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"Mexican Catholic Women's Grassroots Organizing in Rural Jalisco, Mexico, 1929-1940."

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-Entré aquí a rezar. No he terminado todavía.
-¿Qué país es éste, Agripina?
Y ella volvió a alzarse de hombros.

--Juan Rulfo, "Luvina"

Introduction: Church and State, Gender and Culture in Mexico

Too often the portrayal of the Church-state conflict in Mexico remains as a battle between 'Important Men,' i.e., archbishops, bishops and clergymen, and presidents, governors and local officials. The rhetoric of the Mexican postrevolutionary regime and the Catholic Church certainly portrayed particular social groups, such as women, children, peasants, and workers, as objects of social reform and reconstruction. Analyses based solely on the rhetoric of the Mexican state often suffer from what Daniel Nugent calls (using Antonio Gramsci) "statolatry," ascribing an "ahistorical dominance" to the postrevolutionary government in its ability to direct and control the lives of Mexicans through its programs of political and labor organization, and land, educational and social reform. Rather, as postrevisionist historians have noted, the Mexican state did not yet have such a hegemonic hold on the country. Instead, negotiations with not only conservative (or competing) governors and regional military leaders but with popular resistance at the individual and community level mediated the impact of the Mexican state's reformist program.

At this juncture, the Catholic Church in Mexico was facing a similar struggle; it, too, was reconsolidating. In light of the Catholics' defeat in the Cristero Rebellion (1926-1929; also known as "La Cristiada"), the Church hierarchy was aware of its weak position and presented a fairly explicit policy of retrenchment in which it constantly called on lay persons to resist the government's radical social policies. Somehow they were to do so without entering "politics" or "political activity," an arena closed to Catholic organizations by the Revolutionary Constitution of 1917. Political involvement in the name of the Church was discouraged by the Papacy and the Mexican Episcopate because in the postrevolutionary political climate, it was actually detrimental to the Church's security, not to mention unconstitutional. Instead, lay Catholics were to organize themselves in defense of the institutional Church. This was presented as the crucial element in protecting their right to practice their religion, regardless of the fact that lay people were just as much, if not more than the Church hierarchy, the targets of anticlerical, anti-Catholic and other social and cultural policies.

A superficial interpretation of its actions might lead one to conclude that the Revolutionary Mexican government and its ideologues, too, believed that the Catholic religion was practiced exclusively through the male leadership of the Church, for many contentious laws were aimed primarily to curtail

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the presence of the institutional Church in Mexican communities. The number of clergy allowed to minister was limited. The number of Church buildings allotted to the Catholic Church was similarly limited—the rest being dedicated to more revolutionary causes such as schools, libraries, government offices and meeting halls for workers and campesinos involved in the campaign for agrarian reform and the organization of ejidos. Histories of the Church-State conflict tend to focus on these two aspects: clergy and property. It is a historiography of a contest of who would control what and whom.

However, the 'battle' of the 1930s shifted from being a military one—especially after the chaos caused by the numerous military uprisings of the 1920s, notably the Cristero Rebellion—to a cultural one. The goal of Mexican state leaders and intellectuals was to supplant the cultural predominance of the Catholic Church in Mexicans' lives, considered reactionary and retrogressive, with that of the Mexican state, represented by revolutionary school and community organizations, and led by a vanguard of teachers, union organizers, and other trained leaders and officials. As Mary Kay Vaughan points out,

Cultural politics refers to the process whereby definitions of culture—in the narrow sense of national identity and citizenship and in the broader sense of social behavior and meaning—were articulated and disputed. Cultural politics were no marginal frill to the revolution.

Furthermore, cultural politics were not just the practice of a vanguard, but by necessity were the practice of the population. And it is here that the gendered nature of the cultural conflict in Mexico becomes apparent—for it was not only a question of eliminating priests, organizing workers and turning peons into communal farmers. It was also crucial to gain women's support away from the Church and toward revolutionary community organization, and to gain access to the resource of the future, the children.

The Catholic Church was not unaware of this development. To the contrary, postrevolutionary social and cultural policy provoked not only a further decade of protests, but a new impetus to organize lay Catholics, men, women, and children, into the Acción Católica (AC). The AC was touted as a social organization, clearly outside the constitutional prohibition on religiously-sponsored political organization (although, as we will see, their actions were not always apolitical). The Church hierarchy similarly exhorted its adherents to organize the present generation and to prepare the next one to defend the Church in both the 'public' and 'private' realms of the home, the school, community and civic life. They were also, by extension, to use their influence in interpersonal relationships (family, professional life, community participation) on those in formal government.

This paper will examine how Catholic women activists in one region of Mexico, those in Jalisco state and within the Archdiocese of Guadalajara, played a significant role in these historical processes. More than 'recalcitrant' resisters to changes imposed from without, they were pro-active participants in the social debates of postrevolutionary Mexico. I use archival evidence and oral testimonies to describe not only the presence of the Church-state conflict of the 1930s in ordinary Mexicans' lives, but more importantly, their appropriation of events and fashioning of roles for themselves within them. I use documents from state and Church archives to examine the work of the Unión Femenina Católica Mexicana (UFCM) and other Catholic societies in rural areas. Private correspondence and interviews qualify the undivided loyalty to the Church and its clergy ascribed to its "beatas" by many authors. The smaller towns and rural settlements of Jalisco were the sites of both firm Catholic resistance to the postrevolutionary state's call for change in the social order and of support for its programs of socialist education, agrarian reform, antialcoholism campaigns, and even anticlerical and antireligious agitation. Jalisciences were not limited to choosing between the two institutions; in many cases, they chose both,

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5The term "archdiocese" can be used to refer to the metropolitan see, the diocese within the ecclesiastical region that is the archbishop's seat, as well as to refer to the entire ecclesiastical region. The Archdiocese of Guadalajara consists of the Guadalajara see, plus the dioceses of Aguascalientes, Colima, Tepic and Zacatecas. For the purposes of comparable research, I concentrated on the Guadalajara see only, as its borders are roughly comparable to those of Jalisco state, making archival sources comparable as well.
preserving what they found useful from their cultural and religious heritage, but also accepting what was useful from the Mexican state.

Multiple Loyalties

Most literature concerning Catholic social activism in Mexico during the Revolutionary period concentrates on the activities of the Central Committees of Catholic social action organizations and of the Mexican Episcopate, based in Mexico City. I chose to study the Archdiocese of Guadalajara to examine how the orders and messages given by the center were followed in another region, and how that region’s organization interacted with the center. Though not the capital, Guadalajara was and is one of Mexico’s largest cities. The region has had considerable political and economic importance, and events there had national repercussions. Guadalajara and its environs have a strong historical tradition of Catholicism, dating from the colonial era and from the structural revival of the Church in Mexico in the late nineteenth century; the area was also a major center of Catholic labor and other social organizations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Jalisco joined revolutionary politics relatively late in the game. Powerful and socially prominent jaliscienses held out on declaring their affiliations with a revolutionary faction, and many feared that the Carrancistas were "avaricious and anticlerical," and ready to strip the region of its autonomy as well. Carrancista General Manuel Díazcuez (who was born in Jalisco but began his revolutionary career in Sonora), had been terrifying tapatíos with his radical and anticlerical propositions for several years when he became governor of Jalisco in 1917. One year later, his efforts to implement the Constitution of 1917 by enforcing stringent anticlerical legislation and exiling Archbishop Francisco Orozco y Jiménez were met with fierce, and successful, Catholic grassroots resistance across the state. This success inspired further Catholic resistance in 1926; some of the Cristero rebellions' largest strongholds and bloodiest battlegrounds were in Jalisco, as were some of the most intransigent noncombatant groups trying to resist the Calles laws. During the Cristiada and afterwards, accusations steadily flew of conservative, if not collaborative, leadership in that state. As of 1929, political leaders of jalisco were under great pressure to ally themselves and conform with the federal government and the recently-organized Partido Nacional Revolucionario. In the 1930s, governors Sebastián Allende and Everardo Topete (the latter also chose well in terms of allying himself with Lázaro Cárdenas over the Jefe Máximo in late 1935), knew it would serve them well to openly proclaim their adherence to the political center. State legislators and local political leaders and activists often outdid the governors in their enthusiasm for the new system, basing their claims of loyalty and radical conduct on organizing that in some cases antedated the Revolution. Jalisco political leaders insisted that they were fulfilling their obligations and duties by enforcing the letter of the anticlerical laws, and that rebellious Catholics were acting illegally to undermine the political, economic and social reconstruction of Jalisco. Thus in Jalisco one finds a strong revolutionary tradition as well as a strong Catholic tradition.


7Everardo Topete campaigned against his eventual successor, Silvano Barba González, who came to criticize the radical programs of the central government. Barba González was elected in 1938, as the Cardenista reform was losing some of its urgency; his administration (1 Mar. 1939-28 Feb. 1943) signalled a return to more conservative policies, although he promised to abide by a "strict enforcement of the law." For more on these issues, see Laura P. Romero, Jalisco desde la revolución, Guadalajara, Jal.: Gobierno del Estado de Guadalajara/Universidad de Guadalajara, 1987, v. 3, La consolidación del Estado y los conflictos políticos, and Francisco Barbosa Guzmán, Jalisco desde la Revolución, Guadalajara, Jal.: Gobierno del Estado de Guadalajara/Universidad de Guadalajara, 1988, v. 6, La Iglesia y el Gobierno Civil.

Looking at events outside the center of the region, the city of Guadalajara, gives an even more complex picture. Some authors have subdivided the state of Jalisco into zones of either cooperation with (the south and west) or resistance to (the northernmost municipalities and the eastern region of Los Altos) the Mexican state's postrevolutionary projects, in a way very similar to the scholarly division of Mexico into regions with clear, immutable ideological tendencies ("Catholic" Jalisco versus "revolutionary" Veracruz or Tabasco, the zona cristera versus the sureste). But defining regions in Jalisco as 'won over' or 'lost' because of the presence of "núcleos de agrarismo" or "rebeldes fanáticos," based on the record of actions of small sectors of their populations (campesinos who chose to organize for ejidos, incendiary clergy or lay persons who chose to join armed rebellions) can also fail a bit short of nuanced portrayal.

Without belittling the commitment and vehemence of partisans on both sides, it must be said that with close examination of a variety of sources, one more often sees combinations of both tendencies in the same regions, towns, municipal governments, families, and even individuals. Indeed, one can find the evidence of cooperation with Mexican state initiatives and the desire for real social change in the social order in areas denoted as "Catholic," and evidence of Catholic mobilizations, negligence in the enforcement of anticalerical and antireligious laws, manifestations of faith and practice in supposed "zonas de franca cooperación." One can find dedicated--and successful--Catholic organizers in the south as well as dedicated agrarian reformers and government sympathizers in Los Altos. Even more surprising, but not entirely unexpected, are the fusions of the two ideological currents made by actors at the local level, such as the Casa del Agrarista in Los Altos that, to Inspector Alfredo Félix Díaz's dismay, was found to be violating the Constitution by offering Catholic religious instruction classes.

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9See, for example, J.M. Muriá, Historia de Jalisco, v. 4, pp. 552-554; P. Yankelevich, La Educación Socialista, pp. 114-119. These regions appear to be based on the division of Jalisco into cantones during the early national period, and have pervaded both postrevolutionary bureaucracy and scholarly analysis. For example, the SEP's division of the state into Zonas Escolares in 1926 grouped together the 'ex-cantones' as follows: Primera Zona, municipalities which formed the ex-cantón of Guadalajara (central zone); Segunda Zona (municipalities which formed the ex-cantones of Cd. Guzmán, Sayula and Chapala (south-central); Tercera Zona, municipalities of ex-cantones of Lagos, La Barca and Teocaltiche (the east/Los Altos); Cuarta Zona, municipalities of ex-cantones of Autlán and Ameca (south-west); Quinta Zona, municipalities of ex-cantones of Mascota and Ahualulco (north-west); Sexta Zona, municipalities of the ex-cantón of Colotlán (north). María del Carmen Orozco Cano, La educación en Ciudad Guzmán, Guadalajara, Jal.: Gobierno de Jalisco, Secretaría General, Unidad Editorial, 1986, pp. 102-103.

10Examples of individuals in rural Jalisco living more or less comfortably with ideological contradictions implicit in their actions are presented below. For similar phenomena occurring among zona cristera inhabitants during the 1920s, see Christopher Boyer, "Old Loves, New Loyalties: Agrarismo in Michoacán, 1920-1928," Hispanic American Historical Review, 78: 3 (Sept. 1998), pp. 419-455 and Jennie Purnell, Popular Movements and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico: The Agraristas and Cristeros of Michoacán, Durham, NC and London: Duke University press, 1999; for examples from postrevolutionary Sonora, see Adrian Bantjes, As if Jesus Walked on Earth: Cardenismo, Sonora and the Mexican Revolution, Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1998. As more research carried out on the local level is published, it will surely be demonstrated that in postrevolutionary Mexico the occurrence of such contradictions were not limited to the zona cristera, nor were the inhabitants of that region in any way immune to them.

11For example, in Tamazula, the seat of the Grupo de Acción Anti-Religioso del Estado de Jalisco (Adherido al PNR), Archivo Histórico de Jalisco (Guadalajara, Jalisco–hereafter AHJ)–Gobernación (4) Iglesias, Caja 342, G-4-932, Exp. 360, legajo #14: Carta de la fundación del "Grupo de Acción Anti-Religioso del Estado de Jalisco, Adherido al PNR, , Andrés V. Magaña, párroco (José Ma. Gutiérrez, Srio.) al C. Gobernador Constitucional Lic. Sebastian [sic] Allende, Guadalajara, Jal.,” de Tamazula de Gordiano, 12 dic 1932 (complaints of ‘fanáticos’ in the area); Archivo General de la Nación (México, D.F., hereafter AGN), Ramo Presidentes, Fondo Abelardo L. Rodríguez, Exp. exp. 514.1/2-19, carta de Andres V. Magaña al C. Presidente de la República, 4 Dec. 1932 (complaint regarding priest's seditious activity) and carta de Andres V. Magaña al C. Presidente de la República, 15 Dec. 1932 (requesting chapel of the Hijas de María to establish a public library).

12For example, on 5 Feb. 1938 the parish priest's house in Atotonilco el Alto was first occupied by soldiers, and then upon immediate approval from the Secretaría de Hacienda, conceded to agrarian organizers as a Casa del Agrarista. Christus, 3: 31 (Jun. 1938), “Información: Por la República,” p. 504.

conflicts also occurred in regions not typified as either fanatically Catholic or devotedly statist, such as Guadalajara and the surrounding municipalities in central Jalisco.

Recognizing this multiplicity of influences and responses can help to explain seemingly contradictory historical problems, such as why and how the Mexican state was able to consolidate to the extent that it did in regions where resistance to its programs was strong and in the most far-flung rural areas. At the same time, it can explain how Catholic activists found ways to negotiate for the continued existence of their Church in Mexico within its new, legally anticlerical sociopolitical system, plus the ability to pass on their religious culture to succeeding generations. This religious culture was also not fixed and immutable, but adapted and changed, which was one of the keys to its survival. Such "contradictions" can help clarify why the "look-the-other-way" system of Church-state relations and enforcement of religious laws (albeit with occasional eruptions) that emerged in the 1930s and lasted as long as it did—after all, such a "policy" was necessary even in "Catholic" Jalisco.

**Mexican Catholic Women's Activism, National and Regional**

If one examines only the official literature of the Papacy and the Mexican Episcopate, one could conclude that the work carried out by Catholic men, lay and clerical, predominated the Catholic social action campaigns of the postrevolutionary period. But the composition of what the Church called its "apostolate in society," although described by lay and clerical authors with strictly delineated gender roles, did not exclude women. Women had participated in the Church's Social Catholicism movement in Mexico since the late nineteenth century. The Unión de Damas Católicas Mexicanas (UDCM), founded in 1912, became the organization through which Mexican Catholic women coordinated campaigns nationally during the Revolution and through the early 1920s. With its male leaders exiled and their public influence curtailed, the Catholic Church called upon its women members to mobilize for the preservation, defense and propagation of Catholic doctrine and practice. However, lay and women's organizations sometimes operated too independently from the Church hierarchy; the Brigadas Femeninas de Santa Juana de Arco (BF), who mobilized in support of the Cristero rebels (in complete secrecy, even from fathers, husbands and confessors), are one example of a Catholic organization that became difficult for the hierarchy to control. At this point, the Church encouraged women to join the

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14This process, dating from the late 1930s to the 1992 constitutional reforms, has been defined both as an ongoing process of gradual political and legal relaxation and as an abrupt legal change; depending on the context, both analyses can be seen as historically 'true.' See Roberto Blancarte, *Historia de la Iglesia católica en México*. México, DF: El Colegio Mexiquense y el Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1992, p. 20ff.; Roderic A. Camp, *Crossing Swords: Politics and Religion in Mexico*, pp. 28-41.


17The BF was an entirely secretive Catholic women's network established in 1927 to serve as an auxiliary to the Cristero rebels. The BF coordinated the supply of arms and ammunition, smuggling arms from the U.S.-Mexico border through to the central-western countryside, and provided espionage, nursing and food supply services. Despite the BF's extreme effectiveness, it was one of the autonomous groups attacked by the Mexico City-based Liga Nacional Defensora de la Libertad Religiosa (National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty-LNDLR) in its efforts to gain monopolistic control over the Cristero movement. Leaders of the LNDLR claimed that the women were violating Catholic doctrine by maintaining total secrecy (i.e. circumventing even the confessional and their subordinate place to husbands, fathers, or in the case of nuns, their religious superiors), despite the BF's policy of maintaining careful records of their activities. As a consequence the BF was dissolved shortly after the end of the rebellion (one of the causes of which was a shortage of ammunition and supplies to the Cristeros), notwithstanding the proposals of several of its organizers to utilize its network for peaceful pro-Church activities, and its archives were deliberately burned by Father Miguel Dario Miranda, on the order of Archbishop Pascual Díaz Barreto. See Jean Meyer, *La Cristiada*, México, DF: Siglo XXI, v. 3, *Los cristeros*, pp. 120-133; Barbara Ann Miller, "The Role of Women in the Mexican Cristero Rebellion: A New Chapter.", (Ph.D dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1981) Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms
Acción Católica, founded by the Mexican Episcopate in 1929 to coordinate and control the activity of lay Catholics. It was primarily through the Unión Femenina Católica Mexicana (UFCM—the re-organized UDCM), although not exclusively, that much of women's concerted efforts in support of the Catholic Church were channeled. Their records, examined along with those of the federal and state governments, as well as Catholic normative literature and Church archives, demonstrate that their actions contributed to the gradual cessation of government attacks on the Church.

After the Cristero Rebellion, Catholic priests and laymen were considered by the police and other government agencies as more likely to be involved in seditious activity, and it was to their advantage to keep a low profile. Voicedly Catholic men could lose their employment, a place in a union, or a political position. Ex-cristeros were not only actively persecuted; a significant number were assassinated by government and local law enforcement agents. Priests, even those registered with the Secretaría de Gobernación in compliance with the religious laws, were threatened and some repeatedly arrested while trying to minister to their parishes. Catholic women, on the other hand, could work for Catholic causes with a lesser threat of legal or extralegal reprisal. For this reason, among others, the Catholic Church again called upon its women, lay and religious, to be its 'apostles' and to take on public, activist roles.

The Diocesan Committee of the UFCM in Guadalajara was founded in June 1930, when nine former members of the UDCM were invited by the office of Archbishop Francisco Orozco y Jiménez. They were told by the Jesuit priest Salvador G. Quintero, who had been appointed their general director by the archbishop, that as part of the Acción Católica, they would be continuing the work of the Apostles themselves as they helped the Church carry out its missions; they would be, he said, "the extension of the Ecclesiastical hierarchy in the civil order." The Guadalajara chapter became one of the largest in the UFCM. In 1932, out of the 17,132 members of the UFCM, 1,135 were from Guadalajara (exceeded only by four out of the 23 other diocesan chapters), organized into over 70 parochial groups. In 1940, the Guadalajara chapter of the UFCM had 20,014 members, out of the 149,504 UFCM members nationwide (the third largest of 33 diocesan chapters), organized into 153 parochial and sub-parochial groups. These parochial groups were distributed through much of Jalisco state, and included several parishes in Nayarit, Zacatecas, Guanajuato and Michoacán that were also part of the Archdiocese of Guadalajara.

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It was not uncommon for voicedly pro-Revolutionary politicians to have Catholic wives whose practices diverged considerably from theirs, nor for these same politicians to insist on rigidly Catholic behavior in their spouses and children (often sent to private, Catholic schools); see Verna Carleton Millan, Mexico Reborn (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1939), p. 160-161. However, such behavior did not always go unnoticed; after the celebrations of the 500th anniversary of the Guadalupan apparitions, Senator Eleazar del Valle was expelled from the Senate and the Governor of Puebla was severely reprimanded because the exteriors of their homes had been decorated in honor of the occasion. Both men defended themselves, unsuccessfully, by protesting that it was their wives that had done the decorating. United States Military Intelligence Reports: Mexico, 1919-1940, reel 3 (0835), Military Attaché, Report #3686, "Freedom of Religious Beliefs and Practices–Guadalupe Festival, 18 Dec. 1931," and reel 2 (0841), Military Attaché, Report #3697, "Freedom of Religious Beliefs and Practices–"Carta Abierta" of Archbishop," 29 Dec. 1931.


Juanita P. de Labarthe, "Informe que presenta la Presidenta del Comité Central, ante la V Asamblea General de la UFCM," V Asamblea General (México, DF, 1940), p. 23. In 1940, there were 12 parishes and 6 vicariates in the city of Guadalajara, with a
In this paper I will concentrate on narratives from three towns that had parochial groups of the UFCM: Zapotiltic, in the agriculturally productive south, Hostotipaquillo, in the central-northwestern mining region, and Tizapán el Alto, a town on the southern shore of Lake Chapala. These locations were chosen both for the relative abundance of information from a variety of sources available for comparison, and by virtue of not being in politicized "hot spots," such as the ultra-Catholic Los Altos and the poverty-stricken northern region of Jalisco where much of the violence perpetrated against state schoolteachers took place. Nevertheless, different responses to every social issue of the time—land reform, educational policy, tolerance of the Catholic Church, and changes in women's roles—can be identified in these three towns.

Zapotiltic—The Acción Católica's Ideal Set-up, Set Up by Women

A good deal of information is available on Catholic activity in Zapotiltic during the postrevolutionary period, in part due to the detailed chronicle compiled by María Isabel Contreras, a catechist and JCFM (Juventud Católica Femenina Mexicana—the branch of the AC for young and unmarried women) activist. Contreras wrote this memoir of Catholic activity in Zapotiltic for their departing parish priest and ecclesiastical advisor, who had come to Zapotiltic in 1929, at the end of the Cristero Rebellion. Although the town had been without a priest for some time, the 'Persecución Religiosa' of 1926-1929 had not interfered much with cycles of Catholic religious practice in Zapotiltic. They could even ring the church bells to call children to catechism classes:

Desde la primera llamada empezaban a llegar los niños al Atrio, otros se quedaban en la plaza y era divertido ver como muchas veces los policías, encaminaban a los chiquillos, que entretenían el tiempo jugando en la plaza, a donde las campanas los estaban llamando.23

Zapotiltic was largely unaffected by the violence of the Cristero rebellion. It is not surprising, then, that Father Francisco Quintana was able to organize and coordinate a large number of townspeople in the AC; he merely had to build upon what was already there. Quintana was named parish priest of Zapotiltic on 24 July 1929, and arrived in the town in August. The parishioners organized a commission to greet Quintana and present him with the ongoing works in the parish, which were principally a pious association dedicated to the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (Vela perpetua del Santísimo Sacramento) and a group of adults dedicated to teaching catechism (Congregación de Doctrina Cristiana). The first group was in a severe state of disorganization; the second had a team of officers and a working structure, but relied heavily on didactics of rote memorization and granting rewards or punishments to individual children. Quintana chose to acquaint himself with the parish and observe its workings for several months before initiating his program of reorganization. Quintana began with the pious associations in early 1930—apart from naming new officers for the Vela Perpetua del Santísimo Sacramento, he called upon lapsed members and other parishioners to organize or reorganize the Asociación Josefina (a pious association for fathers), the Cofradía del Escapulario de Nuestra Señora del Carmen, the Hijas de María and other associations. Catechism classes at the parish church were suspended briefly while Quintana recruited women to teach in new schools which he organized for each of the four cuartels of the town. Quintana also sought to establish satellite catechism classes and pious associations in outlying haciendas and rancherías. In late 1930, Quintana set his parishioners to studying the AC Statutes, putting special emphasis on the

23María Isabel Contreras, La Parroquia de Zapotiltic y la Congregación de la Doctrina Cristiana, Querétaro, QRO: Imprenta "Paulín," 1940, p. 151 and p. 113; quote p. 15.
participation of young women—his catechists—in the JCFM, the parochial committee of which began meeting regularly in January of 1931. The UFCM was also established in Zapotiltic at this time, having notified the diocesan committee of their organization in November 1930.24

The Zapotiltic UFCM went straight to work, requesting more copies of the AC Statutes and guidelines for Catholic education, moralization and propaganda campaigns, and suitably moral entertainments for children and adults, be sent from the diocesan committee's offices in Guadalajara. Close contact was maintained with the diocesan committee, through subscriptions to the diocesan AC bulletin and to Acción Femenina (the periodical of the UFCM, published from Mexico City), and fairly regular reports (informes) sent to Guadalajara. The Zapotiltic UFCM sent delegates to the biennial archdiocesan assembly and contributed to archdiocese-wide fundraisers such as the collections made for the Guadalajara seminary. In 1935, the Zapotiltic UFCM began to hold its own parochial assemblies, in keeping with the directives from the diocesan committee, and continued to order téseras (cross-shaped badges symbolizing membership, purchased for a fee) by the hundreds to accommodate their growing membership. In 1937, Quintana founded a local Secretariado Social to coordinate the works of the AC and the numerous pious associations in the parish.25

The UFCM was to organize sections for 'Madres de Familias,' which was sometimes confused with other groups with similar names. In March 1933, the Zapotiltic UFCM asked to be sent the statutes of the 'Madres Cristianas,' so that they could organize a chapter of the same. The diocesan committee initially responded by sending the statutes of the UFCM, but later had to clarify that this group was not part of the AC nor any of its programs for women.26 In addition to the UFCM, JCFM, ACJM (the Asociación Cactólica de la Juventud Mexicana, for young and unmarried men) and Unión de Católicos Mexicanos (for married men; this was a very small group), Zapotiltic had: an Asociación de Padres de Familia (affiliated with the Unión Nacional de Padres de Familia–UNPF27); a group dedicated to the Familia del Espíritu Santo; a Congregación Mariana; a chapter of the Hijas de María (encompassing strict spiritual practice for both cílibes and casadas, celibate and married women); an Asociación de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe; an Apostolado de la Oración, Cofradías del Perpetuo Socorro, San Vicente, and Nuestra Señora de los Dolores; a Venerable Orden Tercera de San Francisco (with separate groups for male and female devotees); as well as the Vela Perpetuo del Santísimo and the Culto Perpetuo de Señor

26 UFCM–Guad., Actas I, pp. 94-94b (23 Mar. 1933); UFCM–Guad., Actas I, p. 95 (20 Apr. 1933). In 1936 another association calling itself the "Madres Cristianas" applied to be admitted as part of the UFCM (the minutes do not specify from where). The diocesan committee initially replied that they would be glad to admit the Madres Cristianas as part of the UFCM once the statutes of their group had been submitted and approved by the diocese and its committee; however, in 1937 the diocesan council of Guadalajara rejected these Madres Cristianas' petition, and sent their reply through the diocesan committee of the UFCM. UFCM–Guad., Actas II, p. 39 (10 Sept. 1936), p. 40 (24 Sept. 1936), p. 47 (28 Jan. 1937), p. 60b (9 Jul. 1937), p. 56b (15 Jul. 1937).
27 The UNPF was a secular organization founded in 1917 to unite earlier efforts of concerned Catholic parents to resist the Mexican government's mandatory secular, and later socialist and sexual, education programs, and other immoral influences on children. Although not officially part of the ACM, the Mexican Episcopate and the SSM supported its actions, and many lay Catholics were members. "Datos Históricos Sobre la UNPF en Jalisco," pamphlet distributed by the UNPF offices in Guadalajara. The Church hierarchy insisted on the fact that the UNPF was not a Church sponsored organization, but made clear that they approved of its programme. Catholic lay persons, members of the UFCM among them, were encouraged to collaborate with the UNPF. Pbro. Narciso Aviña Ruiz, "Circular 15, A los Sres. Párrocos y Vicarios Fijos del Arzobispado," 25 Jul. 1933, BEG, Epoca V, año IV, núm. 8 (1 Aug. 1933), pp. 377-378, José T. Moreno, "Circular Núm. 1," 1 Aug. 1933, BEG, Epoca V, año IV, núm 10 (1 Oct. 1933), pp. 463-464; for UFCM collaboration, see "Conclusiones aprobadas en la Segunda Asamblea General de la Unión Femenina Católica Mexicana," BEG, Epoca V, Año VI, núm. 4 (1 Apr. 1935), pp. 159-160.
San José (Asociación Josefina) mentioned before. The cuarteles also had their own rosary societies in which people gathered to recite the Rosary on a regular basis.28

In 1932, there were 750 children registered in catechism classes in Zapotiltic. By 1933, the JCFM had to introduce catechism classes on Saturdays as well as Sundays in order to accommodate all of the children whose parents wished for them to participate. About 25 teachers gave classes each day of the weekend in the six catechism schools established in town. There was also a school dedicated to training catechists, the grand majority of whom were young women, and a 'Sección de Párvulos' at the parish church to get the very youngest children involved. There were also 11 catechism centers in outlying rancherías that gave classes on Sundays; attendance at these varied, from the smallest, in Santa Gertrudis, having 17 students and 5 teachers, to the center on the Hacienda el Rincón, with 240 students and 20 teachers. To compile records of children's attendance, Quintana had devised a system of boletos. At every Mass, catechism class or sacrament, a child would be given a ticket to demonstrate that he or she had participated. Once every month, a 'Jefa de Manzana' would circulate to the residences in the section of town assigned her, to record the children's levels of attendance and participation. The willingness of parents to cooperate with the endeavor was also recorded, as was the attendance and diligence of the catechists themselves; the names of children and adults who had achieved levels of "suprema" y "buena" in their attendance and performance in yearly exams were read aloud at Mass, along with the quantities (but not the names) of the children and adults who had ranked as "pésima" or "mala." Quintana was so pleased with this system that he introduced a special set of tickets for Lenten exercises in 1936, although these were collected in boxes in the churches rather than by UFCM or JCFM members.29 Keeping accurate tallies of participation with the zeal of a dedicated bureaucrat was an important part of proving the efficacy of the AC, a requirement that certainly was fulfilled in Zapotiltic.

According to Contreras, many children in Zapotiltic enjoyed collecting their tickets and having their parents submit them to the catechists or to the Church. Women participants revealed a slight fault in the system when they asked for the Lenten tickets to be given or sent directly to them, not to their husbands. The women asked that the catechists "no pensarán que es cosa nuestra," meaning that it was not just a whim on their part. Getting men to participate in the sacraments, much less to register their participation in them, was still a difficult task, and often the padres de la familia did not show much interest in submitting their wives' and children's tickets. The women hoped that showing their husbands tickets sent by the parish priest himself would make attendance at Mass seem important enough; nevertheless, they tacitly demonstrated that religion was generally considered "a woman's thing" by illustrating the need to have them be the ones to demonstrate doctrinal compliance – the registry would most likely swell if women were the ones who did the paperwork.30

Contreras does not mention any harassment from local government, agraristas or any other radical activists, and the national and state archives reveal little information about the town as well. The Catholics of Zapotiltic did not need to engage in belligerent types of protest, as their ability to practice their religion, in and outside of churches, was not hampered. They also followed the rules: Quintana sent his biographical data to the state government to be legally registered as Zapotiltic's parish priest in the autumn of 1929, complying promptly with the Gobernación mandate. However, it is possible that the local leadership was conscious of the need to placate the state and national governments. In 1940, the deputy from Zapotiltic sent a letter of support when the Federación de Trabajadores de Ciudad Guzmán petitioned for office space in a church building.31

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28 M. I. Contreras, La Parroquia de Zapotiltic, p. 140-142.
30 M. I. Contreras, La Parroquia de Zapotiltic, p. 130-132.
31 AGN, Gobernación, Caja 47, exp. 2,340(11)33, letter to Secretario de Gobernación, México, DF, from J. M. Cuéllar, Gobernador Provisional de Jalisco, 11 Feb. 1930; AGN, Ramo Presidentes, Lázaro Cárdenas, (Beneficencia Pública), exp. 562.5/94, telegram from Diputado Tomás Palomino Rojas to C. Presidente de la República, 3 Jun. 1940.
Hostotipaquillo--Women Creating Relationships with the Church and the Community

By and large, the women of Zapotiltic worked in close concert with their parish priest to advance the cause of the Catholic Church. One particularly striking element in the study of the archdiocese of Guadalajara is finding examples of rural women who actively engaged with and appropriated the leadership of their Church for themselves. Far from passively watching the arreglos which ended the Cristero Rebellion, women addressed the ecclesiastical “powers-that-be” on a variety of issues. We know that women addressed the local clergy (when they were present), but archival evidence also reveals that some women did not hesitate to address their ecclesiastical superiors, even those at higher levels in the hierarchy, regarding either the political and economic state of affairs in Jalisco and Mexico as a whole or highly personal matters. Furthermore, rather than being overly deferential or obsequious, many of these women wrote in conversational or intellectual tones, and at times sent quite personal entreaties for prayers or assistance.

If it seems odd that women from seemingly less significant towns in central-western Mexico could address the Archbishop of Mexico, Pascual Díaz Barreto, with such familiarity, it helps to note that before arriving at that exalted position, he was a jalisciense by birth (22 October 1875). Díaz Barreto studied for the diocesan priesthood at the Colegio Apostólico de Zapopan and the Seminario de Guadalajara, and was ordained there at 22 years of age. Díaz Barreto served as assistant at the church of San Pedro Analco (as a Church entity, a vicaría fija of the parish of La Yesca, in Nayarit, but as a town located in the municipality of Tequila, Jalisco, which neighbors Hostotipaquillo), then taught in the Guadalajara seminary and served as Prosecretary of the Provisorate and Personal Secretary to José de Jesús Ortiz (Orozco y Jiménez’s predecessor) until 1903, when he began his studies to enter into the Order of Society of Jesus in Mexico City and in Rome. It is likely that Díaz Barreto made the acquaintance of many jaliscienses, men and women, during his education, his service as a secular, parish priest, and his participation in the Church’s social action congresses and evangelization campaigns at the turn of the century.32

Both Juana Cueva de Valdivia and Hermelinda Gil wrote to Díaz Barreto from Hostotipaquillo, a small town in the center-north of Jalisco state. Although today Hostotipaquillo is principally an agricultural town, it had been a fairly important center of opal mining and regional trade before workers’ agitation, strikes and local violence along with source exhaustion resulted in the American owners’ decision to close the mines in the late 1920s.33 Having been a regional center of population and of workers’ organizations was most likely the reason that Hostotipaquillo had been a center of pre-

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32 Díaz Barreto received his doctorate and took his final vows in Rome in 1913; he then returned to Mexico and taught at the Jesuit Seminary in Tepotzotlán, Mexico State. He also served as the superior prefect to the Sagrada Familia church in Mexico City. Díaz Barreto was named Bishop of Tabasco in 1922. On 10 Jan. 1927 he was exiled to the United States by Tabasco State’s extremely anticlerical and anti-religious governor, Tomás Garrido Canabal. After serving as one of the negotiators of the end of the Cristero rebellion (working with exiled Apostolic Delegate Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, American diplomat Dwight Morrow and others), Díaz Barreto was created Archbishop of Mexico in July 1929, and lived and served in Mexico City until his death in May 1936. From 1929-1936 Díaz Barreto presided over the Mexican Episcopate as well as one of the most populous dioceses of the country, centered in the political capital, where, not coincidentally, the national offices of most Catholic lay societies were based. Consequently, he also served as both de facto and honorary spiritual director of many Catholic lay societies. Francisco Sosa, El Episcopado Mexicano. Biografía de los Ilmos. Señores Arzobispos de México, Desde la Epoca Colonial hasta Nuestros Días, México: Editorial Jus, 1962, vol. 2, pp. 254-294. Carlos Martínez Assad, El laboratorio de la revolución: El Tabasco garridista, México: Siglo XXI, 1991 (1979), p. 35; José Miguel Romero de Solís, El aguijón del espíritu: Historia contemporánea de la Iglesia en México (1895-1990), p. 334, n. 76. Also note that in the Arzobispado de México, Archivo Histórico, Archivo del Arzobispo Pascual Díaz Barreto (Archivo PDB), there exists correspondence between Díaz Barreto and lay women and men from many parts of Mexico, including Tabasco, Veracruz, Hidalgo, Michoacán, Guanajuato and Mexico states, as well as various cities in the United States.

Revolutionary Catholic social action programs—though this in itself does not explain why or how Pascual Díaz Barreto and these women had made their acquaintance. Cueva de Valdivia, along with her son, Arnoldo Valdivia (a farmer and small-scale merchant), wrote to Díaz Barreto of the current state of the religious conflict and of their own hardship due to the bad corn harvests, poor sales and other economic difficulties resulting from drought and the aftereffects of the religious war. She alluded to the acquaintance they had made two decades earlier in asking for his prayers for the well-being of her family. Díaz Barreto sent her comparatively lengthy personal replies. For example in their last exchange, he asked for her and her family (on this occasion citing her husband, Diego, her son, Arnoldo, and her daughter, Petra) to pray for him as he embarked on his 1931 trip to Rome for a pilgrimage and an audience with the Pope. Hermelinda Gil seemed to have less of a personal relationship with the archbishop, but capitalized on their acquaintance. With over a year's worth of insistent letters, Gil successfully badgered Díaz Barreto to arrange for a reliquary that her family had kept as an heirloom to be appraised and sold to alleviate their poverty.

Neither Díaz Barreto's archives nor those in Hostotipaquillo or Guadalajara revealed much more about these two women. Interviews conducted with some of Hostotipaquillo's elderly residents fill in some of the gaps in the historical knowledge regarding the Catholic women activists of this locale. Graciela León Reynada and Lucila Mejía Siordia had been well acquainted with Juana Cueva de Valdivia and also knew Hermelinda Gil. Not surprisingly, both were said to be “muy apegada a la Iglesia.” Cueva de Valdivia figured more greatly in León Reynada's and Mejía Siordia’s memories. She had been a catechist and had taught many of the Catholic children of Hostotipaquillo in the 1930s, including León Reynada. Additionally, Cueva de Valdivia had offered her home as a location for clandestine Catholic classes. Cueva de Valdivia had worked with the local chapter of the Hijas de María, which had been directed by Josefina Reyes. Not only was Cueva de Valdivia a long-standing member of the town’s Acción Católica, but at one point she served as president. As part of the AC's work, Cueva de Valdivia and others had sponsored a Catholic academy which taught vocational skills to young girls.

Mejía Siordia remembers having taken sewing and tailoring classes from the Academia, and recalled that Josefina Reyes ran a small clothing business, selling the clothes that the sewing pupils (there were from eight to ten of them) made and paying the seamstresses. While it was not a huge enterprise, the Academia offered an economic opportunity to young women in an otherwise challenged area. The Academia also offered cooking, knitting, and machine-sewing classes. According to Mejía Siordia, there were about sixty students in total when she was a young woman, in the late 1930s. The majority of the

36 Among other difficulties, the municipal archivist informed me that “revolucionarios” (it was not clear if he was referring to the revolutionaries of the 1910-1917 conflicts or the Catholic rebels who had circulated during the 1920s) had burnt down the municipal palace, which meant that few or no records were available for persons born before about 1920. The archivist recommended that I speak to Ezequiel Hidalgo, the elderly man considered the town's local historian; with the help of the parish priest I subsequently located him and several elderly women to interview as well. Hidalgo informed me that Cueva de Valdivia was indeed Arnoldo Valdivia's mother—but could not tell me much else about her or her work in the community, unlike the women; Ezequiel Hidalgo, interview with Kristina Boylan, Hostotipaquillo, Jal., México, 19 Jun. 1997. Lucila Mejía Siordia informed me that Arnoldo Hidalgo later served as Recaudador de Oficinas de Correos, and upon his death somehow managed to donate his house to the church, which is now the residence of the parish priest; Lucila Mejía Siordia (b. 1920), interview with Kristina Boylan, Hostotipaquillo, Jal., Mexico,18 Jun. 1997.
young women of the town belonged to the JCFM, said Mejía Siordia, and many of them enrolled in the Academia's classes.38

During the Cristiada, Mejía Siordia recalled, a clandestine Catholic school had been organized by the local priest. However, the priest was eventually forced to flee, and could rarely return, even in disguise, to his parish. Otherwise, one had to go to Guadalajara to attend mass and to receive the sacraments. She remembers the early 1930s as being "péssimas," in general heralding little or no improvement in local residents' lives, despite the fact that the religious and labor conflicts had ended.39

León Reynada was also born in Cinco Minas. Soon after her birth, her parents sold their one long-term investment, the pig that they had been raising, and moved to Guadalajara for two years. León Reynada gives two reasons for her parents having done this; firstly, they were fleeing the violence in the countryside resulting from the Cristero rebellion; secondly, "no había culto." Still loyal to their origins, her parents had their daughter's name entered into the baptismal registry of Hostotipaquillo parish by her godparents, who promised to do so "bajo un juramento de Dios." Prior to their move León Reynada's father had also worked as a miner, but in Guadalajara and upon their move to Hostotipaquillo, both he and León Reynada's mother worked as merchants, selling clothes and sundries they bought in Guadalajara and brought back by train to the nearby town of Magdalena, and then by horse-drawn cart or burro to Hostotipaquillo.

León Reynada lived in Hostotipaquillo until she was ten years old; at that point her father died, and her mother decided to move back to Guadalajara. During this time, León Reynada attended the escuela oficial. There had been a parish school, she noted, but it was short-lived and sporadic. Furthermore, her teacher was one of the gente de confianza: "háztete cuenta que me tocó una de las maestras que no se metía en cosas de eso y ya, pues, era libre y todo que no, y no nos daba, no nos impartía en cosas en contra de la religión, no nada, nada, nada." León Reynada completed the fourth year of primary school in Guadalajara, and later, as a young woman, assisted in the revived parish school opened by the parish priest in the late 1940s (her family had returned to Hostotipaquillo again in 1948), staffed by his nieces. León Reynada also taught catechism classes on Sundays, serving at one point as the president of the catequistas, and was an active member of the JCFM. "Eramos mucho," said León Reynada, concurring with Mejía Siordia. She also took sewing classes from the AC's Academia; her mother sold some of the clothes she made during her trips to Guadalajara. Thus Leon Reynada helped support her family until her marriage in 1956.40

Regardless of the closeness of some women to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, Hostotipaquillo, Cinco Minas and the surrounding settlements were among those visited by the auxiliary bishop of Guadalajara, José Garibi Rivera, as part of the Archbishop's two-month campaign to give mission courses in outlying areas of the archdiocese of Guadalajara. Certain areas were targeted, notably the poverty-stricken parishes of northern Jalisco, Nayarit and Zacatecas.41 This included the mining region of central-northwestern Jalisco, most likely in response to the political agitation around agrarian, labor, indigenous, religious and educational issues of the past decade. Several different accounts exist as to the cause of the closing of the opal mines which once fueled the local economy. Some say the mines were looted repeatedly by the Cristeros, causing foreign investors to pull out of the region; others claim that it was the violence perpetrated by belligerent leftist organization in the late 1920s (led in part by David Alfaro Siquieros) that alienated foreign investment. Although some mines' veins gave out as a matter of course, and others flooded naturally, local legend also tells of their destruction as an act divine retribution.

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38 Mejía Sordia interview, 18 Jun. 1997. Mejía Siordia continues to be active in her church, but in a newer Bible study circle called "Los renovados."
39 Ibid.
occurring after a gringo administrator insulted the patron saint of Hostotipaquillo, the Virgen del Favor, by forbidding her procession to pass by the mine for veneration.42

Scarcity continued to lead residents of the municipality to compete for resources. In 1935, Fidel Camarena and Paula Salas of Jocotlán wrote to President Cárdenas asking him to concede to them the use of the local priest's house, as the chapel which had existed alongside it had been destroyed in 1918. When informed that this would not be possible, as the building could not have been used for the celebration of religious acts, and therefore did not legally fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Finance to confiscate it, other representatives of the Agrarian community of Jocotlán and Teimillo, Hostotipaquillo municipality, again asked for the use of the room which they claimed to have 'always' used for their meetings and which had once been the curato, or barring that, to be given 400 pesos in order to construct another one.43

It is certain that the mining industry ceased in the area in the late 1920s, and that this contributed to the economic depression of the early 1930s. Whether the closure of the mines and the economic depression of the surrounding area was due to Catholic fanáticos, union radicals, divine retribution or natural exhaustion—or some combination thereof—is yet to be resolved. The point is that those with sympathies toward either side blame the violent behavior of the other for the destruction of the industry and detriment of their community; differing interpretations of the causes of the region's poverty endure to this day. During that time of crisis, Catholic women in Hostotipaquillo sought more from their Church. Some women looked for support from the hierarchical leaders they had become acquainted with earlier. They also took the pattern for organization offered them, the AC, and used it not only for the defense of the Church in the face of radical activity, but also as a means of obtaining economic support for themselves and their families. While Hostotipaquillo was not as comfortably situated as Zapotiltic, the practical applications of allying with the Church strengthened its position in the community.

Tizapán el Alto- A Quiet Central Town with Controversial Central Issues

Tizapán el Alto is located on the far side of Lake Chapala from the diocesan seat and state capital of Guadalajara, a good distance from the lakeside towns which benefit more from tourism. It was not a relatively affluent center of agricultural production, like Zapotiltic, nor a center of mining industry and worker organization, like Hostotipaquillo. Despite being so out of the way, though, Tizapán el Alto had its share of sociocultural conflict, with the participation of Catholic activists, including a chapter of the UFCM, radical activists, and people caught in the middle of the cultural battles of the 1930s. In Tizapán el Alto as well we can examine women's active involvement in the religious and social issues of the 1930s: the renewed debate over the distribution of churches and priests permitted to minister; the presence of Catholic versus federal or state schools; and violence that continued to occur in rural Jalisco, provoked by severe droughts as well as by discontent with local, state and federal government policy.

As stated above, Jalisco was not initially a site of significant revolutionary activity; few rancheros or campesinos responded to Francisco I. Madero's calls to rebellion. Due to the fact that very few great haciendas existed on the scale of those in the north, claims for peasant's right to rebel fell on somewhat deaf ears. Salvador Gómez, a tapatio who moved north to Chihuahua to engage in revolutionary


43 AGN, LC, Exp. 547.4/183, letter from Fidel Camarena and Paula Salas, Jocotlán, to Sr. Presidente Lázaro Cárdenas, 4 Aug. 1935; copy of letter from José Hernández Delgado, Oficial mayor del secretario particular to the Secretario de Hacienda y Crédito Público, 13 Aug. 1935; letter from Ing. Rodrigo Pérez Ayala, Subdirector, Secretario de Hacienda y Crédito Público, Dirección General de Bienes Nacionales, Secc de Destino, # 30-V-16170, exp. 223(723.3)14984, to F. Camarena y P. Salas (cc Secretario Particular de la Presidencia), 20 Aug. 1935; letter from Guillermo Ulloa and Aniceto García, president and secretary of the Comunidad Agraria de Jocotlán y Teimillo, Municipio Hostotipaquillo, Jal, to Pdte. L. Cárdenas, 14 Sept. 1935; letter from José Hernández Delgado, Oficial mayor del secretario particular to the Secretario de Hacienda y Crédito Público (cc G. Ulloa and A. García), 28 Sept. 1935.
activity, complained about the undue 'patience' of the campesinos, but this was most likely tempered by the propensity of small- and medium-scale as well as large-scale and multiple property holders to defend their land from incursions. On the other side of Lake Chapala, in Michoacán, an undercurrent of popular agrarianism (often organized along the lines of indigenous ancestry) emerged, eventually spurred revolutionary mobilization, and its proposals spread to communities on Chapala's Jalisco shores.

According to the United States Consul in Guadalajara, as early as the summer of 1911 there were "armed Indians organized for the purpose of dispossessing landowners around Lake Chapala … [claiming] lands once belonging to their ancestors, because 'Madero promised we should have them'." 44

The municipal government of Tizapán el Alto apparently supported the government's reform programs. In 1932, when Governor Sebastian Allende promulgated Decreto 3742, which limited the number of priests allowed to officiate in Jalisco to 50 for a population of over 1,200,000, Tizapán el Alto was one of the municipalities from which the ayuntamiento sent a congratulatory note and expression of adhesion to the governor's cause of eradicating religious fanaticism from the state. 45 It seemed that there was support for federal and state educational initiatives in towns throughout the municipality as well. According to Pablo Yankelevich, Tizapán hosted an "outstanding" cultural mission during the Secretaría de Educación Pública's (SEP) post-Cristiada campaign of 1929-1930—a presumably this meant that the response was satisfactory as well. 46 In 1929, teachers in the federal school in El Atracadero complained that their work was being sabotaged by "rebeldes fanáticos." Despite continuing significant rural unrest, some schools in the municipality seemed to have been able to retrench and to renew their efforts: in 1930, a teacher from Mismaloya sent an exemplary student's essay on the victories of the Mexican Revolution to the central offices of the SEP, and in 1934, the schoolteachers in El Atracadero petitioned the federal government to expropriate the local priest's residence for use as a larger school building. 47

However, the efforts of the teachers were not universally supported. Local landowners had a vested interest in sabotaging the "Escuelas Artículo 123," schools that landowners, miners and industrialists were constitutionally mandated to construct and fund if more than twenty children of their enterprise's workers lived on or near their property and further than three kilometers from the next urban center; the schools were administered by the state and federal government and were subject to their regulations. Wishing to prevent what they perceived to be "escuelas del agrarismo" from gaining strength and adherents, landowners frequently neglected to pay the teachers and provide for the schools, and also turned a blind eye toward (or, at times, assisted) threats or violent attacks on the teachers. The 1934 educational reform included an initiative to close Escuelas Artículo 123, rightly seeing them as manipulated by wealthier individuals who were hostile to the mission of free, ideologically-oriented education, and to replace them with federally funded and administered rural schools. 48


47 Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Educación Pública (México, DF—hereafter, AHSEP), Sección Departamento de Escuelas Rurales, Serie Escuelas Rurales Federales, JALISCO, Caja 6783, Exp. IV/161(IV-14)/10155 (El Atracadero), Exp. IV/161(IV-14)/5478 (El Refugio, drought, local unrest), Exp. IV/161(IV-14)/1004 (Mismaloya—unfortunately, this essay is only mentioned in a letter in the file; no copy exists at the SEP national archives).

48 However, the Escuelas Artículo 123 were phased out in a manner much more gradual than originally intended, because, in a way very similar to its changing views regarding private schools, the Mexican government simply did not have the resources to replace all of these schools at once. The number of Escuelas Artículo 123 decreased throughout the late 1930s due to the expropriation and redistribution of land, which thus eliminated the presence of large landowners to fund the schools. See
Meanwhile, in response to the reform of Article 3 of the Constitution, the Mexican Church hierarchy instructed parents, children and school employees to boycott state schools, because to comply with the new socialist education program would be to commit sins so grave only a bishop could absolve them and to risk deprivation of the sacraments and even excommunication. As of 1935, the schools on the haciendas of the Lake Chapala school district had one of the lowest levels of attendance in the state of Jalisco, mainly because of the sabotage of the Escuelas Artículo 123. As a consequence of the threat of violence, in addition to official and unofficial Church admonitions, not only day schools for children but night schools and educational programs for adults (including literacy training, hygiene workshops, antialcoholic leagues, and workshops in farming and animal-raising techniques; many were specifically geared toward women) faltered.49

The agrarian organizers in Tizapán el Alto had another complaint besides the efforts of the landowners: local complicity. In April 1935 the Comisariado Ejidal of Tizapán el Alto addressed a letter to the governor, Everardo Topete, reiterating complaints made earlier to the state Director of Education that the director and the head teachers at the Escuela Superior para Niñas located in the municipal capital were acting against the goals of the educational programs of the government, opposing revolutionary curricula with "reactionary" and "clerical" teachings. The 58 signatories to the petition (all men) blamed the "uno de los más grandes retrocesos de la historia de Tizapán el Alto" on the work of these teachers, and claimed that as good "padres de familia" they could not and would not send their daughters to such a desecrated "Templo del Saber." The fathers requested that the aforementioned director and teachers be replaced with more reliable personnel.50

According to several women residents, the AC was present in Tizapán el Alto and was active in local affairs and schooling. María Guadalupe Díaz, a lifelong resident of Tizapán el Alto, was a young girl when the SEP opened the federal rural school in the town. Díaz and her mother, Elpidia Solís de Díaz, recall cooking up scarce food for Cristero soldiers who would sneak through town, and of the very rare occasions in the 1920s and early 1930s when they could attend a clandestine mass and receive Holy Communion. These masses were frequently held in private homes big enough to hide a priest and receive a number of people, and wealthy enough to pay the fees for the mass—therefore they were often a privilege of the upper classes, only occasionally opened to other, poorer attendants as a pious act of Christian charity.

Nevertheless, Díaz’s parents allowed her to go to the state school. As Díaz explained, Tizapán el Alto did have a small chapter of the UFCM, which held catechism classes for the village children in the church on Sundays. The UFCM, with some difficulty, tried to arrange for a clandestine Catholic school. In order to sustain the school, they charged tuition—a barrier which poorer families such as Díaz’s could not surmount. According to Díaz, her father, who himself chose to stand for a position in the ‘revolutionary’ municipal government in order to establish his social position and protect his family, also believed that the Revolution (referring to the Cristero Rebellion as well as the Revolution of 1910-1917), was a war of adults, not children. Díaz still remembers lessons and songs she was taught from the radical program of the Federal school and can sing them almost verbatim. One, she said, was sung after the government had redistributed land in Tizapán el Alto, in the early 1930s:

Marchemos, agraristas, ¡a los campos!
Let us march, agraristas, to the fields!
A sembrar la semilla del progreso
To sow the seed of progress
Marchemos, muy unidos, sin tropiezo
Let us march, all united, without fear

49F. Barbosa Guzmán, Jalisco Desde la Revolución (v. 6), pp. 544-545; For Church instructions, see, for example, Episcopado Mexicano, “Carta Pastoral Colectiva” 21 Nov. 1935; Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores (Delegado Apostólico de México), “Indicaciones que pueden servir para orientar y unir a los buenos elementos que se interesan por la libertad de la Iglesia y la prosperidad de la Patria,” 27 Oct. 1935, Christus, I, 2 (Jan. 1936), pp. 22-25.
50AHJ, Instrucción Pública, Caja 222, IP-11-933, exp. TIA--s/n, carta al C. Gobernador de Doroteo Vasquez et. al., (Comisariado Ejidal Tizapan el Alto), 13 Apr. 1935.
Laborando por la paz de la nación  
No queremos ya más luchas entre hermanos  
Que se llenen de trigo los graneros  
Y que surja la ansiada redención!

Muy lento voy a cantar,  
la canción del agrarista  
Los que con tantos sudores  
Señores capitalistas  
(coro) Ay ay ay

Lucharon por nuestro anhelo  
Murieron muchos hermanos  
Que Dios los tenga en el cielo

Díaz's song is very similar to the text of the "Corrido del Agrarista" reprinted in Victoria Lerner's study of socialist education in Mexico—up to the last line. It is interesting that Díaz weaves a line about God into a revolutionary corrido. "Telescoping" memories of events or influences in an oral interview is not uncommon, and, after seventy-four years, certainly understandable. For the purposes of understanding the differences between State and Church ideology, analytically separating the two is imperative. However, as Paul Thompson points out, "this very reorganization of the memory will be a precious indication of how a peoples' consciousness is constructed." Díaz was a child of the Mexican Revolution—and a Catholic.

Díaz was evidently trained well by her catechism teachers, not only in Catholic doctrine but in practical matters. She also remembers cautioning her younger brother not to answer if a stranger asked, "¿Quién vive?" for fear that the interrogator was seeking an incriminating response, also one of the first responses that Catholic children learned: 'Viva Cristo Rey.' At a very tender age, Díaz knew that such exposures could endanger her parents and others. Díaz does not consider herself any less a Catholic, or somehow being marred for life for having attended a state school teaching a "socialistic" curriculum. After all, she pointed out, Tizapán el Alto only had a primaria, a three-year program, so there was not too much time between learning the basics for her to be converted to atheistic socialism.

Porfiria Corona, also a lifelong resident of Tizapán el Alto, harbors harsher memories of the decade following the Cristero rebellion. Corona's parents had worked as peons on a local hacienda to support their many children. Although he had fought in the Revolution of 1910-1917, her father, Ramón Corona, a staunch Catholic, chose to follow the mandates of the Mexican Episcopate afterwards. He rejected the offer to take a share in the ejido allotted to the campesinos of Tizapán el Alto, created when nearby haciendas were expropriated. The Church branded the land distributed under the Mexican program of agrarian reform as "stolen property and goods," which would be a sin to collect, and would possibly result in denial of the sacraments, public condemnation of those supporting the agrarian reform, or even excommunication. Sadly, in order to prove its goodwill towards the end of the administration of President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940), the Mexican Catholic Church hierarchy gradually reversed its position, declaring that campesinos could accept expropriated land if its prior owner had unjustly deprived resident campesinos of their livelihood, or if the owner had been properly compensated. Pope Pius XI approved of this, asking for "special attention" to be paid to needy Mexican workers and farmers in his 1937 Apostolic Letter Nos es muy conocido. The Church hierarchy also reversed its earlier instructions to parish priests, permitting them to absolve agraristas and others who had accepted land.

This was too late for many farmers, as most of the expropriated land of the region had already been distributed.  

Corona is still furious at her father's decision to remain a day worker. As one of the oldest of fifteen children, Corona was expected to help her mother with the younger children and the chores. Her father would not permit her to attend the public school, and besides being needed at home, her parents could not afford the tuition for attending any clandestine Catholic classes. Corona, now a successful shopkeeper, taught herself to read by secretly listening to classes of both the state and the Catholic school—whichever had its windows open on hot days. Corona is a practicing Catholic, active in the parish church's social programs—but emphasized that these, created during the 1960s, answer the needs of Tizapán el Alto far more than the Church, including the AC, did during the 1930s.

**Conclusion—Church and State, Gender and Culture in Perspective**

Catholic women founded organizations and otherwise acted in support of the Church in markedly different contexts. **It comes as no surprise that thriving chapters of the UFCM existed in places like Zapotiltic, but that the UFCM could also have a lasting impression in radicalized atmospheres gone poor like Hostotipaquillo or backwater towns neighboring agrarian hot spots like Tizapán el Alto** testifies both to the Church's concern to spread the organization of the AC, acted upon diligently in the archdiocese of Guadalajara, and of Catholic women's generally favorable response to participation at some level in the Church's campaign.

Catholic resistance played a large part in the adaptation of some of the Mexican state's revolutionary programs. Their most obviously successful campaign was that against the socialist education project. By 1936, even in parts of Jalisco that once had been reported to be "zonas de franca cooperación," like the west, teachers were advised to refrain from the mere use of the word "socialist," even as they tried to advance their work according to the Constitution, federal and state laws, and the mandates of the public school system. In another region also considered less adamantly Catholic and more swayed by radical agrarianism, the south, municipal presidents complained to the government that "reactionary" parents in Zapotiltic, Sayula, Tamazula and other locales kept their children out of the public schools. Even in Ciudad Guzmán, the region's center for agrarian activism and also home to a SEP Centro de Cooperación for teachers, attendance levels remained low through the mid-1930s, while several private schools operating without government license were known to have higher attendance. Though attendance levels suffered, there some Catholics, like Graciela León and María Guadalupe Díaz, who took part in the public school system, because it was available and it was all their families could afford; others, like Porfíria Corona, wished they had.

Catholic women activists became experts in working around the public school system. If not able to organize alternative schools, they set up programs of extracurricular catechism instruction, as in Zapotiltic, Hostotipaquillo, and Tizapán el Alto. Programs such as these coincided with the UFCM's national initiative of September 1937 to coordinate the Asociación de Niños de la Acción Católica (Boys' Association of the Catholic Action—ANAC). ANAC offered young boys, thought to be especially at risk

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53 P. Corona Sánchez, interview, 14 Mar. 1997. I am grateful to the Hermanas del Buen Pastor (Sisters of the Good Shepherd) of Tizapán el Alto for introducing me to the Corona family and M. G. Díaz and E. Solís de Díaz. The Sisters established a house in Tizapán el Alto during the 1960s to co-found a Base Christian Community and provide services to the town.


55 P. Yankelevich, *La educación socialista*, p. 100.
of departure from Catholic belief, needy of “maternal care” and thus worthy of the UFCM’s attention, religious instruction after school, rather than urging parents to keep them out of public schools. Where parents and children could be convinced to take part in these programs, the UFCM and JCFM were able to provide a measure of doctrinal education to children who otherwise lacked it because they did not attend Catholic schools. Particularly in Huentitánquillo, it is clear that even a few motivated, activist women were enough to train and influence a generation of children, many of whom grew up to participate in the institutional Church as well. Women were crucial to the process of reconsolidation of the Church in Jalisco at the ground level, proven not only in the archival and printed record, but also in jaliscenses’ memories and in their continued involvement in the Church.

Towards the end of the 1930s, the UFCM shifted its emphasis away from social campaigns which directly placed Catholicism and Catholic social projects against state ideology and programs and towards campaigns for personal piety and religiosity, and against intrusions by Protestant missionaries and communism. Nevertheless, the UFCM continued to emphasize education for children and adults, principally in the form of catechism, as the way to preserve and to reproduce Catholic values and customs in Mexico. The continual focus on educating women, and mothers in particular, leads to two conclusions: one, that Catholic leaders saw far more potential for support for the Catholic Church from its women than from Mexican laymen, and two, that the actual extent of women’s influence and the effectiveness of their work, as well as their willingness to work for the Church, was recognized. Repeated mention is made in the archives of the UFCM in Guadalajara and in Mexico City, as well as in publications for priests such as the magazine Christus (distributed to Catholic priests throughout Mexico from December 1935 onward), of the need to involve Catholic men in some sort of concrete, pro-Church project, alongside detailed descriptions of Catholic women’s work.

However, from the point of view of many Catholic leaders, the increasing participation of women in public life outside of prescribed roles, such as the religious pilgrimage or auxiliary church society, was a process that heralded the breakdown of society. Preventing such an occurrence and encouraging women to gravitate toward their rightful place in the home and the church was a key element in the church’s efforts to provide a measure of doctrinal education to children who otherwise lacked it because they did not attend Catholic schools. Where parents and children could be convinced to take part in these programs, the UFCM and JCFM were able to organize them well, with concrete projects to maintain interest; this is followed by a two-page description of the UFCM’s programe for the “education of children” and how parish priests could assist the women with their projects; also see UFCM–Guad., Actas I, hojas sueltas—27 Oct. 1933, complaints re: disorganization of the Unión de Católicos Mexicanos in Guadalajara; Archivo del Secretariado Social Mexicano (hereafter, SSMM), Carpeta Conflicto Religioso, Sección XI, 5 (May 1940), p. 171.


57 Granted, this involvement takes place more often in groups established after the Second Vatican Council that have a rather different ethos (organizing explicitly around social justice principles, for example) than the AC. Nevertheless, women’s loyal and numerous involvement in Catholic social groups in the earlier part of the twentieth century paved the way for their greater participation in Church ministries and social organizations after Vatican II.


59 See, for example, the article “Acción Católica” in Christus I: 2 (Jan. 1936), pp. 84-93. On p. 85 priests are recommended to found committees of the UCM and to organize them well, with concrete projects to maintain interest; this is followed by a two-page description of the UFCM’s program for the “education of children” and how parish priests could assist the women with their projects; also see UFCM–Guad., Actas I, hojas sueltas—27 Oct. 1933, complaints re: disorganization of the Unión de Católicos Mexicanos in Guadalajara; Archivo del Secretariado Social Mexicano (hereafter, SSMM), Carpeta Conflicto Religioso, Sección “Guadalajara,” “Se Contesta al Cuestionario #2 del C.E.E.,” 17 Jul. 1935, p. 7, or, as the editors of the BEG asked in 1940, “¿Son [los hombres] absolutamente incapaces de reeducación?” Acción Católica: Organización de los hombres en la U.C.M., BEG, XI, 5 (May 1940), p. 171.
Catholic Church's reaction to political and social upheaval in Mexico. Because this belief was so clearly and frequently expressed, both within and outside Mexico, some historians have concluded that Mexican Catholic women unequivocally followed the lead of the Roman Catholic Church in its objections to the policies of the Mexican revolutionary government. Such a portrayal of Catholic women activists is two-dimensional and obscures the meaning of their mobilizations under the command of their male religious leadership. Catholic women from different regions, with different social, economic and educational backgrounds, responded in various ways to crises and did not always follow the lead of the Mexican Catholic hierarchy to the letter. In doing so, they carried out "one of the most successful mobilizations" of women in Mexican history, and won a substantial cultural concession—the suspension of the Mexican Revolutionary government's campaign against the Catholic Church.60

Ironically, the Church expressed ambivalence, at best, and more often hostility towards much of women's effective action on its behalf. During this time, the Catholic Church itself was issuing mixed messages to women. In papal encyclicals and diocesan synods, in homilies at Mass and in Catholic periodicals, in civic society meetings and in the confessional, Catholic women were exhorted to be relentless defensoras of their faith yet to obey the rule of law and the leaders of their Church. They were told that it was an expression of virtue to devote time to participation in the Unión Femenina Católica Mexicana (UFCM), yet that they should also stay at home to be good housewives and mothers. Women were charged with the responsibility of regulating the morals of their husbands, their children and their associates, yet they were to be meek and obedient. At this point, the Mexican Catholic Church needed both active and passive women to restore the Church to a secure position of influence in society. The fears inspired by political reform, urbanization and industrialization in the Mexican Catholic hierarchy—and in many Mexican men in general—explain the seeming contradiction in their moral exhortations to women. Women's involvement in the labor force, in education and in social and political organization portended a potential loss of men's political, social and familial control, and an apparent disintegration of the traditional units and structures of family, church, community and society, which presented a far greater threat to the Church and to male heads of households than had the violent religious persecution of the 1920s.

On the surface, Catholic women activists echoed these sentiments. Women were acknowledged as a powerful social force, and were held accountable to use their power in a moral and wise manner. At the same time, exposure to "public immorality" supposedly imperiled women. One woman, speaking at a 1935 diocesan assembly in Guanajuato, commented, "Se ha dicho que la mujer fuera del hogar es como un vaso sagrado fuera del templo: se expone a la profanación. Y es cierto por desgracia."61 It is highly likely that women such as Juana Cueva de Valdivia and the catechists of Zapotiltic heard such rhetoric on a regular basis, but this hardly kept them inside their homes, safe from all exposure to profanation. At some levels, this must have seemed inherently contradictory; such statements provoke ironic comment from some contemporary Catholic women activists.62

Other disadvantages of the Catholic program, however, were also evident in places like Hostotipaquillo and Tizapán el Alto. Supporting the Church and religious tradition certainly appealed to a broad sector of the population, but the Church proved as incapable as the state, if not more so, of answering all its members' needs. The papal encyclicals Rerum Novarum (1891) and Quadragesimo Anno (1931) called on employers and landowners to treat their employees in a Christian manner, by paying them living wages with which they could support their families, and by providing adequate

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opportunities for schooling, health care, and of course, religious practice. These idealistic sentiments were echoed in the Mexican Episcopate's messages to its followers, but often to little avail. By the early 1930s, Catholic union organizing and political lobbying had been suppressed, and in the face of material want, land redistribution programs, schools, unions and other enterprises offered by the state and its allies affiliates seemed not only more attractive, but necessary, to many less-privileged Mexican men and women.

The Church also could not stop its members from reshaping its doctrine and incorporating elements of secular, "modern" culture into their lives as they saw fit. Catholics did not always obey the prohibitions of the hierarchy, but struck compromises with the Revolutionary regime at various levels, as in the case of María Guadalupe Díaz and Graciela León. Many Mexican Catholics jettisoned some or all of their Church's anxious warnings and prohibitions against suspicious innovations, ranging from films and short-sleeved shirts to fertilizers and vaccinations, long before the Church hierarchy gradually came around to relaxing its stand.

However, due in great part to the Catholic campaigns of the postrevolutionary period, the Church still plays a large part in the cultural and social life of Mexico, and has even recovered some indirect political influence, though this recovery still prompts strong criticism. Mexican Catholics won concessions from the Revolutionary state, and made concessions towards it. Mexican Catholic women played a large part in the day-to-day operations of the Church, as well as the larger campaigns to preserve the Church in the wake of anticlerical attacks in Revolutionary Mexico. They successfully defended their value system against the Revolutionary State's call for women to reject their religious, social and cultural traditions, which it condemned as anachronistic and superstitious. These women also played an important role in the transmission of their value system—not a static and unchanging one, but one which could adapt to exigencies of time and place—to younger generations, despite efforts to the contrary on the part of the Mexican state and leftist partisans. These women created an influential niche for themselves in the Church and in their communities, in order to preserve and propagate what was important to them. In their mobilization, Mexican Catholic women activists circumvented prescribed behavior for women and to realize their personal and political goals.

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64 Alan Knight, "Revolutionary Project, Recalcitrant People," passim; M.K. Vaughan. Cultural Politics in Revolution, p. 23.
65 This can be seen, for example, in the relationship of the Church and individual members with the conservative, right wing Partido de Acción Nacional (Party of National Action, founded in Guadalajara in 1939) and its participation in more recent movements for social justice, such as the ongoing conflict in Chiapas.