parish by annulling 38 marriages between men in their thirties and girls of between 13 and 15. By 1935 the confrontation between the cleric and certain pueblos had become critical. The municipal agent of the small satellite village, Concepción Porfirio Díaz, complained that Flores was obliging the children to go to the socialist school and refusing to come to the village to marry couples or baptise children. They asked their village to be moved from the parish of San Miguel to the parish of Ayuquililla. However, according to the vicar-general, behind the request and mendacious accusations was the pueblo's desire to maintain the practice of marriage between older men and younger girls. Apparently the priest and municipal authorities of Ayuquililla were more lenient in the matter. Despite Flores' protestations, Concepción Porfirio Díaz (now called Concepción Buenavista) was allowed to move parish.¹⁸⁰

As patriotic festivals became an important sphere for the redefinition of state-peasant relations, so religious fiestas were moulded by the interaction between the church and the lay population.¹⁸¹ Narciso Villa asked the bishop for his permission to dispense with the need for fasting on Friday 25 March as the titular festival of the Santo Niño fell on that day. As he pointed out, 'obtaining the dispensation will avoid many sins'. Although Villa's letter was

¹⁷⁸ AOHL, Parish records, Santa María Mariscala, Víctor and Marcos Arellano to Bishop Méndez, 9 Aug. 1934.

¹⁷⁹ AOHL, Bishop Amador to Jesus Martínez, 2 July 1909.

¹⁸⁰ AOHL, Parish records, San Miguel Amatitlán, Rufilio Flores Ayala to Bishop Méndez, 27 Nov. 1927; AOHL, Parish records, San Miguel Amatitlán, Rufilio Flores Ayala to Bishop Méndez, 4 April 1933; AOHL, Parish records, San Miguel Amatitlán, Men of Concepción Porfirio Díaz to Bishop Méndez, 24 Aug. 1934; ADH, Parish records, San Miguel Amatitlán, Bishop Méndez to Narciso Villa, 20 Dec. 1935.

¹⁸¹ David E. Lorey, 'Post-Revolutionary Contexts for Independence Day: The Problem of Order and the Invention of Revolution Day 1920–1940,' in William H. Beezley and David E. Lorey (eds.), *Viva Mexico! Viva La Independencia!: Celebrations of September 16* (Wilmington, 2001), pp. 233–48; Mary Kay Vaughan, 'The Construction of the Patriotic Festival in Tecamachalco, Puebla 1900–1940,' in William H. Beezley, Cheryl English Martin, William E. French (eds.), *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance: Public Celebrations and Popular Culture in Mexico* (Wilmington, 1994), pp. 213–46.

sent on 16 March 1938, Bishop Méndez did not reply until 24 March. One of them must have known that the tardiness of the letter-writing process made the bishop's opinion irrelevant. Thus, the fiestas and the accompanying gluttony and drunkenness went ahead the next day despite his negative reply.¹⁸² As the secular festivals borrowed heavily from the custom and iconography of ecclesiastical ritual, so the church festivals began to include elements of the new secular models. In particular, the Huajuapam festivities started to adopt some of the songs utilised by the state government as part of its local variation of *indigenismo*. 'Mañanitas oaxaqueñas' and 'El alma oaxaqueña' were added to the programme of religious celebrations.¹⁸³ The church even laid claim to the authorship of the popular 'Canción Mixteca'. Although the government asserted that it was written by a revolutionary teacher, José López Alvarez, the church countered that it was composed by his brother, Porfirio, a priest from Juxtahuaca.¹⁸⁴

Owing to the construction of a powerful diocesan structure during the Porfiriato and even through to the 1920s, Huajuapam was well placed to counter the attempts of the state to reconfigure the Mexicans' understandings of God, loyalty, education, ethnicity and patriotism. The state made little headway through the lack of opportunities for *agrarismo*, the maintenance of a fairly regular church structure, continual propaganda, close connections between the Church and local authorities, private education, a very effective school strike and various well-chosen tools of peasant resistance. Concurrently the campaign and counter-campaign opened up space for debate over the nature of the religious regime in the diocese, with Huajuapam inhabitants able to adjust church practice both to their traditions and certain attractive elements of the new secular culture. To modify a metaphor of Alan Knight's, church and parents formed an organisational tandem, and while priests and the bishop steered the bicycle, the parents provided most of the legwork. However, by dropping the pace, the parents in turn could force the clergy, however briefly, to change direction.

To what extent was the diocese of Huajuapam an exceptional case? Did other indigenous areas of Mexico experience such a close bond between prelate, priests and parishioners and such retention of Catholic culture? Socialist education in the archdiocese of Oaxaca certainly suffered little of this concerted clergy-led opposition. Although popular obduracy to the

¹⁸² AOHL, Parish records, Santa María Mariscala, Narciso Villa to Bishop Méndez, 16 March 1938.

¹⁸³ AOHL, Programa de la Gran Feria de San Juan Jolotepec, 3–5 April 1932; AOHL, Programa de la Fiesta Eucarística 1940.

¹⁸⁴ AOHL, Manuel Cubas to Bishop Méndez, 3 Sept. 1937; Interview with Luis Martínez, Sept. 2003.

programme was widespread and there was vocal resistance to the state project from a few small, armed bands and a handful of intransigent clerics, the foundations and practicalities of clerical Oaxacan Catholicism were not equal to those of the diocese of Huajuapam de León. Edward Wright-Rios in his doctoral study of the archdiocese in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, argues that although Archbishop Eulogio Gillow y Zavalza attempted in some ways to ‘heighten and harness popular devotion’, the reform project ‘was limited in reach and shallow’. While Gillow encouraged the training of more Oaxacan clergy, they were predominantly urban mestizos or Hispanics and often parachuted into remote parishes, where they understood neither the language nor the culture of their indigenous charges. Also, unlike Bishop Amador, Gillow, by suppressing a succession of visionary movements and almost ignoring that of Juquila, failed ‘to secure the foundations of the Church and bolster their political position in the popular religious enthusiasm and belief’ of the era.¹⁸⁵ As a result the struggle against socialist education was sporadic and geographically limited. Bishop, priests and parishioners were far from united and their ideas of resistance wildly divergent. In 1934 Archbishop José Othón Núñez y Zárate advised parents to remove their children from official schools and peacefully resist the approaches of the federal educators.¹⁸⁶ The vicar general, Carlos Gracida, organised a demonstration against the changes to Article 3 in Oaxaca City and a rather pitiful letter-writing campaign.¹⁸⁷ Some of the rare priests with well-established connections to their parishes managed to persuade their congregation of the importance of the Archbishop’s words, but where government anticlericism did offend popular religious sensibilities resistance often had little in common with the pontiff’s mandates.¹⁸⁸ On the coast and in the Sierra Sur former *Cristero* David Rodríguez continued to mix banditry, Zapatista *agrarismo* and religious zeal.¹⁸⁹ In the

¹⁸⁵ Wright Rios, *Pilgrims and Progress*. See also Esparza, *Gillow durante el Porfiriato*; Chassen-López, *From Liberal to Revolutionary Oaxaca*, pp. 423–5.

¹⁸⁶ AAO, Diocesano, Gobierno, Correspondencia, 1933–4, Archbishop Othón Núñez y Zárate to Carlos Gracida, 2 Jan. 1934.

¹⁸⁷ AAO, Diocesano, Gobierno, Correspondencia, 1933–4, Carlos Gracida to Ignacio Colmenares, 7 Sept. 1934; AGPEO, Gobernación 1934, Juan G. Cabral to Governor García Toledo, 26 Sept. 1934. The letters written by the various parents groups at Gracida’s instigation are in a AGPEO, Gobernación 1934.

¹⁸⁸ For example, Rafael Hernández, the priest of San Miguel Peras, Zimatlan, was related to a local Zapotec ranchero, supported the popular insurgency of David Rodríguez, and expressed an appreciation for the merits of popular Catholicism. Diocesano, Gobierno, Correspondencia, Rafael Hernández to Agustín Espinosa, 8 Oct. 1934; Rafael Hernández to Carlos Gracida, 1 Jan. 1934; AGPEO, Gobernación 1934, Sub-secretary of Dispatch to Governor García Toledo, 23 Aug. 1934.

¹⁸⁹ Archivo de Aurelio Acevedo Robles, Caja 25, Exp. 122; AGPEO, Gobernación 1934, Juan G. Cabral to Governor, 26 Sept. 1934; AAO, Diocesano, Gobierno, Correspondencia, 1933–4, Alfonso Aragón to Archbishop Othón Núñez y Zárate.

Region Mixe, the local cacique's anticlericalism moved 300 Mixe Indians to start worshipping an indigenous girl from Asunción Cacalotepec who claimed to be 'a virgin arrived from Rome'.¹⁹⁰ If, in general, socialist education did fail, it was more due to the working patterns of the Oaxacan Indians, the threat of the local landlord's armed retainers and the poverty of the federal education system.¹⁹¹ In the Sierra Juárez, where land was equitably divided, the *mayordomía* system weak, municipal governments supportive, the federal system well funded and flexible and the teachers, like the priests of Huajuapam, native-speakers, socialist education was remarkably successful and there was 'frank camaraderie with the ideals of the school'.¹⁹²

Conclusion

This study of the religious culture of Huajuapam in the first half of the twentieth century has attempted to relate a two-stage process of development in the relations between church, state and society. First, during the Porfiriato, under the tutelage of Bishop Amador, the church attempted a renaissance based on an increase in lay groups and Catholic schools, both of which were designed to teach the patriotic Catholicism that Bishop Amador had welded to his own vision of the Mixtec inhabitants of the parish. The programme was continued well into the 1920s, when despite official government pronouncements, the Mixteca saw little anticlericalism. Second, by 1932, Governor López Cortés was obliged to enforce a series of Jacobin edicts to counteract the increasing accusations regarding his Catholic sympathies. Without a malleable *agrarismo* project these measures attracted no support among the inhabitants of Huajuapam. Furthermore the project was blocked by a firm alliance of bishop, priests and parishioners. Together they resisted both the anticlericalism and socialist education through private education, non-attendance, persuasion and a selection of the 'weapons of the weak'. Pressured into working together, society and church in Huajuapam de León were forced to renegotiate their terms and many villages reaffirmed their independence with regard the economic, social and cultural constraints of orthodox Catholicism.

The narrative questions some of the assumptions of modern Mexican historiography. First, the description of how prelate, parishioners, priests and

¹⁹⁰ AGPEO, Gobernación, Justicia, Sierra Juárez, 1943, Armando Herrera C. to Governor González Fernandez, 20 Feb. 1943.

¹⁹¹ AHSEP, 241.21, Federación Regional Mixta de Campesinos y Obreros de la Costa Chica to Director of SEP, 28 Oct. 1934; Alfredo Martínez Barroso, 'Maestro y escuela rural, 1920–1952,' *Los Maestros y la Cultura Nacional, Sureste*, vol. 5 (Mexico City, 1987).

¹⁹² AHSEP, 176.2 Annual report of Ramón Robles, 9 Dec. 1933; Ramón Pérez García, *La Sierra Juárez* (Mexico City, 1956), (2 volumes).

private schools interacted to confront the anticlerical persecution of the 1930s overturns traditional ideas of the divisions in early-twentieth century Mexican religious culture. In Huajuapam, ecclesiastical hierarchy and village Catholics did not operate in opposition. Instead, priests acting as cultural and political intermediaries, brought together the bishop's implacable ire, private and municipal schoolteachers' religious devotion and parishioners' traditional Catholicism to form an intransigent anti-government front.

Second, the efforts of Bishop Amador to mould local Catholicism around the customs and culture of the Indian communities and the persistence of the links between the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the Mixtec inhabitants offers a potential corrective to descriptions of the gulf of understanding between indigenous and official forms of religion. Although there were clearly differences between the church hierarchy and the parishioners over moral, cultural and ritual issues of Catholicism, both looked for a middle ground. Under Bishop Amador especially, the Huajuapam church was keen to adapt itself to the local customs of the Indians. Third, in comparison with most of the archdiocese of Oaxaca at least, Huajuapam was an exception, which modifies the religious geography of Mexico. Clerical Catholicism has always been thought to be most powerful in central states of Mexico, or what Manuel Ceballos Ramírez calls the 'Catholic geo-political axis', which stretches between Zacatecas and Puebla.¹⁹³ In contrast, the Catholicism of the indigenous south and southeast have been held to be a heady and unorthodox mix of apparently over-literal often chiliastic interpretations of doctrine and quasi-pagan continuities.¹⁹⁴ However, Huajuapam's strong clerical devotion indicates at the very least that by the early twentieth century the Catholic axis had spread beyond its traditional boundaries.

Fourth, the difference in the relationships between the Huajuapam people and the church and the Huajuapam people and the state challenges the increasingly promiscuous use of the term 'negotiation'. While negotiation can in this case be used to describe the process of debate and conciliation undertaken by priests and parishioners over the economic, moral and cultural role of religion, it should not be invoked as a fundamentalist creed and stretched to explain the antagonistic and hostile relationship between the state and the Catholic masses of Huajuapam. Here, it would be judicious to

¹⁹³ Ceballos Ramírez, *El catolicismo social*, p. 16; D. A. Brading, *Church and State in Bourbon Mexico: The Diocese of Michoacán 1749–1810* (Cambridge, 1994).

¹⁹⁴ Rugeley, *Of Wisdom and Wise Men*; Terry Rugeley, *Yucatán's Maya Peasantry and the Origins of the Caste War*, (Austin, 1986); Jan Rus, 'Whose Caste War? Indians, Ladinos and Mexico's Chiapas 'Caste War' of 1869,' in Virginia Garrard-Burnett (ed.), *On Earth as it is in Heaven: Religion in Modern Latin America* (Wilmington, 2000), pp. 24–59.

return to the idea of resistance. In addition, this would allow the historian to understand how today's bitter division between the Partido Acción Nacional and the Partido Revolucionario Institucional emerged from the conflict of the 1930s.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ Martínez, *La lucha electoral del PAN*.