

2017

Maya/Mam spirituality in “El Redentor” United Methodist Church in Memphis, Tennessee

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/22612>

"Downloaded from OpenBU. Boston University's institutional repository."

**BOSTON UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY**

Thesis Project

**MAYA/MAM SPIRITUALITY IN
“EL REDENTOR” UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
IN MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE**

by

GOYO DE LA CRUZ CUTIMANCO

B.Th., National University of Costa Rica, 1985
B.Th., Latin American Biblical Seminary, 1986
M.Phil., University of Birmingham, 2002

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Ministry

2017

Approved by

First Reader

Cristian De la Rosa, Ph.D.
Clinical Assistant Professor of Contextual Theology and Practice

Second Reader

Eileen M. Daily, Ph.D.
Lecturer and Director of D.Min. Program

Dedication

To the thousands of indigenous peoples in the Diaspora.

To my parents Luis Germán Tito Arangoitia and Teófila Nicasia Cutimanco Riveros.

Acknowledgements

First, many thanks go to my good and gracious God, Heart of Heaven and Heart of Earth, who has given to me so generously this education opportunity.

I would like to thank my advisor Cristian De la Rosa, Ph.D. for her assistance and mentoring in all aspects of this research. My sincere thanks to Eileen M. Daily, Ph.D., for her help and guidance to improve my project. I have also made some life-long friends in this doctoral program and I am glad to be part of such an amazing and supportive cohort.

I also want to extend my thanks to the Higher Education and Ministry of the United Methodist Church, Scholarship program, for their financial support to this Project.

I thank my dear wife Luz Marina Campos Huamán for her patience, love and advice. I would also like to thank for the support of my daughters Ana Jael, Lucy Qoyllor and Cusi Urpi. Specifically, I would like to acknowledge Cusi Urpi for the endless hours of manual labor she put in this project.

**MAYA/MAM SPIRITUALITY IN
“EL REDENTOR” UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
IN MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE**

(Order No. _____)

GOYO DE LA CRUZ CUTIMANCO

Boston University, School of Theology, 2017

Major Professor: De la Rosa, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

This project presents an historical and sociological vision of indigenous Maya/Mam spirituality. The historical damage caused by the European invasion continues as modern exploitation that is causing a mass exodus towards the north. The project describes the survival of the Maya/Mam now living in the Metro District of The United Methodist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, and attempting to combine their new Christian faith with their ancestral spirituality preserved for more than 500 years. To include the generation of indigenous people born in the Diaspora takes transformative leadership.

Key words: indigenous, Maya/Mam, spirituality, leadership.

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Chapter 1	Brief Historical Background	8
	1.1 Historical and Geographical Location	9
	1.2 The History: Version of the Vanquished	11
	1.3 The White Legend and the Black Legend in History	13
Chapter 2	The Intersection of Two Worlds: Analysis of the Mayan/Mam in Memphis Tennessee	25
	2.1 The Surrounding Population.....	26
	2.2 The Background of The United Methodist Church "El Redentor" in Memphis Tennessee	27
	2.2.1 Beginning of "El Redentor" United Methodist Church....	27
	2.2.2 Mission to be a Part of the Parish	29
	2.2.3 The Most Recent Bureaucratic Changes.....	30
	2.3 Social and Economic Situation.....	36
	2.3.1 From the Stone Age to the Cyber Age: "Culture shock"	37
	2.3.2 From Caravels to NAFTA: The Current Situation	39
	2.3.3 Mining.....	42
	2.4 Maya/Mam Immigrants: A People in Motion or in Forced Migration.....	44
	2.5 Indigenous Invisibilization.....	46
	2.6 Education	49

	2.7	Discrimination.....	50
Chapter 3		Maya/Mam Spirituality.....	54
	3.1	What is Spirituality?	56
	3.2	Exploring the Maya/Mam Spirituality	58
	3.2.1	Connection with Mother Earth and a Sense of Community	58
	3.2.2	Mayan and Practical Ecology	61
	3.2.3	Other Practices and Customs of Maya/Mam Spirituality .	66
	3.3	Maya/Mam Resistance: More than Five Hundred Years of Survival.....	68
Chapter 4		Theological Reflections.....	78
	4.1	The Mayas and the concept of God	79
	4.2	Scripture and Pastoral Theology.....	83
	4.3	The Indigenous Spiritual Practice Within Indigenous Theology..	85
	4.4	The Indigenous Spirituality and Theology of Liberation	87
	4.5	Indigenous Spirituality and Protestant Movements	92
	4.6	Singing in Foreign Lands: The Song of the Diggers	98
	4.7	The Two Loves: Towards Maya/Mam and Christian Spirituality.....	103
	4.8	The United Methodist Church and Indigenous Spiritualities	108
Chapter 5		A Transformative Leadership Proposal	113
	5.1	Toward Transformative Leadership.....	113
	5.2	Confronting Challenges	115

5.3	No Birds or Mice: The Second Generation of Maya/Mam Indigenous.....	121
5.4	A Tentative Proposal.....	122
5.4.1	Levels of Organization.....	124
5.4.2	Other Resources	124
5.4.3	Koj’bil: Indigenous Pastoral Relief	125
	CONCLUSIONS	129
	APPENDIX 1 Proposal Plan: Koj’bil: Indigenous Pastoral Relief	131
	APPENDIX 2 Letter to the Superintendent Rev. Dr. Harry Durbin and the Bishop Bill MacAlilly	138
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	140
	VITA	151

INTRODUCTION

Y fueron muchos quienes miraron cumplidos los sucesos que cuento dentro de mi información, a saber, para que sean conocidos por los de mi linaje y por mis hijos, y por los que vengán detrás hasta que tenga lugar la muerte aquí, en la tierra.

(And there were many who saw completed the events that I report in my story, [namely,] to be known by my lineage, my children, and for those who come after until death takes place here on earth.)¹

Among the many practices of English radical spirituality of the seventeenth century were the Levellers, later known as the Diggers,² who valued the land as a common good given by the Creator and therefore to be shared equally among all human beings. I suggest that those Maya-Mam indigenous people who now reside in Memphis, Tennessee are a kind of modern-day Diggers who have interrupted the "peaceful" life of the members of the monolingual White Caucasian community there by their difference and also their desire to belong. This difference is partially expressed in their language, called Mam, their lack of English, and, contrary to expectations, their lack of Spanish too.

¹ Fragment of the Mayan story in Yucatan narrated by the defeated chiefs, "Ah Nakuk Pech Historia y crónica de Chac Xulub Chen," National Autonomous University of Mexico, *Lecturas históricas mexicanas*, tomo I, page 236, paragraph 14, accessed July 28, 2016. Translations into English are my own, unless otherwise noted.
<http://www.historicas.unam.mx/publicaciones/publicadigital/libros/lecturas/histmex01.html> .

² This social movement emerged in seventeenth-century England. They called themselves "the Levellers," although later they are known as "the Diggers." They are often associated with modern anarchists and socialists, yet it must be emphasized that they were simply defending and advocating for biblical principles of social equity. Winstanley describes the essence of the Diggers' thinking in Gerrard Winstanley, *The True Levellers Standard Advanced: Or, The State of Community Opened, and Presented to the Sons of Men*, accessed October 30, 2016,
<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/winstanley/1649/levellers-standard.htm>.

We will hear more about the "Diggers" in Chapter IV.

Yet despite such difference, these people have chosen to become United Methodists. At the risk of deportation, these undocumented people decided to live and work in the United States. They function in the midst of people who largely believe that they are a burden to the U.S., because they draw social benefits and take jobs away from “real” Americans, but in fact the Maya/Mam actually pay their taxes and contribute with their labor force to the development of the country. However, they continue in the parish because of their strong faith in God, who by divine wisdom created humans from corn of different colors but with equal rights. The Mam (or Mames) culture comes from one a single model, even if it is expressed in different languages — the common Mayan root.

This topic of Mayan- Mam spirituality is particularly relevant now, with the threat of mass deportations under the President Donald Trump, but in fact ever since the discovery and conquest of their lands by Westerners, they have been oppressed and subjugated, and as a consequence have long struggled to survive. They carry a past of struggle, a new situation of oppression in their ancestral lands, and now are again struggling, this time to survive their immigrant status in the United States.

Clarification of Terminology

In his General Introduction of the book, *The Vision of the Defeated*, Miguel Leon-Portilla refers to the point of view of Europeans (the winners) and the point of view of the indigenous (the defeated or losers) by saying that they are "two different sides of the historic mirror that reflected the conquest," and that each side "should be studied without

prejudice"³ in order for us to have a better understanding of the invasion suffered by the continent where the majority of Maya-Mam people are still located. Taking seriously this charge, I, an Indigenous Quechua⁴ author, am writing this thesis from an indigenous point of view using indigenous terms. I do so as much as I can without prejudice, as Leon-Portilla advocates. This work aims to be a vehicle for the transformation of the subjects and situations involved in this research. Indeed, it is in my own interests to contribute to the substantial transformation of the context of my current pastoral charge.

I mentioned above in passing that I would be using indigenous terms. Why so? Many terms of our current vocabulary are euphemisms that try to disguise and conceal the truly ethical and moral implications of that terminology. These euphemisms respond to a prejudiced way of interpreting the history of this part of the land in which we live. For that reason, to identify the territory that extends from Alaska to Patagonia, I will use the name "Abia Yala."⁵ I will avoid using "America"⁶ when referring to the country of

³ Miguel Leon-Portilla, *La Visión de los Vencidos* (México City: Universidad Autónoma de México, Tercera Reimpresión de la Vigésima Novena Edición 2010), xii.

⁴ The ancient Peruvian Quechua culture of South America belonged to the vast empire of the Tawantinsuyo, whose capital was the city of Cusco, that existed between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries of our era. It is bordered to the north by the Acasmayo River in Pasto Colombia and to the south by the Maule River in Chile.

⁵ Today many organizations on the continent use the term "Abia Yala" or "Abya Yala." A Catholic editorial in Quito, Ecuador that uses this name affirms: Abya Yala, "meaning 'land in full maturity,' to name the American continent was suggested by the Aymara leader Takir Mamani, who proposed that all indigenous use it in their documents and oral statements. 'To call our cities, towns, and continents by a foreign name,' he argues, 'is to submit our identity to the will of our invaders and their heirs.'" ¿Quiénes Somos?, Abya Yala Publicaciones, accessed September 2, 2015, <http://www.abiyayala.org/presentacion.php>.

⁶ "America" is a European name used to describe the entire continent from Alaska to Patagonia, but in the United States, Europe, and on other continents, this noun is used exclusively to denote the country of the United States.

the United States since it is a misnomer; people and countries in Central America, the Caribbean, and South America may likewise be identified as and called "Americans." In short, the "American" substantive has been co-opted by the dominant country in the north. Likewise, instead of using the term "discovery," "conquest," "colonization," or the euphemism "meeting of two worlds," I will use the term "invasion," as it better describes what actually unfolded in this region of the planet. In addition, to refer to people who do not have what is deemed to be the appropriate documentation designated to live in the United States, I will use the term "undocumented" to replace and avoid the use of the terms "alien" or "illegal."

The world history that we have been told and taught so far is myopic because it assumes that the global development of civilizations has its apogee in the West, specifically Europe. In world history, Africa and the continent of Abia Yala were simply ignored. Since childhood, we have been indoctrinated into this Western concept, as Enrique Dussel explains: In world history, this east-west movement has essentially removed Latin America and Africa from the map.⁷

In the first chapter, I aim to describe briefly the historical context of the continent of Abia Yala. I do not intend to address all the details of the history of the ancient cultures before the invasion, the invasion itself, or the resistance of the peoples of Abia Yala and the mestizos' independence. However, I will place special emphasis on the cultural background of the Maya/Mam from the perspective of the defeated, and on the

⁷ Dussel continues affirming that in the western point of view Asia is in a state of "immaturity" or "childhood." Enrique Dussel, *1492 El Encubrimiento del Otro "Hacia el origen del mito de la modernidad"* (La Paz: Centro de Información para el Desarrollo, 1994), 15.

subtle way in which the invader used theological interpretation, Aristotelian philosophy, and the use of force to satisfy the ravenous appetite for wealth and the land of Abia Yala.

In the second chapter, using the “intersection corner” metaphor of Dr. Fluker, I will aim to locate "El Redentor" United Methodist Church and the Maya/Mam people at this political, economic, and socio-cultural intersection.

The presence of the Mayan/Mam community in the Metro District of The United Methodist Church in Memphis, TN has been traumatic. For it encountered an American church that is not prepared to provide the necessary facilities for this indigenous community to be welcomed. In addition to describing this conflicted living situation, I will explore the adverse social and economic situation that the Maya-Mam face in their country of origin.

In the third chapter, I will highlight the Maya/Mam spirituality and its resistance, as heirs of the ancient civilization on the continent of Abia Yala. In short, I will show Maya/Mam spirituality that seeks balance in time and space, between nature, the human being, and God. I will underline the sense of community and "sense of consensus" that they still hold within an episcopal but connectional church. In addition, I will demonstrate the ways that the Maya-Mam have found to survive by conserving their old rites and customs through use in their diverse daily practices. In sum, I will describe Mayan/Mam spirituality's interrelation with Mother Earth, its sense of community, and its ancestral ritual practices that continue to this day and in which I participate. Here I

refer to those spiritual practices of theirs—or I should say ours⁸—that have served as foundations of resistance for more than five hundred years.

In the fourth chapter, I will discuss the implicit theology in Maya/Mam thought, according to the Scriptures; its interaction with Methodism; and the apparent conflict of the two combined loves between Maya/Mam indigenous spirituality and Christianity. Over the course of this chapter, I will describe how the Maya/Mam concept of God goes by various names and seeks balance in time and space, and between nature, the human being, and God. I analyze the arrival of the Maya/Mam in the U.S., and their frank and courageous attitude of defiance toward the different theological currents and the different religious movements that try to prevent them from settling, like the Diggers of the seventeenth century, in a new geographic and adverse urban reality that is quite different to their ancestral practices. In addition, I will address the two theological currents (or two loves) that they try to combine in this new reality.

The fifth chapter proposes some transformative actions that would allow the coexistence of Maya/Mam with U.S. citizens in their new reality in Memphis, facing the future without damaging their original identity as indigenous people in exile. To this end, I explore the problems of loss of identity of the later generations of Maya/Mam born in this country and how we might address those problems. Finally, I will propose alternatives that can help this indigenous community in the Diaspora, and suggest what

⁸ Both myself and my wife Rev. Luz Campos as peruvian Quechua indigenous pastors, we feel identified with the Maya/Mam membership of El Redentor UMC, as we have the common denominator of being indigenous to Abia Yala that we have practiced our spirituality for more than Five centuries.

kind of leadership from this community might be welcomed in and honored by The United Methodist Church in Memphis, Tennessee.

CHAPTER 1

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Rather than address in detail the history of the invasion of Abia Yala, I want here to give an overview of the Maya/Mam culture and how the imposition of Aristotelian philosophy looked from the perspective of the vanquished.⁹ This indigenous way of looking at these historical events is ably summarized in the ancient writings of the Maya Indians in the book *Chac-Xulub-Chen*, which says:

(Esta es la historia que) aderezo para que se conozca cómo vino la conquista, y cuántas angustias pasamos aquí, bajo los árboles, bajo los bejucos, bajo las ramas, dentro de este tiempo y además los hombres principales y los mayores, porque pasaron dos, tres años de que estaban establecidos (los españoles) entre tanto que se daban por nuestros amos, los señores extranjeros, los pueblos

([This is the story that] I tell you so that you can know how the conquest came, and how we struggled here, under the trees, under the vines, under the branches, within this time and also the leading men and the elderly, because two and three years passed since they [the Spaniards] were established. Meanwhile, they assumed they were our masters, foreign lords, and towns...)¹⁰

⁹ Some topics of the following chapters are based on my previous essay, Goyo De la Cruz Cutimanco, “Maya/Mam Indigenous Spirituality in the Southeast Memphis Cooperative Parish of The United Methodist Church” (term paper, Boston University, 2015).

¹⁰ “Ah Nakuk Pech Historia y Crónica de Chac Xulub Chen,” paragraph 36.

1.1 Historical and Geographical Location

According to Quintana and Rosales, the name "Mam" is a generic term for father or grandfather.¹¹ Before the European Invasion, these people were dominated first by the Olmecs, and later by the Quiches (or Kichés) and King Kikab II, who subjected them and imposed taxes on them.¹² The authors De la Garza and Recinos give us the following classification of the Mayan family where the Maya/Mam is located:

HUASTACAN: huasteco, chicomuselteco (cotoque).
CHOLAZO: Chontal, chil, Chorti.
TZELTALAN: Tzeltal, tzolzil, tojolabal.
CHUJ
CANJOLABANO: jakalteco, kanjobal, solomeco.
MOTOZINTECO
MAMEAN: mam, aguacateco, Ixil.
QUICHEAN: Rabinal (achi), uspanteco, kiché, Cakchiquel, tzutujil
KEKCHIAN: kekchí poconchí, pocomam.
MAYAN: Yucatecan, Lacandon, Itza, Mopan.¹³

It is believed that this group of languages originated in the highlands of Guatemala around 1800 BC.; this means that the population in this study is linguistically part of the Mamean family of languages, and closest to those who speak Aguacateco and Ixil.

According to Holmes, we know fairly specifically what geographical region the Mayan/Mam people occupied. He writes:

¹¹ Francisca Quintana Hernández and Cecilio Luis Rosales, *Mames de Chiapas, Pueblos Indígenas del México Contemporáneo* (Mexico City: Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, 206), 8.

¹² Alberto María Carreño, *Vocabulario de la Lengua Mame: Compuesto por el Padre Predicador Fray Diego de Reynoso de la Orden de La Merced* (Mexico City: Departamento de Imprenta de la Secretaría de Fomento, 1916), 10-11.

¹³ Mercedes de la Garza, ed., *Literatura Maya* (Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1992), xi.

There is some unanimity among historians, admitting that the mam or mame race took practically all of what is now known as Huehuetenango, Soconusco, Quetzaltenango, Totonicapan and San Marcos; and according to tradition, the territory of the Mam was reduced to its present boundaries only after a bloody battle with the Kiches in the time of Kicab the Great.¹⁴

From the invasion in 1524 to the day of independence from Spain in 1821, all Mam communities were managed politically from Guatemala. After the border treaty between Guatemala and Mexico in 1882, in which Guatemala gave Mexico the District of Mariscal, the Mames were divided by the new nation states. Both on the Mexican side and on the Guatemalan side, their ancestral lands were declared as government property, and their famed communal lands disappeared.

Alberto Ruz Lohuiller locates the current geographic countries of the Maya's influence. He notes they lived in Mexico, Guatemala, Belize and the western extremes of Honduras and El Salvador.¹⁵ Likewise Quintana and Rosales, referring to the Maya/Mam geographical region, claim that current Mam people

inhabit the border of southern Mexico, specifically on the coast, in the Soconusco region, in the highlands and in the jungle of Chiapas. They extend into the Western Highlands of Guatemala in the departments of San Marcos, Huehuetenango, Quetzaltenango, and Retalhuleu, forming a territorial, cultural and linguistic continuum.¹⁶

Referring to recent times, Quintana and Rosales note the "Mexicanization" of the Mam who inhabited the border of southern Mexico:

¹⁴ William H. Holmes, *Proceedings of the Second Pan American Scientific Congress, Section I Anthropology, Vol. I.* (Washington, DC: Washington Government Printing Office, 1917), 216, accessed February 14, 2017, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=osu.32435030638340;view=1up;seq=254>.

¹⁵ Alberto Ruz Lhuillier: *Los Antiguos Mayas* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Economica, tercera edición, 1995), 25, Kindle.

¹⁶ Quintana and Rosales, 5.

The Mam were considered second-class Mexicans. Efforts were made to strip them of their ethnic identity by phasing out the use of their language, their customs, their traditions, their worldview, and their religion through systematic campaigns of national integration under threats of deportation, imprisonment and execution. All this in order to differentiate them from the Guatemalan Mames.¹⁷

This geographical divisions that split the Mam people into two parts was followed by multiple forms of marginalization and abuse by both countries. As Quintana and Rosales add, in Guatemala “discrimination, exploitation, and political repression were the focus and it remains until today.”¹⁸

Currently, most of the Maya/Mam who now live in the Memphis area come from the department of Huehuetenango, Guatemala, where they are distributed as follows:

“Mam municipalities with Mam majority: Santa Bárbara H., San Sebastián H., Todos Santos Cuchumatán, San JuanAtitlán, Santiago Chimaltenago, San Pedro Necta, San Rafael Pézcal, Colotenango, and San Gaspar Ixchil e Ixtahuacán. Municipalities with Mam minority: Chiantla, Cuilco, La Libertad and La Democracia.”¹⁹

1.2 The History: Version of the Vanquished

There is no impartial or neutral history. As David B. Perrin says, “there is no neutral perspective from which human beings carry on their various activities.”²⁰ In this case, to be consistent with the radical indigenous spirituality, I will relate historical events from the indigenous point of view, and specifically from my own perspective as a

¹⁷ Quintana and Rosales, 15.

¹⁸ Quintana and Rosales, 14.

¹⁹ Odilio Jiménez Sánchez, “Los Caminos de la Resistencia: Comunidad, Política e Historia Maya en Guatemala” (Doctor of Philosophy diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 2008), 12.

²⁰ David B. Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality* (New York: Routledge, 2007), xi.

descendant of cultures invaded by Europeans.²¹ I must state that the history written from a European point of view will always try to cover up the history of the other, and it becomes the "official" one, and is used to educate our children in school.

In such histories, Europe is typically designated as the "old world" and the indigenous people as the "new world," completely ignoring the fact that these lands were already owned and had names. Yet the representatives of the "old world" tried to erase all the names and the historical memory of the original nations of this continent. Europe, through invasions in the north, center, and south of the American continent, gradually took over our land and our wealth, and rapidly became the modern hegemonic world power, at the expense of defeated civilizations on this continent. In short, *"So that their flower could continue living, they damaged and sucked the flower of others."*²² It is in this manner that ancient Mayan book, *Chilam Balam*, tells us what was witnessed about the great massacres committed during the invasion of the territories of their ancestors.

Indeed, the invaders tried to erase all traces of our ancestors, and condemned us, our spirituality, and our cultural ways and monuments to the stake of the so-called "Holy Inquisition." For example, Western history records the tragic event occurred on July 12, 1562, called the "Auto de Fe in Mani, Yucatan:"

These people also used certain characters or letters to write old things and sciences in their books, and with figures and some signs in the figures. They understood their things and implied and taught from them. We found a great

²¹ As well as the Mayas, the Inca/Quechuas, we were invaded by Spain. Therefore we share the same patterns of oppression and resistance.

²² Antonio Mendiz Bolio, trans., *Libro de Chilam Balam de Chumayel* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1988), 58.

number of books of these letters, and because there was nothing that did not have superstition and lies of the devil, we burned them all, which they felt dearly and they felt deep sadness.²³

How can they not feel deep sadness in the face of such a “bibliocaust”? This event can perhaps be compared to the burning of the Library of Alexandria. The only ancient texts that were rescued from that hecatomb were: the Codex Tro-Cortesianus in Madrid, the Codex Persianus in Paris and the Codex Dresdensis in Dresden.²⁴ So in Mani, the Spaniards tried to erase all traces of indigenous literature on spirituality when the priest Diego de Landa condemned to the stake, as it were, the wise Mayan literary treasures of the historical memory of the Maya civilization.²⁵

The advances and progress of the Mayan civilization before the invasion are documented in the writings of the Maya themselves and in numerous books of European writers. Without a doubt, the amazing way of counting time and Mayan numerology, for example, have been and are a source of enormous pride among the Abia Yala civilization.

1.3 The White Legend and the Black Legend in History

There are many types of written history. In the case of Abia Yala, there is a Black Legend and a White Legend. The first is a way of telling the story from the point of view

²³ Diego de Landa: *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán* (Barcelona: Red ediciones S.L., 2016), 1327, Kindle. Also, we can find information about Mayan scientific knowledge in: Alberto Ruz Lhuillier, 340-346, Kindle.

²⁴ Ignacio Domingo Baguer, *Para Qué Han Servido los Libros* (Saragoza: Prensa de la Universidad de Saragoza, 2013), 250.

²⁵ Fernando Baez calls this act of vandalism a "Bibliocaust" and sets the destruction of Mayan books of Yacatan in world history, along with the great destructions of books from ancient times, beginning with the burning of the library of Alexandria, through the burning of books in China in 213 BC, the “auto de Fe” of Granada, and the burning of historical remains in Bagdhad and in Egypt during the "Arab spring." See Fernando Baez, *Nueva Historia Universal de la Destrucción de Libros: De las tablillas sumerias a la era digital* (Mexico City: Editorial Océano, 2014), 5100 and 5254, Kindle.

of the vanquished descendants of the indigenous remnant living on this continent. The second way of telling the story is from the European point of view, in which it is believed that the winner comes from an ancient world who is coming to discover a new world.

The White Legend of the invasion of Abia Yala can be well illustrated by the plaque at the entrance to the General Archives of the Indies in Seville, Spain, where we read the following message:

To the missionary Queen
Isabel the Catholic
Who opened course and route
To the apostolic Zeal of people

To the Spanish missionaries
Who, in a service of a universal
Goal of salvation
Were servants of Christ
And enlarged the inheritance of the world
To the east and to the west
Under the sign of the cross

In this archive of Indies
Treasure of Documents
Of our missionary epic poem
Spain keeps the famous names
Of the propagators of the faith.²⁶

A theological language of religious justification is woven throughout the White Legend. This text of the General Archive of the Indies in Seville, enlighten us about that religious layer and the justification for the invasion. Without going into much semantic detail, we can see the emphasis on the missionary's character-- that the "servants of

²⁶ Alberto Mottesí, *América 500 Años Después, Hacia un Nuevo Liderazgo para el Año 2000* (Fountain Valley, CA: Asociación Evangélica Alberto Mottesí, 1992), 21.

Christ" (invaders) claimed to fulfill universal salvation under the sign of the cross by spreading the Christian faith.

This biased appreciation of the history by the Spanish government coincides with the positive expression of the vanquisher, in the words of Diego de Landa, who refers here to the benefits of the invasion: "Indians did not lose but they gained much when the Spanish nation came, even in what is less, although it is much, increased many things and in the future they will enjoy and are beginning to enjoy and they are already using many aspects of it."²⁷ Although here Diego de Landa is referring to animals and plants brought by the Spanish to the Yucatan Maya region, in the sixteenth century, from the perspective of the vanquisher the invasion was positive and improved the lives of the vanquished. The Mayan cultural heritage, its territory, and the dignity of being free—in short, all that was lost—the Spanish never questioned.

According to John A. Mackay, the great missionary movement of Spain to save the world under the sign of the cross brought a different Christ to this continent.

A Christ has come to South America, who has put men in agreement with life, who has told them to accept it as it is, and things as they are, and truth as it appears to be. But the other? – He who makes men dissatisfied with life as it is, and things as they are, and tells them that, through Him, life shall be transformed, and the world overcome, and His followers put in agreement with reality, God and truth? This other Christ wanted to come, but his way was barred . . . But now again spring voices announce His coming.²⁸

²⁷ Relaciones de Yucatán, *Colección de Documentos Inéditos Relativos al Descubrimiento, Conquista y Organización de las Antiguas Posesiones de Ultramar, Segunda Serie, Tomo Número 13, II* (Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid, 1900), 403, accessed April 24, 2017, <https://archive.org/stream/agz9105.0002.001.umich.edu#page/402/mode/2up>.

²⁸ John A. Mackay, *The Other Spanish Christ: A Study in the Spiritual History of Spain and South* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 124.

That impostor Christ brought by the invaders only brought destruction and death. He tried to erase the memory of our ancestors to dominate us and to take what was ours. Meanwhile, the true Christ of love and sacrifice who came to save us was imprisoned in Spain.

From the beginning of the invasion, the Spanish tried to highlight the positive impact of the invaders, from their perspective:

No ha Dios dado acrecentamiento á los indios con la nuestra nación Española de las cosas dichas tan necesarias al servicio del hombre, que por solas ellas no pagan con lo que dan ó darán á los Españoles, tan solamente, pero han les ido sin paga Jas que no se pueden comprar ni merecer que son lajusticia y cristiandad, y paz en que ya viven, por lo qual deuen mas á España y á sus Españoles, y principalmente á los muy cathólicos reyes dellas que con tan continuo cuidado y con tan grande cristiandad destas dos cosas los han proveydo y los proven ...

(God has given accretion to the Indians through our Spanish nation with things so necessary to the service of man, that they cannot pay for what they were given by the Spaniards, so all they have done is gone without pay for what cannot be bought or earned. This includes justice and Christianity, and the peace that they are already living, but they owe much to Spain and the Spaniards, and mainly to the very Catholic kings, those who with such ongoing care and with his large Christendom have two things they provide and will provide them.)²⁹

In this apologetic text, we find the particular theology and hermeneutic about justice, peace, and Christianity that is part of the invaders' mentality. After this theological apologia for the invasion, Diego de Landa justifies the disasters caused by the arrival of Europeans in Abia Yala, saying:

sus primeros fundadores, malos padres que los enjendraron en pecado la cristiandad los enjendra en gracia y para gozar de la vida eternal ... La justicia los ha sacado dellos mediante la predicación ... con razón, pues, se puede gloriarse España en Dios pues la eligió entre otras naciones para remedio de tantas gentes"

²⁹ Relaciones de Yucatán, 404.

(... their first founders, [are] bad parents who begot them in sin ... and Christianity begets in grace and to enjoy eternal life... Justice has delivered them from sin through preaching ... Spain can exult in God because among other nations God chose Spain to heal many people.)³⁰

Diego de Landa here clearly linked the cross and the sword, both used as weapons in the invasion. His first justification is theological, mentioning the virtues of the new spirituality that Spain brought to the Mayan people; but then he subtly relates that spiritual virtue to the Aristotelian philosophy of the vanquishers who God supposedly chooses to subjugate the people of this continent.

The plaque mentioned before marks the origin of the current Christian evangelization. For example, the televangelist Mottesi does not hesitate to affirm that "the Columbian company [meaning Christopher Columbus and colleagues] was an act of faith of a man wishing to fulfill the purpose of God in his life."³¹ Likewise, the annual celebrations of Columbus Day on October 12 and the day of Thanksgiving both accept at face value the White Legend. For the defenders of the White Legend, the history of Abia Yala begins with the invasion and colonization; they totally ignore the centuries of culture and innovation that came before they arrived. As Todorov affirms:

The discovery of America is what announces and founds our present identity; even if every date that allows two periods to be separated is arbitrary, there is not one that is more suited to mark the birth of the modern era than the year 1492, when Columbus crosses the Atlantic Ocean. We are all descendants of Columbus; with him begins our genealogy - insofar as the word "beginning" makes sense.³²

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Mottesi, 23.

³² Tzvetan Todorov, *La conquista de América. El problema del otro* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI Editores, 2003), 15.

Yet according to the Black Legend, the “beginning” of the history of Abya Yala is not the year 1492; for we cannot speak of "discovery" or of a "meeting of two worlds," as many would like to call it. The more appropriate, and appropriately radical, word for that event would be "invasion." This statement carries an appropriately negative connotation regarding the presence of Europeans in Abia Yala, which resulted in the massive holocaust³³ of the indigenous nations of the continent by wars, servitude, and epidemics.

The philosophical and prophetic vision of the invasion by the vanquished is in the judgments issued by the Maya scholars who witnessed the dramatic historical transition.

The sacred book of the Mayan prophets, *The Chilam Balam*, tells the before and after of the Mayan history. There, the story of the pre-conquest is described in the following way:

When religious men had not yet arrived, there was no greed or offenses to the blood of other men. The poor ate as a result of his efforts. But when they (Europeans), the rampaging, arrived they ate from five fruit trees Cabcoh, Osos meleros (honey eating bear).³⁴

The Mayan prophecies describe the impact of the European invasion; the following quotation predicts that Christianity will cause food shortages, and the mistreatment and dispersal of the Maya people:

³³ According to the Spanish newspaper ABC, the proponents of the White Legend say that the people of Abia Yala before the invasion numbered only 13 million, while detractors of this idea argue that the indigenous inhabitants numbered between 40 and 100 million. See César Cervera, “El mito del ‘Genocidio español’: las enfermedades acabaron con el 95% de la población”, ABC España (Abril 2015), accessed September 28, 2016, <http://www.abc.es/espana/20150428/abci-mito-genocidio-america-201504271956.html>.

³⁴ Alfredo Barrera Vásquez and Silvia Rendón, *El Libro de los Libros de Chilam Balam* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1990), 79.

The 11 Ahau is the one that begins the count because it was during the katun when the foreigners from the east arrived. The ones who brought Christianity which ended the power of the east and made the sky cry and filled the cornbread of the Katun with grief ... scattered around the world will be the women that sing, the men that sing, and all who sing.³⁵

The prophecy continues by telling about the origin of foreigners, the imposition of the Catholic religion, death and cruelty perpetuated by foreigners, and the beginning of misery:

Oh! We grieve because they came from the east! ... the bearded came to this earth the messengers of divinity ...
Oh! We grieve because they arrived! ...
This true God from heaven speaks only about sin, his teaching will be only about sin, his soldiers are inhumane, and cruel are their fierce mastiffs...
... Receive your guests, the bearded, the messengers of God's sign... who come to settle as your Elder Brothers ...
Oh! My children's poverty will increase.³⁶

That misery and sorrow includes the destruction of the scientific writings and inventions of the Mayas. The text laments: "Science will be lost, and so true wisdom will be lost."³⁷

We can also mention Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda as one who reflected the true philosophy and mission of the invasion, and who therefore would strengthen the theory of the Black Legend. Yet Sepulveda, faithful follower of Aristotle's philosophy, even without ever having set foot in Abia Yalan lands, defended the racial superiority of the Spaniards and defended the "just war against the Indians." Mario Zuñiga sums up the dichotomies in their approaches as an instrument of domination, one that Sepulveda argued in the following way:

³⁵ Ibid., 49.

³⁶ Ibid., 68-69.

³⁷ Ibid., 72.

Natural Right:	
Form	Subject
Perfect	Imperfect
Equal	Unequal
Human Subject:	
Reason	Appetite
Soul	Body
Society:	
Father	son
Husband	woman
Master	Servant
Magistrate	Citizen
King	Peoples
[Owner	Dispossessed]
Cultural:	
Spaniards	Indigenous ³⁸

This is the ideology of domination that the invaders had in mind when they began to occupy the vast territories of Abia Yala. Under this philosophy they did not respect women or the elderly. They destroyed everything supposedly because they were superior to the inhabitants of the "new world."

The role of the Roman Catholic Church at the time of the invasion was no less detrimental, as they justified and delivered the new lands to the invaders in the name of God by a papal bull: "Pope Alexander VI, who was Spanish, ordained Queen Isabella as proprietor and master of the New World. The expansion of the kingdom of Castile

³⁸ Zúñiga shows us synoptic picture of Juan Ginés de Sepulveda's thoughts, who emphasizes a separation of elements - typical of the middle ages - where the "other" column on the right is considered negative. The purpose of this dichotomous classification is to justify the massacre of the indigenous peoples, that is to say, the subjugation of "the others" the ones who were not conformed with the canon of "equality" nor did they "look like" the individuals in the European society. It was necessary for them to justify the cultural superiority of the invader over the "uncivilized" cultures. See Mario Zúñiga, "Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda: La Guerra Justa Como Ejercicio Patriarcal para la Fundación de la Modernidad," San José, Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones, Pasos N. 137, (Julio-Agosto 2007): 27, accessed February 14, 2017, http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/Costa_Rica/dei/20120706030658/juan.pdf.

extended God's reign over the earth."³⁹ Fray Bartolome de Las Casas asserts:

Uno de los Pontífices pasados que he dicho (el'Español Alexandro VI. ó Borja)> como Señor del mundo hizo donación de estas Islas y Tierra-firme del mar oceano á los Católicos reyes de Castilla que eran entonces Dn. Fernando y Da. Isabel , de gloriosa memoria , y á sus sucesores nuestros Señores, con todo lo que en ellos hay , según se contiene en ciertas escrituras que sobre ello pasaron , según dicho es, que podéis ver (si quisiéredes).

(One of the last Pontiffs [I] said [el Español Alexander VI. Or Borja] as Lord of the world made donation of these islands and Earth-firm ocean sea to the Catholic kings of Castile who were then Dn. Fernando and Da. Isabel of glorious memory, and his successors our Lords, with all that is in them, as contained in certain writings which passed over it, according to what is spoken, that you can see [if you want]).⁴⁰

To corroborate the inhuman manner with which the Spanish invaders treated the ancient inhabitants of Abia Yala, we must refer to the official religious view of the time and to the concept that the invader had of the humanity of the vanquished. On June 9, 1537, Pope Paul III tried to clarify to the executioners the humanity of the inhabitants of Abia Yala, through the Bula Sublimis Deus:

We, who, though unworthy, exercise on earth the power of our Lord and seek with all our might to bring those sheep of His flock who are outside into the fold committed to our charge, *consider, however, that the Indians are truly men* and that they are not only capable of understanding the Catholic Faith but, according to our information, they desire exceedingly to receive it.⁴¹

Because of the long-delayed publication of this papal pronouncement, by then, many people had already been decimated and ambitious Europeans machinery had

³⁹ Eduardo Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1997), 323, Kindle.

⁴⁰ Bartolomé de Las Casas: *Breve Relación de la Destrucción de Las Indias* (Sevilla: Impresa por Juan F, Hurtel, 1821), XXV.

⁴¹ See: Pope Paul III, *Papal Encyclicals Online, Sublime Dei*: accessed October 15, 2016, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Paul03/p3subli.htm>.

advanced, sweeping away the main metropolis of the ancient civilizations. However, to justify evangelization and conversion into Christianity, it was necessary to declare the indigenous as “humans” because, after all, the Spanish could not evangelize plants, soulless animals or beasts. The religious justification became an ideological and political weapon that the invaders used with the consent of the church. Thus this papal statement was a political religious order to legitimize the occupation and to justify the "evangelizing" mission that accompanied the invasion; that is, the "sword" accompanied by the cross legitimated their presence on that fateful moment in history.

Reconciling the two legends:

The White Legend tells us how a handful of Spaniards came to dominate vast empires. Its proponents argue that the Europeans did not fight the Maya, Aztec, and Inca civilizations alone, but were helped by discontented indigenous factions of these peoples. In other words, it was indigenous “self-destruction” that occurred in Abia Yala. On the other hand, proponents of the White Legend say that, the neighboring countries of Europe who wanted to discredit and promote the fall of the rising Spanish Empire deliberately stigmatized Spain. The collective suicides caused and unknown diseases brought by the invaders contributed to the triumph of the Europeans. In this regard, Galeano writes:

Bacteria and viruses were the most effective allies. The Europeans brought with them: smallpox and tetanus, various lung, intestinal, and venereal diseases, trachoma, typhus, leprosy, yellow fever, and teeth-rotting caries just like biblical plagues. Smallpox was the first to appear.⁴²

Whether we choose to accept it or not, the result of that episode of invasion meant

⁴² Galeano, 425, Kindle.

for the nations of Europe the beginning of a huge and almost unlimited process of wealth accumulation. Meanwhile for the indigenous peoples of the lands under colonial rule the invasion meant subjugation in the best-case scenario and the almost total destruction of their civilizations in the far worse cases.

In order to consider the history and memories of indigenous spirituality, we have few options than to what the invaders, and especially their friars, wrote, and this they did always through the lens of the Holy Inquisition. Therefore, it will always be difficult to look objectively at the events that occurred before and after the invasion and destruction of the Maya/Mam culture.

Today, there are advocates of both lines of argument. However, it is necessary to put the story on a scale to see which of the side has more weight and which way the scale tips. We cannot be Manichean and see the story in black or white only. The reality is that we must accept that there have been people and historical events that are best classified as gray in history. Among these are people like Montesinos and Las Casas who disagreed with the philosophy of the invaders. In addition, somehow both our peoples, the Indigenous and the Spanish invaders, knew how to enrich their spirituality by learning from the experiences of the other.

I do not dispute the enormous wealth of social and cultural exchange that occurred in this forced relationship. However, history is clear: the result whether of the invasion or the "friendly encounter of two worlds" resulted in the destruction of civilizations; furthermore, that submission has continued until this day. Today it may not be Spain, which in the past subjected the inhabitants of the ancient civilizations of Abia

Yala, but there are other empires and nefarious neo-colonial systems that now subjugate and exploit our people in new ways. Everything depends on the lens through which one sees and through which one reads history. Even if we try to make an apologia to Spain or to European countries in terms of their historical responsibility for the debacle of the civilizations of Abia Yala, India, Australia, New Zealand, etc., it would be like trying to cover the sun with a finger. With regard to the story of Abia Yala, there is a clear winner: the invaders who subjected it and continue exploiting it through their descendants. And there is also a clear loser: the primary civilizations of Abia Yala and their descendants who today live in misery on the scraps of land that they still have.

CHAPTER 2

THE INTERSECTION OF TWO WORLDS: ANALYSIS OF THE MAYAN/MAM IN MEMPHIS TENNESSEE

How to locate the situation of the Maya/Mam community of Guatemala in its new reality, not only as immigrants in Memphis Tennessee, but also now practicing their Christian faith within the Tennessee Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church? Dr. Walter Fluker speaks about a hypothetical "busy intersection " where worlds collide, where it is impossible to individually face the uncertainty in a limited space. He suggests that the best thing for those at a difficult intersection of life is to come together in community to address the situation.⁴³

Indeed, the current reality of the Maya/Mam community is like being at an “intersection” where there are no traffic lights, where the community feels confronted on all sides, where there is a collision of antagonistic thoughts and political, social, religious, and economic difference and difficulties, a place where danger lurks. It is an intersection where you will find friends and enemies, an intersection where their Maya/Mam future, their survival as a people with a distinct cultural identity has to be tackled from a community perspective, with the support of themselves as a community and the support

⁴³ Walter E. Fluker, *Ethical Leadership: The Quest for Character, Civility, and Community* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2009), 5-7.

and transformational and responsible leadership of the Methodist community in which they are now.

2.1 The Surrounding Population

The BBC, in its feature segment, “Las verdaderas cifras de los hispanos en EE.UU. y cuánto poder tienen” (The true numbers of U. S. Hispanics and how much power they have) says that the number of Hispanics in the United States is 55 million, of which 2.3% are Guatemalans, who represent the sixth place after Mexico, Puerto Rico, El Salvador, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic.⁴⁴ Data from Census Bureau adds that of the U.S. population of 308,745,538, there are 50,477,594 Hispanics,⁴⁵ of whom 290,059 live in the state of Tennessee; however, there is no data to indicate the number of Guatemalans of indigenous origin among that number.

The city of Memphis is located in the southwest of the state of Tennessee, and the United Methodist Church El Redentor is located in Shelby County. As of July 1, 2015, the population of Shelby County was estimated to be 938,069 inhabitants, of whom the majority (53.5%) is African American, along with 42.00% white, and 6.1% Hispanic.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ BBC Mundo, 2016. “Las verdaderas cifras de los hispanos en EE.UU. y cuánto poder tienen” (March 2016), accessed October 30, 2016, http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2016/03/160304_internacional_elecciones_eeuu_2016_cifras_latinos_if.

⁴⁵ See United States Census Bureau “Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin: 2010”, accessed March 30, 2017, <http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>.

⁴⁶ Compare the Census Bureau dates, accessed May 30, 2017, <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/4748000,47157>. This result would indicate that the number of the Hispanic population in 2015 amounted to 57, 222; however other non-governmental organizations such as “Latino Memphis pegs the Lumber of Hispanic residents at 81,000”. See “Población del Condado de Shelby crece en diversidad, según censo,” La Prensa Latina (Memphis), 03 to 09 July 2016, accessed March 30, 2017, https://issuu.com/laprensalatina/docs/lpl_07032016. Meanwhile, “Su

Memphis is known for its music, and is home to several big companies like FedEx and AutoZone, thanks to its location in the center of the southern United States and at the crossroads of several major trade routes. Yet despite such flourishing businesses, there is significant economic inequality among the indigenous and /HispanicLatinos.⁴⁷

The neighborhood where El Redentor United Methodist Church is located is racially diverse, with a minority white population, in comparison to a majority African-American and Hispanic population.

2.2 The Background of The United Methodist Church "El Redentor" in Memphis Tennessee

2.2.1 Beginning of “El Redentor” United Methodist Church

The United Methodist Church "El Redentor" first met in September 2016, five years after being founded in the city of Memphis, Tennessee. It began as a simple weekly meeting in the homes of some Maya/Mam indigenous, without the sponsorship of any denomination. But once it was under my direction, I had to find some support from The United Methodist Church in which I pastored. The beginnings of this new Christian community occurred because of my work of preaching in the prison in Hernando,

Casa," the Presbyterian organization which supports the Hispanic community, says the following: “the rate of Hispanic immigration both across the U.S., and within Tennessee, continues to climb, estimated at over 53 million nationwide and as high as 150,000 in the Memphis/Shelby County area.” See Su Casa, “Hispanic Immigration in Memphis,” accessed October 29, 2016, <http://sucasamemphis.org/about-us/>.

⁴⁷ According to research documented on the "Memphis Poverty Fact Sheet" produced by Memphis University, in the Memphis area the poorest population is the Hispanic/Latino (which include indigenous) with 45.5% followed by African Americans with 34.4%; the Asian population represents 26.7% and the white population represents 14.5%. See Elena Delavega “2015 Memphis Poverty Fact Sheet (Data from 2014 ACS),” accessed April 17, 2017, <http://www.memphis.edu/socialwork/pdfs/20152povertyfactsheetwebversion.pdf>.

Mississippi in 2010. There, an immigrant facing deportation gave me the address of an apartment complex in Memphis, Tennessee and asked me to meet two families who requested weekly prayer in their homes. When I reported my missionary outreach work to my superintendent, he reminded me that I belonged to the Methodist Annual Conference in Mississippi, and pointed out that the Memphis jurisdiction belonged to another Methodist Conference; therefore, my district did not support the new mission in Memphis, Tennessee and my cooperation with the new mission became simply my own voluntary responsibility.

Thanks to the persistence of missionary work in Memphis, the group grew fast the following year, and then I applied for space in one of the Methodist churches in the Memphis area. After consultations with different churches and pastors in Memphis, I then had to make appointments with superintendents belonging to the neighboring districts of the Conferences of Mississippi and Memphis, TN (the District of Asbury and McKendree in Memphis Tennessee, and the Senatobia District in Mississippi) to work in a coordinated manner to advance the new mission. Between 2011 and 2012, the "El Redentor" Mission was assigned a physical location in Asbury United Methodist Church. Rev. Luz Campos was appointed in 2013 as its part-time Pastor, and I continued supporting the mission as a volunteer. In order to formalize the presence of a new Indigenous Maya/Mam mission, in 2014 Rev. Luz Campos was officially appointed as full-time pastor of "El Redentor" Mission. Also, I was relocated to the Conference of Memphis and appointed as Outreach Ministries pastor in the new "Southeast Memphis Cooperative Parish United Methodist Church"; the indigenous Maya/Mam "El Redentor"

Mission became part of the Southeast Memphis Cooperative Parish in 2014, together with Aldersgate United Methodist Church and Asbury United Methodist Church.

2.2.2 Mission to be a Part of the Parish

The parish was created in June 2014 with two churches of Caucasian membership and a Hispanic Mission composed mostly of Maya/Mam indigenous people originally from Guatemala. The former churches are Aldersgate UMC, which is sixty years old, and Asbury UMC, fifty years old, the latter the four-year-old El Redentor United Methodist Church. When the Maya/Mam community arrived in 2012, the two English-speaking congregations had long been established, practicing their routine rituals and weekly gatherings. Throughout their existence, these two churches had had only white pastors. Though a number of African-Americans attend frequently, they are not part of the governing or leadership bodies of the two churches. The district and church leaders agreed to the Methodist Maya/Mam community's request in 2011 for room to worship at Asbury Church. At first, they regarded the Maya/Mam community simply as an external group looking for a meeting place. In June 2014, the District decided to merge Asbury, Aldersgate, and El Redentor into one parish. That year, Asbury had its first African-American pastor. I was officially appointed as pastor for Outreach Ministries of the parish, the African-American pastor was named as senior pastor of the parish, while Rev. Luz Campos, has continued as pastor of El Redentor since she was appointed in 2013.

The presence in the parish of new pastors and non-white members (i.e. Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous people) undoubtedly gave rise to new challenges within a white Methodist church, which was structured and established more than five decades ago. That

idea did not please many of the English-only speaking members and the problems started. Resistance to change was manifested particularly by older Caucasian church members; there were change in the membership and the African-American pastor was removed to another District, in June 2015.

2.2.3 The Most Recent Bureaucratic Changes

June 2016 marked two important changes: The Memphis Conference decided to unify the Mackendree District and Asbury District into one “Metro District,” and the Southeast Memphis Cooperative Parish UMC was dissolved.

The other important factor to consider as we look at the church situation are the broader demographic changes in the city. Memphis is a city of mostly African-Americans that has recently seen a significant increase in the number of Hispanic and indigenous residents from Mexico and Central America. As a result of this influx, white people increasingly are moving to the peripheries of the city. Another important factor to consider is the aging of the Methodist church membership and the consequent decline in attendance at the regular services.

The problems experienced at the church were exacerbated by the fact that the new immigrants are misunderstood. Whites typically misunderstand the Maya/Mam to be "Hispanic /Latino." However, they do not speak English or Spanish, nor do they have ancestors in Italy, Portugal, France, or Spain. Instead, the native language of these people is Mam, and their cultural heritage is Mayan. The Maya/Mam differ from the Hispanic/Latino and English-speaking brotherhood in their language, customs, food,

clothing, and forms of liturgical celebration. These different forms of cultural expression have been ignored either for lack of information or historical neglect.

In June 2015, a change of pastors occurred; a white pastor replaced the only recently appointed pastor of African American origin. Between June 2015 and June 2016, the new pastor tried to keep the Parish together, but problems arose, and the District chose to end this form of Parish in June 2016. The District decided to let the El Redentor church remain independent, and that the white pastor should take over the leadership of the two white churches. The Rev. Luz Campos continued to lead the work of El Redentor, where most members are of Mayan/Mam origin, and space was created for me for a Hispanic⁴⁸ Ministry in which 80% of my work would be as a missionary in the District and 20 % dedicated to serving the Hispanic work in the Aldersgate UMC, which has a predominantly Caucasian church membership.

It is necessary to mention the evolution of the relationship between the White church and the indigenous church in the five years since the El Redentor/Redeemer United Methodist Church was founded. Over the past four years, relations between the Asbury Church and El Redentor have been more or less cordial: the congregations

⁴⁸ As we said before, the Hispanic/Latino population in Shelby County officially consists of 6.1% of the total population; however, there is no population census of the indigenous community. Aldersgate UMC is the sponsor of Willow Oaks Elementary School which has 663 students, most of whom are of African American origin. Similar to the official census, we do not have data on the percentage of the population of indigenous children. Nevertheless, due to the presence of indigenous families in activities that the church has carried out with Willow Oak Elementary School, we can roughly calculate that 10-15% of the students are of indigenous origins.

occasionally ate together;⁴⁹ Asbury taught Sunday School to all Maya/Mam children and gave them the sacrament of Communion; and the children in turn served as acolytes at Asbury. In addition, Rev. Luz Campos, the Council, and the trustees of El Redentor, were invited to participate in all the regular meetings of Asbury's administrative bodies, to ensure smooth coordination between the two congregations. Meanwhile, El Redentor, which had begun as a mission, offered to take up a love offering to give to Asbury to cover the costs of cleaning and building maintenance. Asbury welcomed that gesture of economic cooperation. In addition, Pastor Luz Campos suggested that the churches hold a joint annual Flea Market, and that proposal also was accepted by Asbury. The Flea Market project continues to this day, although El Redentor is no longer invited to be the organizer.

On the other hand, El Redentor began to celebrate the Festival of Cultures in the month of October to give "Columbus Day" an alternative meaning and to take advantage of the United States Hispanic Heritage Month celebration that runs from September 15 to October 15; the celebration of the Festival of Cultures also managed to coincide with World Communion Sunday, which was officially adopted by The United Methodist Church. The activities of this special day are divided into two parts: First, there is a special service and World Communion, followed by food and special presentations. During the Special Worship of World Communion Sunday, the church invites all those from other cultures to bring greetings and say a word of welcome in their original

⁴⁹ This practice, called "potluck dinner" by Asbury folks, still continues today.

languages, an appropriate sermon is preached, and the Holy Communion is shared with all present, including children.

For the second part of the Festival of Cultures, every Maya/Mam family brings special Guatemalan food, and music. Men and women wear or show off their colorful Indigenous clothes, sing the National Anthem of Guatemala, and dance to the beat of the marimba. As an attempt to better communicate with other communities, they write the information in English and Spanish in colorful displays. Meanwhile, the Anglo brothers and sisters prepare a great number of hamburgers and hotdogs for all participants and also participate in the cultural performances.

Today, with the inclusion of Hondurans, Mexicans, Costa Ricans, Peruvians, African refugees, and people of other nationalities, the Festival has enriched its goals, but participants must not forget that originally this activity was planned exclusively for the Maya/Mam to have a space to dialogue and fellowship with White brothers and sisters.

Another important fact is that El Redentor reached an agreement with the Consulate of Guatemala in Atlanta to become the annual host of the realization of the “Mobile Consulate.”⁵⁰ El Redentor asked permission from Asbury for this important activity, at which the consulate serves more than a thousand people twice a year. Asbury accepted the proposal and asked to be part of this project.

⁵⁰ The Guatemalan “Mobile Consulate” consists of the Guatemalan Consulate, closest to the State of Tennessee, mobilizes twice a year toward the city of Memphis to serve all guatemalans who need to carry out procedures of National Passport, to grant consular Identity Card and registration of children born in the United States, among other services.

The Asbury-El Redentor relationship took an unexpected turn between July 2015 and July 2016 when Asbury suddenly decided not to invite Rev. Luz Campos and lay leaders to the normal meetings of the Council and Trustees; Asbury also refused to help continue teaching Sunday School and offering the sacrament of holy communion to the children of El Redentor.⁵¹

Subsequently, Asbury forced El Redentor to sign a lease for use of the building. The initial proposal for a contract to be signed by El Redentor was immediately rejected by the representatives of El Redentor at a meeting of the Trustees. They argued that according to the *Book of Discipline* a Methodist church cannot rent space to another Methodist Church; so Asbury simply changed the language of the contract document from "Rent" to "in lieu of rent." Thus, Asbury became the "landlord" and El Redentor a "tenant" instead of a partner in ministry. Thus, relations between the two churches became conflictive; instead of being a host mission in brotherhood and sharing precious moments of fellowship and a rich intercultural relationship, now El Redentor became a stranger, a tenant renting a place to practice their faith in Christ in a strange country. This incident provoked serious psychological and spiritual tension between the undocumented Maya/Mam immigrant membership and they fled, scared, thinking Asbury would call the police or the immigration officers if they refused to sign the contract. Finally, they were forced to consult with the District Superintendent, who advised that they sign the lease.⁵²

⁵¹ Regardless of the differences and disagreements, individual member from Asbury offered to help with teaching the class for children 0-4 years and 8-12 years old.

⁵² It is probable that this situation was new for the District and so it did not want to have more discussion with the Asbury church at that particular time. However, in subsequent conversations with the

The civil rights struggle that African-American brothers and sisters are still pursuing within the social and religious political history of this country is well-known, but I sincerely believe that the Anglo Methodist community was not prepared to receive people from other cultures. At this point they do not understand the Hispanic/Latino well, and the understanding towards Indigenous is lesser. But, not everything is negative in the current balance of intercultural relations between these two cultures. I believe that both indigenous and whites have had during these years a true school of learning. Both, the Mississippi Annual Conference and the Annual Memphis Conference, have welcomed my wife and I with open arms to work on the Lord's work with Hispanic/Latino (and indigenous) ministries. We have also seen the friendship and familiarity that is emerging between some indigenous and white families. As for the pastors of the old parish (El Redentor, Aldersgate, and Asbury), the climate continues to be tense. However, there are evident efforts of cordiality and attempts to coordinate the work better.

We hope that the bureaucratic changes will continue to be made for the good of a multicultural United Methodist Church that may later receive vulnerable brothers and sisters such as those who are fleeing the wars and miseries of the Middle East.

In order to understand the current situation of the Maya/Mam people within the United Methodist Church it is paramount to turn to the historical process that has formed them as indigenous people with a rich historical legacy, and see what life was like for

District Superintendent, we learned that the District wants to further advance the idea of having multicultural churches. It sounds easy to tackle this challenge in theory, but in practice things become harder and challenging to face.

them before they arrived in the United States and how their situation outside of the church.

2.3 Social and Economic Situation

In this section, I analyze the issues of neo-colonization, destruction of the environment, and the role of transnational companies and how they have influenced the plundering of natural resources of third world countries. This is necessary to understand neo-colonialization and the dependency of the countries to the south of the United States. That situation is what prompted or even forced the arrival of the Indigenous contingent in the United States as “economic refugees” and “ecological refugees.” As for the current social reality, it is important to note that this population has been literally expelled from their ancestral territories through international programs like the North American Free Trade Agreement or NAFTA, as I will explain later. Many other situations have forced migration of the modern descendants of the Maya culture, whose geographical and cultural influence once extended to Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras.

During my thirteen years of working in the United States, with the Hispanic immigrant community and the Indigenous of Mexico and Central America, many brothers and sisters have (lay an clerk persons) asked me questions. Among the most common are:

- Why are Hispanics in this country without documents?
- What are the reasons that drive immigrants to travel to the United States?

- Why do they not go to the US Embassy in their home countries and apply for a visa?
- Why do you transport immigrants in your vehicle? That can be dangerous; you can be charged as a "coyote" (smuggler), and put yourself at risk of being deported.
- Why do immigrants not go to the Social Security office to ask for their own Social Security cards? It is easy.
- When I tell them I am an immigrant from Peru, they ask me: In what part of Mexico is Peru located?

Some of these questions are innocent and even jocular, but other questions are serious and show real concern to know the reason that has prompted hundreds of thousands of people to leave their countries of origin. It is, therefore, important to describe the current social and economic situation that has led to the displacement of millions of people to the north, even knowing that it is a path of many difficulties and dangers to the integrity of the immigrants.

Eduardo Galeano describes the misery from which these immigrants try to escape with the following statement: "The human murder by poverty in Latin America is secret; every year, without making a sound, three Hiroshima bombs explode over communities that have become accustomed to suffering with clenched teeth."⁵³

2.3.1 From the Stone Age to the Cyber Age: "Culture shock"

⁵³ Galeano, 5, Kindle.

Unlike the mestizo population of Central America and Mexico, indigenous people are marginalized within their own countries because they are indigenous. So in traveling to the the United States they have to experience in a very short period of time things to which others have become acclimated over many decades and centuries. First, the Maya/Mam come from a social context that still belongs to the age of their Mayan ancestors, in terms of traditions, language, dress, food, agriculture, and community social relations. Second, they encountered the new reality of Spanish-speaking mestizos of Guatemala seeking ways to help them out of their communities and to help them face the new realities outside their communities. Third, they had to face up to the Spanish-speaking mestizos of Guatemala (called "ladinos"), who historically have oppressed them, but at the same time they have had to pay those mestizos to help them migrate from their communities of origin to other cities and abroad.⁵⁴ Fourth, they had to break through the political barriers of other countries' borders, other customs, other cultures and languages, and they had to contact a "coyote" to help them get false identities to cross borders and travel to the north smoothly. Fourth, many arrive in the United States only to face another reality that is even more strange and unfamiliar, in terms of language,

⁵⁴ Through this connection of "helping" the Maya/Mam exodus, the mestizos take advantage of them, charging exorbitant costs to bring them to the United States; they take their money without giving them any guarantee that they will actually bring them to the U.S., and indeed many mestizos simply abandon the Indians in the desert. On other occasions, I have heard the testimony of Indians who have paid a lot of money to be contacted by mestizos' representatives of the large American companies that enlist people to plant pine trees. Because these representatives often ask for an initial registration fee of \$400 or more, to do so the Indians have to mortgage their land or houses. In addition, the indigenous have to pay immigration and passport expenses and the payment of their airplane tickets. Once in the United States, the employer typically pays them minimum wage, charges them rent for Company-owned housing, gives or sells them inadequate food (or no food at all), and confiscates their passports so that they cannot remain in the country and immigrate properly.

customs, economy, and social life. Many times, they undergo all of these changes within the span of a month. We might say that within a month, the Indigenous Maya/Mam pass "from the stone age to the cybernetic era of the twenty-first century."

Referring to the migration of peasants and Mexican indigenous, Velasquez

Alvarado writes:

85% of Mexicans who migrate "north" are rural peasants and/or part of the indigenous population. People emigrate from cities mostly with only a basic or secondary education, far fewer as highly qualified professionals. The structural deficiencies in language proficiency are huge. It puts limitations on compatriots to have low performance in the indigenous language, Spanish, and consequently in the English national language--without all the social, human, and cultural conflicts this implies once emigrants live in the United States of America.⁵⁵

I call these sudden changes among immigrants "culture shock." This reminds me of a move I made in my early childhood to a primary school in Peru, where as a seven-year-old I had to learn to speak Spanish in the midst of bullying teachers and cruel children, because my mother and my grandparents migrated from my village to another region where my original Quechua language is not spoken. So, it is not easy to describe the depths of this "culture shock," which in the worst cases causes depression and impotence before the new reality we face.

2.3.2 From Caravels to NAFTA: The Current Situation

Recently, Hispanic Methodist Bishop Minerva Carcaño was imprisoned for having participated with Hispanics in a public demonstration in which participants

⁵⁵ María Ester Alvarado G. y Patricia Velásquez M. "El Español de las Mayorías y Minorías en México: 'Crónica de Una Política de la Enseñanza del Español,'" in Manuel Perez Gutierrez and José Coloma Maestre, eds., *El Español Lengua del Mestizaje y la Interculturalidad* (Madrid: 2003), 117-118.

demanded rights and justice for the millions of undocumented immigrants living in anxiety in the United States. Bishop Carcaño testified before the House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security: "Immigrants want to stay home. They're not able to stay home, because we've undermined their economies. We have raped their lands."⁵⁶

The complaint of the Methodist bishop carries a more complex truth that has to do with the current neo-colonialism and hegemony exercised by the North American empire, which treats Latin American countries with contempt, as if they were "minors," as we are referred to in this quotation from Noam Chomsky, referring to the statements of Presidents Wilson and William Howard Taft:

[T]he day is not far distant [when] the whole hemisphere will be ours in fact as, by virtue of our superiority of race, it already is morally." Latin Americans may not understand it, the Wilson administration added, but that's because "they are naughty children who are exercising all the privileges and rights of grown-ups" and require "a stiff hand, an authoritative hand."⁵⁷

That attitude of being a superior race, whose authoritarian hand the United States applied to our countries of Abia Yala, has caused many problems. So prostrated in poverty are our countries that they literally expel their populations, which then leave their beloved and familiar hometowns in search of a better future for their families. So desperate are these families that they make the journey despite the enormous dangers that

⁵⁶ See Methodist Bishop Minerva Carcaño's affirmation in Melany Hunter, "Immigration Advocate Blames US for Flood of Illegals: 'We Have Raped Their Lands,'" accessed October 21, 2016, <http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/melanie-hunter/immigration-advocate-immigrants-want-stay-home-we-have-raped-their-lands>.

⁵⁷ Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival, America's Quest for Global Dominance* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003), 1050, Kindle.

face them en route and the lack of welcome and uncertainty they will find if they make it to the U.S.

The earlier affirmation of Bishop Carcaño is corroborated by David Bacon, who stated that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has accelerated the forced migration of the inhabitants of southern countries to the United States. He notes that, “In Latin America, economic reforms promoted by the U.S. government through trade agreements and International financial institutions displace workers, from miners to coffee pickers, who join a huge flood of labor moving north.”⁵⁸

This right to stay at home is closely linked to the environmental vocation that the Indigenous defend. When the Oaxacan Indigenous brother, Aldo Gonzales referred to the issue of migration, and urged us not to lose sight of our connection with Mother Earth, to speaks against contamination by transgenic seeds and protection of native seeds, he was aware of the effect of globalization on current indigenous life. He said: “We want to talk about the right to remain at home, the right not to migrate. We want to protect our native seeds to remain in our land. We never expected that globalization [would come] so close to the communities that were so far removed from Western culture.”⁵⁹

But, how has NAFTA has affected the acceleration of migration northward?

Bacon explains this situation as follows:

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) of 1994 vigorously endorsed by the political leaders of the United States, Mexico and Canada, was

⁵⁸ David Bacon, *Illegal People: How Globalization Creates Migration and Criminalizes Immigrants* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008), 67.

⁵⁹ David Bacon, *El derecho a quedarse en casa: Cómo las políticas de Estados Unidos influyen en la migración mexicana* (Mexico City: Grupo Planeta, 2015), 1952, Kindle.

supposed to fix the problem of the undocumented Mexican migration into the United States ... The idea was that economic development in Mexico would be enhanced under NAFTA and that development would create Jobs in Mexico, encouraging Mexicans to stay home... NAFTA as a method of reducing undocumented migration failed miserably ... NAFTA has not resulted in increased employment opportunities in Mexico for Mexican workers.⁶⁰

2.3.3 Mining

Another of the serious problems affecting communities in Guatemala Mames are connected to mining. Especially affected are the communities of San Miguel and Sipacapa, where the Marlin mine run by the Montana-Goldcorp Company is established in the Department of San Marcos to extract gold and silver. According to the report of the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations, the mining concession was granted without prior consultation with affected communities and without respecting Convention 169 of the ILO,⁶¹ which requires that projects in communities should be executed only after consultation with and the approval of indigenous peoples. Furthermore, no agreements were signed in 1995 under the peace agreement between the government and the Guatemalan guerrilla, where Decree 52-2005 agreement demands that they

Promote legal and institutional reforms, facilitate, regulate and guarantee such participation", "with the participation of representatives of indigenous organizations," including the establishment of "mandatory [m]echanisms consultation with indigenous peoples whenever legislative and administrative measures are foreseen.⁶²

⁶⁰ Bill On Hing, *Ethical Borders, NAFTA, Globalization, and Mexican Migration* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 9.

⁶¹ The International Labour Organization (ILO) "Convention No. 169" concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, was created in 1989 and ratified by the State of Guatemala in 1996.

⁶² See the United Nations document in its Spanish edition: United Nations, "Informe del Relator Especial de Naciones Unidas sobre los derechos de los pueblos indígenas, James Anaya, Adición:

In this case, the Rapporteur found a "lack of respect for the rights of indigenous peoples" and that "it is clear that there are limitations in the study of initial environmental impact of the company resulting from the shortcomings in Guatemalan legislation." This has not only affected the health of the population, but has had a social and cultural impact on indigenous communities.⁶³ As Otilio Jimenez says about the impact of the mining activity in that Maya/Mam area:

In reality, there has been no improvement in the economy of the municipality. For Mames, the mining history is a history of land expropriation and displacement of people from their ancestral lands. The poorest and most vulnerable sectors of society have been the Mam people and they have been the hardest hit in the years while the mine has operated on their lands.⁶⁴

The Guatemalan government has imposed mining arbitrarily on the ancestral lands of the Maya people; the royalties left by mining companies average the ridiculously small sum of 1%.⁶⁵ The report of the document on mining in Guatemala explains:

Observaciones sobre la situación de los derechos de los pueblos indígenas de Guatemala en relación con los proyectos extractivos, y otro tipo de proyectos, en sus territorios tradicionales," accessed October 20, 2016, http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/indigenous/rapporteur/docs/GuatemalaIP16th_AUV.pdf.

⁶³ See the United Nations document: "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, James Anaya" and its addendum, "Preliminary note on the application of the principle of consultation with indigenous peoples in Guatemala and the case of the Marlin mine," accessed October 10, 2016, http://www.unsr.jamesanaya.org/docs/special/2010_special_guatemala_preliminary_note_en.pdf.

⁶⁴ Jiménez, 85-86.

⁶⁵ See Instituto Centroamericano de Estudios Fiscales, *La Minería en Guatemala: Realidad y Desafíos frente a la Democracia y el Desarrollo* (Guatemala City: Instituto Centroamericano de Estudios Fiscales, 2014), 54.

In Bolivia, where there is now an indigenous government with an indigenous president, things are very different: "Between taxes and royalties, the state takes up to 11% of the value of mineral sold." See Fundación Jubileo and Brot für Die Welt-Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst, *Informe sobre Normativa Minera en Bolivia* (La Paz: 2013), 21.

The study reveals that in the case of Guatemalan if the metal mining industry continues in the current trend, an incremental pressure will affect the sector, limiting space for debate, negotiation and organization among social actors; following an increase in human right violations and disregard of collective Indigenous Peoples rights. State responses are limited given the lack of congruent regulations, characterized by the fragile legal and institutional environmental framework, which in turn will increase levels of uncertainty and risks.⁶⁶

In western Guatemala, mines such as "Lilies" and "Anabella" operate, privately owned by "Minas de Guatemala S.A.". However, the ephemeral dream of the prosperity of the Maya/Mam in Guatemala has not been enough to stop the migration of their people to places where they can find a decent job to support themselves and their family.

2.4 Maya/Mam Immigrants: A People in Motion or in Forced Migration

As mentioned earlier, the Maya/Mam have a tradition of migration, since losing wars with the Olmecs, the Cakchiquels, the Kiches, and the Spanish. Then they were removed from Chimaltenango, Totonicapan to the west of Xelajú of Guatemala and Chiapas, which is now located in southern Mexico. Then they got used to working seasonally, because their local subsistence economy of corn and beans planted on their small farms did not allow them to cover the necessities of family life. By territorial division and a political agreement of 1882, in addition to Chiapas and Soconusco, Guatemala gave Mexico part of the District of Mariscal. Among other things, the abuse that the Maya/Mam population was receiving on both sides of the border, caused constant internal migration; it seems as if Maya/Mam on the Mexican side bore the brunt of this, as Quintana and Rosales clarify:

⁶⁶ Ibid., 5.

[T]he Mam were considered second-class Mexicans; efforts were made to strip them of their ethnic identity by phasing out the use of their language, their customs, their traditions, their worldview and their religion through systematic campaigns of national integration, in order to differentiate them from the Guatemalan Mames and under threats of deportation, imprisonment and execution.⁶⁷

As well as the integration and discriminatory policies of both countries, another factor influencing internal migration was the eruption of the Santa Maria volcano in Guatemala in 1902.⁶⁸

Rigoberta Menchú Tum, 1992 Nobel Peace Prize winner from Guatemala and of Maya/Kiché origin, describes clearly the job of migrants on large cotton and coffee farms. She says that from when she was very young, her parents used to move from the Guatemalan highlands to the coast so they could buy necessities for the family. Rigoberta says they regularly picked cotton and coffee, usually with miserable salaries; the barracks where they lived had precarious conditions, without bathrooms, without mosquito nets, and the foremen took advantage of the adult workforce and indigenous children.⁶⁹

This practice of migration because of work has been practiced since ancient times between the Mam of Guatemala and Mexico. It continues today along the southern border of the United States, for the same reasons of people looking to improve the incomes and standard of living of their families.

Forced migration

⁶⁷ Quintana and Rosales, 15.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 14.

⁶⁹ Elizaberth Burgos, *Me Llamo Rigoberta Menchú y Así Me Nació la Conciencia* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI Editores, 2007), 42-48.

The massive forced migration from Central America to the United States has turned Maya/Mam indigenous and others into “economic refugees”⁷⁰ because of the abovementioned economic impoverishment they are suffering. However, NAFTA and the accompanying deterioration of the habitat of these peoples clearly shows us that they have also become “environmental refugees” because they have been affected by the destruction of their environment by pollution and dispossession of their lands by mining companies.⁷¹ They have the “right to remain in their homes”, and yet they have gradually been losing their rights because of the policies of neocolonial northern countries, especially the United States and Canada.

In short, the current socio-economic situation that gives rise to the exodus of the Mayan/Mam people is closely related to the aftermath of colonial subjugation and to modern forms of transnational exploitation.

2.5 Indigenous Invisibilization

Another key aspect that we see in this "busy intersection" is the social invisibility that indigenous peoples in the Diaspora have been suffering. Countries with an indigenous majority have tried to fossilize and ignore the leading role that indigenous

⁷⁰ As well, the globalizationalization of the economy produced economic refugees in Mexico. See Bill Ong Hing, *Ethical Borders: NAFTA, Globalization, and Mexican Migration* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 166.

⁷¹ Also, as Aldo Gonzales explains: "We feel threatened and harassed, especially when we see the murders of opponents to the mines in Central America, Chiapas or even here in Oaxaca. A community here staged a sit-in opposing the mine, and the government summoned thousands of police to arrest the protesters." See David Bacon, *El derecho a quedarse en casa*, 1985, Kindle.

peoples play.⁷² The act of relegating the native files to the past is to deny the indigenous incorporation into a community as an active subject of the present. Further, that act aims to deny their customary rights, and prevents us from teaming up as a global brother and sister with whom we can build the future together.

In the case of the Maya/Mam, that invisibilization started in their own country of origin according to the myth that five hundred years ago all indigenous people either disappeared or were completely assimilated. Using such deceitfulness, those in power have called Maya/Mam “peasants,” or in the argot of the atheistic Marxist Latin American left, they were simply considered as a minority population assimilated into the “proletarian class.”⁷³ Their rich ethnic specificities including their spirituality were ignored. In the heat of the Cold War, many Guatemalan indigenous joined the armed struggle. Despite that service to country, they are not recognized as indigenous people who claim their ancient space, but in the late 1980s were treated only as "peasants," who served as "cannon fodder" in the fight of guerrillas against the oppressive government of Guatemala.⁷⁴

⁷² Some have not hesitated to describe the Indian as a sign of the "backwardness" of some countries compared with the so-called developing countries.

⁷³ Anthropologists and sociologists have passionately discussed the theme of ethnicity and class. Diaz-Polanco tries to clarify terminologies in his article: Héctor Díaz-Polanco, “Etnia, clase y cuestión nacional,” Ponencia presentada al XIV Congreso Latinoamericano de Sociología, que tuvo lugar del 5 al 9 de octubre de 1981, accessed March 29, <http://www.cuadernospoliticos.unam.mx/cuadernos/contenido/CP.30/30.6HectorDiaz.pdf>.

⁷⁴ The conceptual dichotomy between capitalism and socialism, that gave no space to indigenous thought, is explained in José Alejos García, ed., *Dialogando Alteridades: identidades y poder en Guatemala* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México 2006), 72.

Likewise, the guerrilla movement "Sendero Luminoso" in Peru, which existed at the same time as the Guatemalan guerrilla, included in its ranks the Quechua and Ashaninka Indians, but did not take into

An example of peasantization of the Indigenous was the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize winner Maya/Kiché Rigoberta Menchu Tum, who joined the peasant movement "Comité de Unidad Campesina" (CUC),⁷⁵ which was class-oriented but showed solidarity with the indigenous cause. One hears reports that the CUC collaborated with individual lobbying for Menchú to win the Nobel Peace Prize, which occurred on the 500-year anniversary of the European invasion of Abia Yala, in 1992.⁷⁶

There is no option to identify oneself as of Abia Yalan indigenous racial origin in medical forms or other official documents.⁷⁷ It seems that there is a sinister conspiracy dedicated to hiding this reality. The Indigenous has been invisible under the cloak of miscegenation; the indigenous presence has been dissipated under the confused identity of "Hispanic/Latino" which is not at all the same, as explained earlier.

account the idiosyncrasy of the Peruvian natives. "Sendero Luminoso" claimed Maoist political postulates, which respond to a different reality, without regard to the cosmovision and indigenous spirituality. In fact, as in Guatemala, in Peru many indigenous villages were razed by the army and guerrillas during that period.

Many indigenous organizations during the period of the Cold War were under the paternalism of the movements of the Latin American left. See Alberto Cruz, *Pueblos Originarios en América, Guía Introductoria de su Situación* (Pamplona: Aldea Alternatiba Desarrollo, 2010), 20.

⁷⁵ CUC means "Peasant Unity Committee" in English.

⁷⁶ A documentary report of the CUC records the date Rigoberta Menchú left this organization: "In 1994 the Fourth National Assembly of the CUC took place in the town hall of Solola. Rigoberta Menchu in this assembly formally renounced the CUC and became a member of honor." See the document "Lucha, Resistencia e Historia," accessed October 20, 2016, <https://foodfirst.org/pueblos-indigenas-de-guatemala-rechazan-protocolo-de-nagoya/>. Right now, the Nobel Peace Prize winner of 1992, Maya/Quiché Rigoberta Menchu Tum, continues working for the indigenous cause through the foundation that bears her name. See "Fundación Rigoberta Menchú," accessed October 20, 2016, <http://www.frmt.org/en/>.

⁷⁷ The only box in which the indigenous Abia Yala could identify as such can be found in the usual questions that the Immigration and Naturalization Service asks, when you opt for citizenship of the United States. Thus, there is a section where you can identify as "Native American" born in any country in Abia Yala although not born in the United States.

In the thoughtless concept of some United States citizens, all who speak Spanish are considered "Mexican"; others are simply considered Hispanic/Latino. In general, this has tended to homogenize society under some "universal" values; this way of homogenizing societies has allowed our human specificities to become more and more invisible, especially those of indigenous peoples like the Maya/Mam.

2.6 Education

Secular education in Guatemala functions as a means of acculturation of the indigenous. Odilio Jimenez points out this issue by one example in the community of Ixtahuacán, where the Catholic Maryknoll brothers founded the *Ajkman* (God the Father, in the Mam language) school in 1952, which was later changed to "School San Idelfonso" in honor of the patron saint of the city. This private school, run by religious, eventually produced "changes" among their charges at cultural, religious, and identity levels. Jimenez has underlined the attitude and participation of the Catholic Church in this: "As part of the Catholic re-colonization, the Maryknoll create cooperatives, clinics and schools."⁷⁸

It should be noted that the Maya/Mam members of the El Redentor United Methodist Church, have had an average of only three years of school education; for that reason, many of them write their names and use numbers with great difficulty. This situation makes it highly challenging for them to obtain jobs with good remuneration both in Guatemala and here in the United States

⁷⁸ Jiménez, 139-140.

2.7 Discrimination

The Maya/Mam suffer discrimination in their original country and also here in the United States. In Guatemala, they are relegated to the lowest echelons in the social structure, whether that be in matters of health or education. There is a great deal of difference in how *Ladino* (mestizo) and Indians are treated. The words "vos" (hey you) "mijito/a" (hear, my son/daughter) are used to address indigenous, while to address a ladino/na one says "you" (you) Mister or Mrs or Miss. The word "Indian/indigenous" is pejorative; it is a synonym for a person with mental retardation, a misfit, one with little knowledge of the rules of civilization and a huge inability to perform as a normal person of our times.

On almost all the trips that I made in Guatemala, I have used the public bus service. Doing so, I notice the difference in how people are treated, specifically how courteously ladino people are treated compared to those who wear indigenous dress.

Yet things are not that different in the United States. If in Guatemala one fights against the marginalization by Ladinos, in the United States discriminations are far greater. Maya/Man are mistreated at home and in their workplaces by Asians, African-Americans,⁷⁹ Caucasians, and ladinos (mestizos) from other countries who speak Spanish. We have seen with great sadness that many ladinos have called El Redentor "the church of the *guatemalitos*" or "the church of the *guatemalas*;" some ladino families from

⁷⁹ Without any litigation mediator, many Indigenous have been killed in their own homes at the hands of the African-American population, because they have realized that many Indigenous do not have bank accounts and therefore tend to carry money on them or keep it in their homes, in addition to being unarmed.

Guatemala and other countries who have approached the church, have left quickly as soon as they have realized that most families do not speak good Spanish and have different customs. However, a small number of non-indigenous families are assimilating the idiosyncrasies of the Maya/Mam and have decided to remain in the El Redentor church.⁸⁰

During the operation of the Mobile Consulates that El Redentor hosts, we have had to enlist the infrastructure and we have had to serve all citizens of Guatemala who have business to do with Consulate of their country. The normal demeanor of indigenous people is to be calm and try to maintain order, in contrast to the Ladino people, who demand privileges, want to occupy the first places in lines, and do not look out for indigenous people or the most at risk and in need. In addition, the Maya/Mam have very low wages, because their priority is to stay away from people who discriminate against them, even if that means they have to accept poorly paid work.

At the beginning of my work with the Maya/Mam Mission, very early in the morning I received a phone call from a Maya/Mam family; someone was trying to commit suicide and was hanging on the second floor of the apartment where she lived. I went immediately and I noticed with surprise that it was a young woman who came to our home prayer meetings. She had had discussions with her boyfriend and was pregnant.

⁸⁰ In the city of Memphis, some Pentecostal churches are composed of indigenous only, usually have an undocumented ladino pastor who takes control of absolutely all the tithes of the congregation. But the group is not worried about being prey to exploitation; they just want to live with or near relatives or people from the same village or same ethnicity (Chus, Kiches, Mames, etc.) This particular group has gathered in family-religious ghettos is because they do not want to be abused by others, and try to revive the communal sense of their hometowns.

Then I found out that she had been raped by the coyote or trafficker while she walked the desert to reach the United States. The child would not have a father who would welcome the baby and the current relationship of the young woman with her boyfriend was not very good. She was suffering in the aftermath of the rape and had never been treated psychologically for that trauma. This is the situation of almost all immigrant indigenous women. It is common knowledge among immigrants that women have to add to her bill for the coyote the cost of a one-month contraceptive injection.⁸¹

Such discrimination against indigenous women extends to them receiving very little formal education, a situation that then typically means women are treated as servants, and become yet more invisible. Jimenez agrees, and notes that, “a society, where Mames women live, violates their rights as women and as Maya because they not only constantly face unequal relations but also constantly have to fight against the different faces of discrimination, which they live every day.”⁸² Indigenous women, therefore, are the most discriminated against—because they are poor, because they are indigenous, because they are immigrants, and because they are women.

How does this play out in our particular context of Memphis? At this point, a majority African-American and White population surrounds the Maya/Mam community there. The process of insertion within the United Methodist Church of the Metro District

⁸¹ See the Fox News World’s article about the price that Central American women pay in order to get the American Dream, David Agren, “Fearing Rape, Female Migrants Are Taking Birth Control Before Crossing The Border,” Fox News World (April 24, 2014), accessed February 7, 2017, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2014/04/23/fearing-rape-female-migrants-are-taking-birth-control-before-crossing-border.html>.

⁸² Jiménez, 295.

has not been easy for the Maya/Mam people; they occupy the lowest ranks of Memphis, TN society, below the White, Black, Asian, and Hispanic/Latino populations. They are marginalized in their country of origin as well as in this new city where they are today; they are victims of the phenomenon of globalization, they are oppressed and made invisible by the surrounding society, and have been condemned to an exodus towards the United States. This is the crude intersection where the indigenous Maya/Mam of Guatemala tries to survive.

CHAPTER 3

MAYA/MAM SPIRITUALITY

Ancient Mayan texts such as the *Popol Vuh* and The Book of the *Books of Chilam Balam*, as well as books written by current Mayan writers, help us to analyze the theology and Mayan perspective that is relevant still today. The vision of the Mayan world before, during, and after the invasion of this continent continues to be practiced in different Mayan communities today, with some modifications.

Mayan/Mam spirituality transcends cultural and geographical barriers. This is partly something that they have learned to do for their survival. Subconsciously they believe that they are natives of this land and of this continent. While it is true that in Memphis most of them are not engaged in agriculture, according to the *Popol Vuh* the sacred concept that states that they are children of the corn is enough for them to make their way in society with a sense of self-respect. In their hometowns, they defended their lands from Catholic-Roman conquerors. Now in their new reality in the U.S., they face their Protestant conquerors.

In order to analyze the attachment that Maya/Mam have for Mother Earth, this chapter will examine indigenous documents of major international forums that show similar understandings of the earth and of spirituality, not only of the Maya but also of other indigenous peoples from other continents. Proposing a definition of spirituality in

general and specifically of indigenous spirituality will be paramount for this part of the dissertation.

In addition, as an illustration of the practice of Maya/Mam spirituality, this document will include my participant observation experience in Mayan religious ceremonies in different indigenous communities in Guatemala.⁸³ Above all, the emphasis of the Mayan indigenous ritual ceremonies will help us to understand better the religious idiosyncrasies of Maya/Mam immigrants. It will inform the reader of how they live and worship in the city of Memphis, Tennessee.

It is a characteristic of the human being to try to destroy and trample the vanquished, by attempting to erase all traces of their existence. However, it is clear that in the case of the Maya culture, the invaders could not destroy everything. Even the "Holy Inquisition" and successive invasions and looting could not destroy the entire spirituality of a civilization that to this day refuses to be ignored.

Why should it be called spirituality? Would not it be better to call it religion, faith, confession, or the spiritual identity of the Maya? It is common for Christianity to call the spiritual practice of indigenous peoples "popular religiosity" or "shamanism." But these designations assume Christian superiority, the belief that only one religious group has the truth. Some Christian churches try to de-demonize ancestral spiritual practices while other groups try to syncretize them with Eastern religious practices, also many times with some degree of esotericism.

⁸³ These narratives are registered in my other DMin courses at Boston University.

Happily, despite such demonization, ignorance, prejudice, and centuries of oppression, today we can say that all is not lost. For since the 1992 celebration of the fifth centenary of the invasion of Abia Yala, there has been an awakening of Mayan spirituality expressed in rituals, the ordination of young Mayan priests and priestesses, contemporary writings on Mayan religion and spirituality, recovery of sacred sites, and the articulation of various Mayan spirituality organizations.⁸⁴

3.1 What is Spirituality?

I begin by asking, what is spirituality? As Perrin says “it is difficult to provide one general definition of spirituality for all and therefore it is important to keep one’s mind

⁸⁴ After the creation of the Academy of Mayan Languages of Guatemala with Executive Decree n.º 65-90 in 1990, a process of identity construction was followed, which was strengthened with the signing of the Peace Agreements in 1996. As a result, the "Agreement on Identity and Law of Indigenous Peoples" emerged. One of these achievements is represented by the organization "Association of Mayas Priests of Guatemala" ASMG that recovered one of the Mayan sacred places called "La Pedrera," as a corollary of the awakening of Mayan spirituality. See the thesis Ana Lopez Molina, *Maximón y el Cristo de Esquipulas en La Pedrera, zona 6, Ciudad de Guatemala* (Licenciatura en Antropología thesis, Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, Escuela de Historia, 2003), accessed March 2017, http://biblioteca.usac.edu.gt/tesis/14/14_0325.pdf.

The book: Santiago Bastos and Aura Cumes, *Mayanización y vida cotidiana, La Ideología Multicultural en la Sociedad Guatemalteca. Volumen 2, Los Estudios de caso* (Guatemala City: Cholsamaj, 2007), 415, records the recovery of the sacred place La Pedrera by the Mayan priests. Also, the book of José García narrates the political events and events that gave rise to this new situation favorable to the development of Mayan spirituality in Guatemala. José Alejos García, *ibid.*, 65.

Finally, Monterroso and Barrientos summarize the context of the general development of Mayan spirituality in Guatemala as follows: "Archaeological research has defined the origin and development of the ancient Mesoamerican and Maya religion, including the conception of sacred sites, which have a Antiquity of about 4,000 years. Evidence has been recovered, both in geographic locations (caves, springs, mountains, and others) as well as archaeological sites." Matilde de Monterroso, y Tomás Barrientos Quezada, "La Interculturalidad de los Lugares Sagrados: una perspectiva desde los sitios arqueológicos," Guatemala City, 2009, accessed March 27, 2017, http://uvg.edu.gt/publicaciones/revista/volumenes/numero-22/Revista_22_22-28.pdf.

open to the new and the unexpected.”⁸⁵ According to Muenala, a Quichua Indigenous from Ecuador:

The word "spirituality" comes from the Latin word spiritus, "breath," "indomitable strong wind," "freedom." Spirituality is a fundamental part of life, social, family, and communal. It is interpreted as a vital energy, including emotions, feelings and character that shows enthusiasm, will, love, courage and firmness. It's like a wind of release within every soul.⁸⁶

By contrast, David G. Scotchmer says: “By spirituality, I mean that kind of religion that is personal to the way people think, belief, feel and act.”⁸⁷ The “spirituality as such is not necessarily religious, denominational or confessional.”⁸⁸ Practical theology or practical spirituality has to do with the life of the individual, his or her family, and social environment.

I myself have gone through several important stages in my personal spirituality over the years. I was born in a Quechua community of central Peru. The first seven years I lived with my grandparents, away from the bustle of "civilization," nurtured by the dance music and customs of my people. Of course, we had particular spiritual practices and Andean rituals that reflected the agricultural calendar. Then, when I was seven, my mother took me to the village of my grandparents to learn Spanish and to attend school. It was a traumatic time of culture clashes and discrimination because of the language

⁸⁵ Perrin, 27.

⁸⁶ Fabian Muenala, “Espiritualidad Indígena,” Kichua Hatari, accessed December 8, 2015, <http://kichwahatari.org/2015/04/24/espiritualidad-indigena/>.

⁸⁷ Garry H. Gossen and Miguel León-Portilla, eds., *South and Meso American Native Spirituality, From the Cult of the Feathered Serpent to the Theology of Liberation* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997), 497.

⁸⁸ Arthur Holder, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2005), 15.

barrier. The next stage of my life started when my mother became a Christian and began to embrace the Christian faith. After high school, I worked for a year and then I decided to study at the seminary to become a preacher. This process allowed me to migrate from one place to another. In the migration process, I encountered the cultural wealth of different people. Those experiences helped me to appreciate more the cultural values that my grandparents had instilled in me and guided me in the practice of my own spirituality. After a long journey, I have become a citizen of three countries: Peru, Costa Rica, and the United States. Today, I am at a very special intersection: I am working with a group of people who in one way or another are going through experiences very similar to mine. They are indigenous Maya/Mam who had to migrate for economic reasons, violence, and the ecological disaster that nowadays many regions of the planet suffer. They try to live their own radical spirituality in strange lands.

3.2 Exploring the Maya/Mam Spirituality

3.2.1 Connection with Mother Earth and a Sense of Community

One of the main features of Maya/Mam spirituality is the sense of community. This communal sense is not a whim or incidental. Maya/Mam have embodied their knowledge and practices from immemorial time. In the sacred book *Popol Wuj*, we find the origin of this practice when it says: “Arise, all of you, call everyone, let there be not one group, nor two groups, among us who remain behind the others.”⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Adrian Resinos, trans., *El Popol Wuj, Las Antiguas Historias del Quiche* (San José, CR: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana, 1994, 124.

Based on its belief in the *Popol Vuh*, the Maya intertwine the concept of Mother Earth, the cosmos, and the Mayan calendar. The Ixmucané grandmother and her daughter-in-law, Ixquic, who represent Mother Earth and the moon, had the leading role in the development of agriculture based on their femininity in a close relationship with the lunar motion, which led to the creation of the calendar. They started the practice of agriculture and then formed a relationship with the planets and their movements.⁹⁰ That is why to this day, indigenous communities of Abia Yala plant and grow food according to the lunar cycles. We find this same mathematical logic in the relationship of the cycle of the moon to the duration of pregnancy. Indeed, the cycles of the moon are described as a woman at different stages of pregnancy:

The woman is a binomial, Earth and Moon, grandmother and mother ... Ixmucane and Ixquic are the Earth, but also the Moon. The first moon is Ixmucane that aging becomes the last quarter, then Ixquic as a maid is the fourth being pregnant growing and represents the full moon; and finally Ixbalanque, her daughter will be the new moon.⁹¹

Those who are familiar with the sea will know that the lunar motion is related to the tides. Also, Cabrera points out the relationship between the phases of the moon and its direct influence on the agriculture and rain season. The author describes the relation between these natural phenomena and how they appear in Maya writings: "The Maya codices contain their grandmother, Ixmucane. The Moon, pouring water jugs over the

⁹⁰ See Edgar H. Cabrera, *El Calendario Maya, Su Origen y su Filosofía* (San José, CR: Ediciones Liga Maya, 1995), 144-145.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 144.

land, as the Popol Vuh narrates when describing the twins leave the ball game in the underworld, Xibalba."⁹²

We can summarize the Maya/Mam spiritual practice according to research conducted by Otilio Jiménez. The practice of spirituality found in the *Popol Vuh* is very present in all the Mayan identities of Guatemala, Mexico, and El Salvador. The communal character of their spiritual experiences still rules, particularly among Mames. Jiménez summarizes that "community" (*kojb'il* in the Mam language) and *Copal* or incense (*Poom* in the Mam language) are inter-related; one does not exist without the other. Mayan ceremonies are communal and *copal* is always a visible element in the spiritual ceremonies of the people.⁹³

Respect and gratitude are common spiritual and cultural practices in the Maya/Mam community. For example, when I visit their homes for dinner, the first thing they do is to offer me water to wash my hands. I have noticed that after finishing the meal, it is a custom to thank each and every one at the table and those who served in the kitchen, as a sign of respect for the family and the community. This practice is an authentic ritual.

One of the major concerns expressed by the families among whom I minister in Memphis is that they miss seeing a lot of those good habits and customs, especially in and for the children born in the United States. Regarding the respect that is still practiced in the Maya/Mam community of Guatemala, Jiménez explains: "the *ka'wb'il* in Mam is a

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Jiménez, 69.

philosophical principle of life that includes respect for all that exists." He then makes a list of subjects to be respected: respect for the family where they are involved, not only parents of each household, but also midwives and *Ajq'ij* (Mayan priests), as leaders of the people. Then he mentions respect for the community under the *oyaab'in* system (an obligation to cooperate with the community). Another subject to respect, writes Jimenez, is the *Ajaaw* (the cosmic balance), that is, the relationship of the Heart of Heaven and Heart of Earth where human beings take the sacred incense *Poom* or "*copal*," to offer the spirit of the universe and Mother Earth. These ceremonies are done by the *Ajq'ij* (Mayan priest) and *Chman Tnam* (village elders). Then, we have the respect for nature, with ceremonies particularly directed to requesting the land for permission to cultivate, to cut a tree, to hunt animals, or simply to thank God for the corn crop. Finally, Jiménez mentions the respect for institutions and forms of community life or the *oyaab'in*, which essentially refers to the importance of obeying the rules of community life.⁹⁴

3.2.2 Mayan and Practical Ecology

There is a substantial difference between the concept that the Maya Indians and the non-indigenous have about the earth:

Whether Ladino or Spanish colonists and from the point of view of neoliberal capitalism, the land and its inhabitants are no more than an economic resource for exploitation. However, from the Maya's point of view, the land is an indispensable element, it has a cultural and religious significance. As such, it is our mother, is the origin of life and becomes the basis of the identity of the Mames and the Maya people in general.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Ibid., 239-249.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 69.

It is also important to highlight the trinomial corn, beans, and *ayote* (pumpkin) in organic farming practice. To this day, the joint planting of these three foods is practiced because

Corn with his cane serves as a support to beans ... preventing damage due to excessive moisture, the pumpkin with its vine-like stems at ground level protects the soil, prevents the rain from washing the humus and also with its wide leaves stops sunlight, preventing scorching activity."⁹⁶

Indeed, a document of The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, writing about preserving and maintaining soil's fertility, recommends: "If corn, beans and pumpkin are planted: Each crop absorbs the nutrients it needs without competing with others."⁹⁷ This trinomial corn, beans, and pumpkin (which in Mexico is known as *calabaza*, in Costa Rica *ayote* and in Peru is known as *zapallo*) is the perfect organic gardening combination for it so respects the environment. How is this the case? Corn consumes a great deal of nitrate, and so "impoverishes the soil and so thrives on the virgin lands and the wetlands. It can, however, grow on almost all land, provided the land has plenty of humus in it, and has been sufficiently tilled and prepared."⁹⁸ But the bean has an opposite function, for it takes " nitrogen from the air and fixes it in the land, so that it is naturally fertilized."⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Cabrera, 144.

⁹⁷ See Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Departamento de Montes *Ecología y enseñanza rural*, in "El Suelo", accessed October 30, 2016, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/006/w1309s/w1309s04.htm#TopOfPage>.

⁹⁸ *Diccionario histórico, geográfico, estadístico y biográfico del estado Lara* (Barquisimeto: Imprenta y Librería de J. A. Segrestáa., 1883), 330.

⁹⁹ Cabrera, 144.

Indigenous people practice subsistence farming, which means they do not have many surplus products to sell. Therefore, they are against intensive or monoculture farming, as that kind of agricultural practice damages the natural cycle of production of land, allows the proliferation of pests, and impoverishes the earth. In addition to needing pesticides and fertilizers, land that has been exploited leaves depleted and malnourished soil for posterity. Along the same lines, in a document from the Public Ministry of Education of Mexico, we read: “Plantations that manage a single species impoverish the earth. In contrast, we know the value for the land when farmers have corn fields that produce in the same plot and simultaneously different species (corn, pumpkins, beans, green beans).”¹⁰⁰

Indigenous communities tend to diversify the type of crops they plant, and also leave the land fallow periodically so that it can regain its nutrients. Many indigenous communities have strongly opposed the use of transgenic seeds because it ultimately means sacrificing the natural varieties of seeds, and they do not want to suffer the threats of fines by transnational companies (like Monsanto), who own the newly patented seeds. Indigenous peoples are against this project because it threatens food sovereignty, biodiversity, and health.¹⁰¹ For example, while the government of Guatemala ratified the

¹⁰⁰ Luz Chapela and Raquel Ahuja, *La Diversidad cultural y Lingüística* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública, Coordinación General de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe, 2006), 11.

¹⁰¹ The Latin American Information Agency (ALAI) has published a paper on the harmfulness of "transgenic" seeds, which was then delivered to Pope Francisco on April 30, 2014. See "Why GM crops are a threat to farmers, food sovereignty, health, and biodiversity on the planet," accessed October 20, 2016, <http://www.alainet.org/es/active/76040>.

“Nagoya Protocol” to access genetic resources,¹⁰² but indigenous communities rejected the agreement,¹⁰³ because ultimately it favors only the transnational companies.

In the specific case of the Maya/Mam, this connection with Mother Earth is evident. For a long time, I've dealt with Mayan families who have settled in Mississippi and Memphis, TN. We often have discussions regarding the stability that they must offer to their family that has settled in the United States, where they have immigrated. Though they have children, a relatively stable job, and a reasonable salary—in short, are doing what one would expect to provide for their families--they usually share with me that they are building a home or are buying land in Guatemala. They speak particularly eagerly when they share details about their acquisition of land with water sources and what they have begun planting on the land. All the effort put into the work in the United States is for the goal of acquiring some property in Guatemala. I always tell them to be careful about this, reminding them that they have children who speak fluent English and are growing up in a different society, which in the future will likely mean that the children will stay in this country, even if the parents go back. However, time after time, I have received the same kinds of answers: "just in case," they say, or, "in case we are deported," or "we do it because at some point we will return to Guatemala." With

¹⁰² See Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, “Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefit Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity,” accessed October 20, 2016, <https://www.cbd.int/abs/doc/protocol/nagoya-protocol-en.pdf>.

¹⁰³ Articles 10 and 11 of the Convention relating to the participation of indigenous communities are vague and ambiguous. That is why indigenous communities rejected it. See Leonor Hurtado, October 6, 2016, on the Web Page “Food First”, “Pueblos Indigenas de Guatemala Rechazan Protocolo de Nagoya,” Montreal, 2011, accessed October 20, 2016, <https://foodfirst.org/pueblos-indigenas-de-guatemala-rechazan-protocolo-de-nagoya/>.

considerable nostalgia, others tell me: "I'm building a house and buying a corn field (a relatively small piece of land to grow corn or other vegetables) so that my children can work on it." When I hear such statements, I wonder about their rationale for such thoughts and I ask myself, what is happening with this people?

This communitarian action to love Mother Earth is quite common among many different indigenous nationalities in Abia Yala. Yet I think this close relation between humans and Mother Earth is particularly evident in the case of the *Mixteco* Indigenous of Oaxaca, Mexico. During my pastoral work in Mississippi, what happened every year was that when the Mixteco members traveled to Oaxaca to meet their social obligations to the community and to plant the corn, they were obliged to stay at least one year in their community. My concern, in this case, arose because they virtually abandoned their children and wives in Mississippi; their wife was in charge of earning a living and ensuring the sustenance and care of the children for a minimum of one year because the husband could not send money from Mexico to the United States. Clearly for them it is much more important to meet their ancestral social commitments in the indigenous community of Oaxaca, than to fulfill their household and nuclear family responsibilities. This is another example of how the relationship of the indigenous with Mother Earth is very strong. To outsiders it sounds illogical, but it makes sense in the cosmogony of Mixteco indigenous.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ The document about Mixtecos enumerate some reasons for this tradition: "When someone who lives out of town is appointed by the assembly--which often happens with some frequency--he is forced to return the time necessary to fulfill the responsibilities of public servants in positions that were assigned." Taken from: Dubravka Mindek, *Mixtecos, Pueblos Indígenas del México Contemporáneo* (Mexico City: Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas y Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el

Despite knowing the Maya spirituality and knowing the intimate relationship that Maya has with "the Heart of Heaven" and "the Heart of the Earth," I had not realized that they are right always to cling to Mother Earth. When they arrived in the United States, most of them radically changed their jobs. Before, most of them worked in the fields, took care of pets and domestic animals, sowed the cornfield, or went to work as laborers on large coffee or cotton farms. But, in this new situation, they adopt other forms of employment, such as meatpacking, working in the poultry industry, construction, landscaping, roofing, and factory work, among others. Yet they do not forget their relationship with the land.

Regarding the personal interrelation in the community, the United Methodist Church is episcopal (non-congregational); that is to say, the decisions of the church are often taken vertically, either by the bishop, the superintendent, or the pastor. By contrast, the El Redentor congregation of mostly Maya/Mam decided that everything should be done by consensus after a session where the points of view of the entire congregation are taken into account. Because of their system, the entire congregation plans the festival of cultures and other activities, down to the smallest details. It is to say, although they are fully aware that they are not in their own country, they share their culture with a deep sense of community. This is the kind of non-individualistic spirituality that the Maya/Mam practice even when they are far from home.

3.2.3 Other Practices and Customs of Maya/Mam Spirituality

Desarrollo, 2003), 28.

The old documents and modern practices have confirmed a continuous practice of fasting and sexual abstinence on certain special occasions, such as fasting and abstinence before sowing and harvesting.¹⁰⁵ In regards to this the *Popol Vuh* says:

Nine men fasted and nine made sacrifices and burned incense. Thirteen men were fasting, thirteen more made offerings and burned incense before the god Tohil ... They ate only fruit, sapote, jocote and matasanos. They had no tortillas to eat ... also they did not have a woman to sleep with ... They were in the house of God.¹⁰⁶

In addition, the Maya/Mam must keep certain rules of Mayan spirituality. Fasting and sexual abstinence are practiced in order to hunt. They request permission to hunt of the mountain that owns the animals through rites involving the *aq'ij* (Mayan Priest).¹⁰⁷

Quintana and Rosales say that the Maya/Mam practice their rites in the mountains, caves, rivers, lagoons at intersections of roads, in the cornfields, and homes. The observed rites involve births, cleaning (a kind of ritual purification with herbs, alcohol, or water), deaths, hunting, the Day of the Dead on Easter, and family rituals.¹⁰⁸ The Mayan priests, along with the elders of the village, perform these rituals. In some cases, the father, the mother, or the elderly performs the family rituals.

The Maya/Mam spirituality is closely related to the indigenous religious practice of Mayan descendants who now inhabit the Yucatan, Chiapas, and western Guatemala. In many cases, just like the creation of the universe, the Maya spirituality described in the

¹⁰⁵ J. Eric Thompson S., *Historia y Religión de los Mayas* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI Editores, 1998), 218.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 219.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ See Quintana and Rosales, 23-26.

sacred book *Popol Vuh* written by Maya/kiches¹⁰⁹ is the common denominator among the descendants of the Mayas. The *Popol Vuh* is like the Bible of the Maya people.

Based on living among the Maya, especially in Guatemala from 1987 onwards, I must stress that indigenous religions are not of a proselytizing character or pretend to be the only true religion that offers rewards in the hereafter. Instead, for the Maya in general, spirituality is a set of elements of everyday life. In the first continental meeting of African, Indigenous, and Christian theologies and philosophies, the Mayan priest Simeon Taquirá said the following about Mayan spirituality: “Mayan spirituality is central to what makes up the Mayan worldview as astrology, architecture, agriculture, traditional medicine, arts, writing, numbers and calendar.”¹¹⁰

Observing the behavior of the Mayan members in my church, I see that even in the Diaspora, amid the cares of work and assimilation to the new United States culture, they do not forget those details. They are all purely of agricultural tradition. Therefore, in the church and in their daily work they remain connected to their ancestral lands, sending money to buy properties, building their future home, and dreaming of returning some day to their original lands.

3.3 Maya/Mam Resistance: More than Five Hundred Years of Survival

In the historical part of this research, we have seen the enslavement of indigenous religions. The invader used the argument of Sepúlveda, and through the Holy Inquisition

¹⁰⁹ See Quintana and Rosales, 46.

¹¹⁰ *Busqueda de Espacios Para la Vida, I Encuentro Continental de Teologías y Filosofías Afro, Indígena y Cristiana* (Quito: Editorial Abya Yala, 1994), 84.

got rid of the sages and spiritual guides of the Maya, and burned objects and books that represented the religion of the ancient inhabitants of this continent. Unfortunately, today there is likewise a tendency to fossilize the indigenous culture and treat every aspect of indigenous knowledge as if they were archaeological relics of the past.

We cannot be romantic and pretend that indigenous spirituality was intact after the invasion. But the fact remains that despite all the oppression, the spirituality of the conquered peoples remains and thrives. How can this survival of the religious practices of the Maya be explained?

One of the more subtle forms of resistance of indigenous peoples was to hide their old beliefs and traditions by appearing to embrace the new Christian faith. Faced with the threat of extermination and against the demonization of the practice of ancestral faith, the Maya peoples had to find some way to pretend they were assimilating the new dominant faith.

The Maya voluntarily adopted many external forms of Christianity. During the two decades of conquest, they adopted Christian ideas, such as candles, and even added the crucifixion to their repertoire of sacrifices ... Later there was a separation of functions in the religion formed. The separation was clear but at the same time hardly noticeable for the Mayas. The ancient pagan gods of the earth and nature govern the forest and the fields where the Maya works. Christian saints preside over the affairs of the people with the help of the pagan gods, sitting at the four entrances, to protect the people of "all night terror [and] of the arrow that flies in the day."¹¹¹

When the Mayan refer to their own belief in God, they think of the moon and planets governing the seasons for planting and harvesting. They think about health, herbs, grains, and seeds to eat. Their relationship with Mother Earth is strong, as Gómez Diéz

¹¹¹ Thompson, 207-208.

asserts: “While the missionary places great emphasis on the salvation of the soul and spiritual well-being, indigenous religions insist mainly on preserving the cosmic order, for the individual has no value in itself, but as contributors to the maintenance of that order.”¹¹² In another quotation about indigenous religious dissimulation, we find the following reference to Tepeyac, the place of worship of the Virgin of Guadalupe:

This had been the site of a temple dedicated to the mother of the gods, who was called Tonantzin. It bothered Sahagún that the Indians who now came there referred to the Virgin as Tonantzin having learned from their preacher to use this title for Mary; he feared that they were really worshiping an ancient goddess instead of Mary. He identified Tonantzin with the goddess Cihuacoatl (“Woman-Snake”), an ominous being whom the friars found repulsive.¹¹³

The origins of this type of Mariology have been described elsewhere. However, what is striking is that during the first years after the invasion, the Catholic priests realized the religious dissimulation of the indigenous. This tendency is widespread and continues today in different religious practices of indigenous people in Abia Yala. The writer Marilu Rojas, referring to the subtle resistance of indigenous spirituality explains:

They learned (does not mean hypocrisy) to resist by accepting the religion of the conqueror (“yes, but no”). Faced with the threat of death, if you do not accept the conqueror's religion, you die...
“I am coming in just a second:” it may be tomorrow, it may not come.... It is the force of resistance.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Francisco Javier Gómez Díez, *El Impacto de las Religiones Indígenas Americanas en la Teología Misionera del Siglo XVI* (Bilbao: Desclée De brouwer, S.A, 2000), 155.

¹¹³ Gossen and León-Portilla, 207.

¹¹⁴ Marilú Rojas, “About Our Lady of Guadalupe from a perspective of a mujer,” TC897: Our Lady of Guadalupe as a Resource for el Pueblo, (lecture, Mexico Travel Seminar, Comunidad Teológica de México, March 6-15, 2015).

The following are three stories of what I have witnessed in my process of learning about indigenous spirituality. The first two are in regards to my visits to Guatemala; the third one is based on my experience in Mexico in March 2015.

Story 1

In 1987, I traveled to Guatemala with an international indigenous group. We particularly went to see Lake Atitlan and San Jorge de la Laguna. On our way to the village of San Jorge, our guide took us through an almost imperceptible route for people who do not know the area well. We came to a cave. Upon entering, we found a group of people who were starting a Maya ceremony. They kindly invited us to join the ceremonial circle. After approximately two hours, the ceremony ended and the people who had led the ritual were identified as leaders of the Brotherhood of San Jorge. They kindly invited us to follow them to the village where they held a Mass in the Catholic Church to honor the patron of the festivities. Then, our guide explained that this is common in many villages of Guatemala. He shared that indigenous people celebrate their ancestral ceremonies first, and then they meet their obligations to the official Catholic religion; this is particularly so since many of them are key authorities (Cofrades)¹¹⁵ in their communities, and also some of them are Mayan Priests. That was my first contact with the Maya religion.¹¹⁶

Story 2

¹¹⁵ For more information, see the Newspaper La Hora: Celso A. Lara Figueroa, "Las Cofradías Guatemaltecas: El Envoltorio Sacro del Mito," La Hora (Septiembre 20, 2013), accessed October 30, 2016, <http://lahora.gt/hemeroteca-lh/las-cofradias-guatemaltecas-el-envoltorio-sacro-del-mito/>.

¹¹⁶ This experience reminded me the Peruvian Andes Quechua ritual experiences when I was child.

In 1992, the "Second Meeting – Indian Theology Workshop of the Mayan Region" was held in Chichicastenango, Guatemala. Several Catholic Bishops of Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras participated. On that occasion, the Bishop of Chichicastenango, Monsignor Julio Cabrera, invited us on a small religious-cultural tour to special places of the community. First, he led us to the Catholic Church of Chichicastenango; there we saw several Mayan Priests (*Ajq' Ijabs*), performing ceremonies in the atrium and on the steps of the Catholic Church. The priests started a fire and blessed the people who approached them on the steps of the Catholic Church's entrance and courtyard. It was not a Christian rite and the whole ceremony was performed in the Maya/Kiché language. After a while we moved inside the temple, and contemplated the treasures that adorned the altar and the sacred statues that occupied the corners of the temple. We also saw in the pews of the temple several Mayan priests, who were rested briefly after the hard work they had done on the steps and in the temple courtyard.

The Bishop of Chichicastenango, Monsignor Cabrera, who accompanied us on this short tour, was kind enough to give us a historical account of the place. He explained a strange phenomenon: the mound on which the Catholic Church was built in the city of Chichicastenango was originally a sacred mound of worship for the Maya/Kiché. The historical memory of the people Maya/Kiché has not been erased even after more than five centuries of Christianization.

After the visit to the Catholic Church, we went to a sacred mound called Pascual Abaj, where we found another indigenous Maya Priestess (*Ajq' Ijab*) performing another

rite. Upon our arrival, she became visibly angered by the presence of the group, pointed out a place for us to stay, and forbade us from taking photos.¹¹⁷ In this case, she was conducting a ceremony for a couple that had problems at home. The *Ajq' Ijab* killed a chicken as part of the ceremony, and spraying blood on the altar she interceded before God for the faults that the couple had allegedly committed and then she justified before God their inexperience. She asked for wisdom for the young couple in order to refrain from committing the same mistakes again.

Story 3

During my visit to the Virgin of Guadalupe Basilica, in March 2015, while the mestizo people and tourists thronged the shrine hearing the continuous masses to the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe,¹¹⁸ other indigenous groups and humble people stood outside. They came carrying banners, costumes of their own regions, and musical instruments; they performed dances, cheered *Tonantzin*, but they did not enter the Basilica. They continued on their way to the Mount of Tepeyac.¹¹⁹ Dr. Francisco Hernandez interweaves pre-Columbian history and current rites when he underlines the importance of Tepeyac as a center of pilgrimage and worship of the "Dear Little Mother

¹¹⁷ The Priestess did not speak Spanish, but in our group was a nun who spoke perfect *Kiché* and she translated every part of the ceremony for us.

¹¹⁸ On this issue, Marilu Rojas says about what we saw that day: "In the Basilica everything is static. When (the Indians) dance outside (not inside), they scream 'TONANTZIN!'" Marilú Rojas, "About Our Lady of Guadalupe from a perspective of a mujer."

¹¹⁹ In this regard, Dr. Cervera said: "In the cult of Guadalupe there are two ways to celebrate: a) the official church makes a special program, and b) people travel several kilometers and worship and go back home." Raul Cervera Milan S. J., "About Virgen de Guadalupe y religiosidad Popular," TC897: Our Lady of Guadalupe as a Resource for el Pueblo, (lecture, Mexico Travel Seminar, Comunidad Teológica de Mexico, Marzo 11, 2015).

Tonantzin," where pilgrims from afar have walked since ancient times. Their walks lasted a day or a week.¹²⁰ A short distance away, we could see the imposing statue of Pope John Paul II, but the statue was almost lonely, for few pilgrims were revering its presence.

Another facet of the indigenous Maya resistance can be found in a raw internal war in the era of the "cold war," in which the Mayans were the protagonists. However, as Zimmermann says:

Although there are 22 different ethnic groups, it can be seen that within the Mayan trunk is a supra-ethnic cohesion. In addition, the Maya show a stronger ethnic and cultural identity. They also show that they are more developed than other Amerindians. The fact that they were not defeated in the civil war of the last 30 years and the fact that they have a Maya woman as a Nobel Peace Prize winner (Rigoberta Menchú) has helped produce an exceptional self-awareness and self-assertion.¹²¹

The quotation above refers to the indigenous people of Guatemala who were victims of the ethnic cleansing program designed by the military with the help of Washington, under the "razing land" project. Although the indigenous class-oriented adherence to the guerrillas was hardly noticed, there is no doubt that the armed uprising was pursuing a classist claim, and again, the indigenous were located within the proletarian peasantry. The Mayan communities were the ones who bore the brunt of the destruction. Many villages were razed and many Indians were forced into exile. Jimenez sums up the atrocities that were happening in Guatemala for more than three decades:

¹²⁰ Notes taken during my trip to Mexico in the course, on March 6-15, 2015 by Dr. Francisco Hernández, "Seminar: The Influence of Our Lady of Guadalupe on National Identity," TC897: Our Lady of Guadalupe as a Resource for el Pueblo, (lecture, Mexico Travel Seminar Comunidad Teológica de México D.F., Marzo 9, 2015).

¹²¹ Klaus Zimmermann, *Modos de interculturalidad en la educación bilingüe. Reflexiones acerca del caso de Guatemala* (Guatemala City: Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos, 1997).

36 years (1960-1996) of a war were directed to the cultural and social extermination of the Maya people. The various military and paramilitary forces organized by the State took the lives of more than 200,000 people, 83% of whom were Mayan. They caused the displacement of more than a million Mayas, created more than 400 clandestine mass graves, and destroyed more than 600 Mayan communities collectively massacred ... All this happened in a small country of about 11 million people (more than 60% belong to one of 22 Mayan groups) and in an area of 108,000 square kilometers ... this was not the first war that the Mayas [experienced], but it was one of the most destructive because of [its] ethnocide and genocidal nature.¹²²

Seen from an international level, the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Rigoberta Menchu, gave visibility to the Guatemalan indigenous movement. Her constant personal struggle denouncing the atrocities committed by the military helped the Maya matter reach the global court of public opinion, and mitigate the suffering of the indigenous peoples of Guatemala. Surely this also contributed to the resistance of the Maya people.

From the time of the invasion until today there have been detractors of the spiritual practices of the indigenous people of Abia Yala, and those detractors have tended to identify those practices as paganism, superstition, witchcraft, and shamanism. The qualifiers have always followed this pattern of denigrating the vanquished. The religious authorities of the invader have superimposed their temples and shrines on the indigenous people's historically holy places to try to uproot the ancestral faith of indigenous peoples. For example, in Peru, the Catholic convent Romano of St. Augustine was built on top of the sacred temple of *Qoricancha*. On the foundations of the Mayan Sacred place there is now a Catholic Church. The temple of the Guadalupe Virgin was built on top of the sacred shrine for Tonantzin. The Mexico Cathedral was built over the

¹²² Jiménez, 25.

Goddess of the Earth in the sacred place of Tenochtitlan. Such events are repeated, over and over again, in different places. Wherever there is now a Roman Catholic Church, there surely was once an ancient indigenous sanctuary of worship.

Before the proclamation of the "500 Years of Indigenous Resistance" in 1992 by the Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, and before the "Zapatista indigenous uprising" in Chiapas, Mexico in 1994, the indigenous peoples only made timid expressions concerning their spiritual claims and rights. As we have seen, the indigenous spirituality was largely camouflaged by Christianity, but this also allowed it to be preserved. After the events mentioned previously, an effervescence of indigenous movements on the continent of Abia Yala began. Along with social and political demands, respective organizations of indigenous priests and organizations supporting the revival of indigenous spiritualities were being developed. In Guatemala, for example, indigenous peoples sought to penetrate the official bureaucracies to recover the sacred places that had been converted into "archaeological sites," and which, because they charged entrance fees, were profitable for the Ministry of Culture.¹²³

In short, these were the forms of resistance against the enemies of the indigenous people. If it weren't for the resistance in Guatemala, then all the tradition and Mayan culture likely would have been destroyed. Furthermore, I believe that the essence of a culture is found in the practice of their spirituality and language; when these two

¹²³ I had the opportunity to enter those places free of charge, but was always guided by Mayan priests' organizations, who had special permits to burn incense and copal to celebrate ancient Mayan rituals. This shows that in Guatemala, people have gradually been recovering ancient sacred spaces where the Mayan are once again practicing their spirituality and worshipping God.

components disappear, we are faced with ethnocide or death of a population that takes to the grave all its ancient traditions. Perhaps henceforth it will not be necessary to speak of ethnocide, assimilation, interculturalization, inculturation, transculturación, and subjugation of indigenous' religious values to the designs of the invaders of yesterday and today. It is my hope that instead it will be the norm to speak of religious plurality and mutual respect.

CHAPTER 4

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

As John McKay describes, the fake Spanish Christ arrived in Abia Yala with a project other than the biblical gospel. This fake religion made numerous substitutions for the real Christianity, as was repeated in the invasion of the African continent by Europeans:

The co-option of the universal symbols of Christianity as a function of colonial Empire-building was made possible by the fabrication of an imperial theology based on an exclusive and narrow interpretation of the Judeo-Christians Concept of covenant.... This imperial theology for Empire-building led to the mutation and transformation of theological concepts into ideological categories for political domination. The result was the ‘domestication’ of God’s covenant of grace with all humanity in Christ, the ‘territorialization’ of the Kingdom of God, the politicisation of ‘evangelism,’ and the ‘imperialization’ of the symbol of Christ.¹²⁴

We have seen the alleged appropriation of truth and salvation of the soul by the invaders, and it seems that even today the spirituality of many people is obliged to remain dependent on a political-religious state anchored in the Vatican, which took many years to declare Abia Yala’s inhabitants to be human. The philosophical foundation of the European invader was similar elsewhere, as happened in New Zealand in 1840 when it

¹²⁴ Afe Adogame, Roswith Gerloff and Klaus Hock, eds., *Christianity in Africa and the African Diaspora: The Appropriation of a Scattered Heritage* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008), 6.

was invaded and invaders doubted that New Zealand's people were human or "near human" and whether they even had a soul to evangelize.¹²⁵

How to reverse that practice against the inhabitants of the territories that were invaded so ignominiously? How can you present a biblical Christianity capable of transforming a society, one that respects life, people's rights, and the indigenous spirituality? I think we have time to transform the theological and ideological concepts of sharing grace and love of God with others. In this process, the Mayan spirituality could help us build a more just and humane society so that nobody is left behind.

4.1 The Mayas and the concept of God

Who is God for the Maya? How do they conceive a person of God? If we say that the *Popol Vuh*, the *Chilam Balam*, or other ancient documents prove Maya polytheism or monotheism, we would be justifying the substitution of their thought by the cosmogony and religious systems like Christianity, which claims to be authentically monotheist. Let us not forget that the book of Genesis, according to Hebrew Bible scholars, tells of a "Divine Council" involved in the creation, a doctrinal notion that later becomes the "Trinity." The "*Bereshit*" begins by mentioning the name of God in plural, "*Elohim*" ("*him*" as a plural ending) and Genesis 1:26 about the creation of man says in the plural, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (KJV); yet we do not therefore simplistically qualify the Torah or the Hebrew religion as polytheistic.

¹²⁵ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies, Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Otago University Press, 2012), 63.

The issue of complementary duality presented in various parts of the sacred book, *Popol Vuh*, and other ancient indigenous documents, does not lead to monotheism with a single name and a single deity in the Mayan spirituality. The Maya mentality has no place for a solitary God. However, sometimes, as Thompson says, Maya Divine duality becomes mystically one Godhead "that somehow recalls the doctrine of the Trinity."¹²⁶ The apparent monotheism represented in *Hunah Ku* "the only living and true God," of whom many authors speak, is actually the product of an early interference of Christianity in the Mayan spirituality. Indeed, Thompson says that this "was a later invention after the conquest."¹²⁷

According to Thompson, the concept that the Maya have about God cannot be compared to the idea of a pantheon of Greek or Roman gods, who had romantic adventures of flesh and blood and sexual concerns; human interaction with those gods demanded a ritual cleanliness and the absence of sexual concerns. It also demanded that human beings bring the deities offerings, recognition, and gratitude.¹²⁸

In the Mayan spirituality there is a dual (but non-dualistic) concept about God. Mayan spirituality conceives the creative Divinity as a balanced duality: *Hun Hunahpú - Vucub Hunanhpu* (The Twin Gods), *Hunah Puh – Ixbalanqué* (The Twin Heroes), *Ucux Caj - Ucux Uleu* (Heart of the Sky and Heart of the Earth) and *Tepeu* and *Gucumatz* "the

¹²⁶ Thompson, 248.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 253.

¹²⁸ Thompson, 247. On numerous occasions I was present at such ceremonies and I saw this reality. Even today, the Maya priest or priestess always ordered at least two days of fasting and abstinence as a requirement to participate in a Mayan ceremony.

progenitors." In addition, the Popol Vuh describes a gender balance in divine beings. As

Maria Eugenia Gutiérrez explains:

In the Maya stories about the origin of the world, and in their ritual practices registered, are women and men serving in various functions. They are creators and trainers, very powerful beings that promote both destruction and fertility, Regents of the [Maya] calendars, ancestors, animistic entities present, sacred ladies and gentlemen involved again and again in ritual contexts.¹²⁹

However, sometimes this duality becomes mystically one being. Sometimes it appears as a complementary duality of man and woman. For example, the *Popol Vuh* presents God as *E Qualom* "someone who begets children" and *E Alom* "someone who conceives children", *Tzacol* "Creator" and *Vitol* "Doer" (female).¹³⁰

It is not a simple matter of labeling the Mayan spirituality as either polytheistic or monotheistic, for as the next paragraph explains:

If the monotheism was not a surprise to the Maya, neither was the Trinity. For the Mayan god was multiplied in to almost indefinite numbers of committees of numerology significant dieties to satisfy the requirements of a ramified and mathematically precise cosmology. All of them were nonetheless aspects of a unitary conception of godhood, and polytheism is a poor description of Mayan belief.¹³¹

No doubt this dual conception of God has great significance when, for example, we analyze the duality "Heart of Heaven" and "Heart of the Earth" (*Uk'u'x kaj, Uk'u'x ulew*). Both interrelate mutually. As Lopez Molina clarifies:

Duality is a constant in the indigenous worldview: the natural and the supernatural, the overworld and the underworld. Being is binary, it is a dual

¹²⁹ María Eugenia Gutiérrez González, *Diosas de los Antiguos Mayas* (Buenos Aires: LibrosEnRed, 2013), 118, Kindle.

¹³⁰ Thompson, 250-251.

¹³¹ Gossen and León-Portilla, 67.

being. These two realities each exist in function of the other. They are two necessary realities, which, instead of being opposed, as Western thought conceives, are complementary and reciprocal.¹³²

By the other hand, the conception of God is not exclusively confined to a Being away from his creation, as someone who has left the world and its creatures, like a clock with activated batteries, to then go home and secluded in some "beyond." But neither is theirs a purely earthly God linked solely to the sphere of created nature, which would suggest a pantheistic religion. Instead, the "Heart of the Earth" is closely linked to the "Heart of Heaven"; they depend on each other as partners in a harmonious relationship. As Gomez Diez asserts:

While missionaries place great emphasis on the salvation of the soul and spiritual welfare of the individual, for indigenous religions, who mainly insist on the preservation of the cosmic order, the individual has no value in itself, but [only] as contributing to the upkeep of that order.¹³³

The Maya seek a harmonious relationship between human beings, Mother Earth, and the Divinity. Mayan spirituality urges all human beings to live in peace and harmony, as the prayer dedicated to the sacred binomial "*Tzacol-Bitol*", "Hearth of Heaven-Hearth of Earth" found in the sacred book *Popol Vuh* says:

Oh, thou. Tzacol, Bitol, Look at us, hear us! Do not leave us, do not forsake us, oh, God, who art in heaven and on earth. Heart of Heaven, Heart of Earth! Give us our descendants, our succession, as long as the sun shall move and there shall be light. Let it dawn; let the day come! Give us many good roads, flat roads! May the people have peace, much peace, and may they be happy; and give us a good life and useful existence!¹³⁴

¹³² Molina, 4.

¹³³ Gómez, 15.

¹³⁴ Recinos, 173.

4.2 Scripture and Pastoral Theology

The Indigenous Spiritual Practice Under Catholic Mariology Doctrine?

The Roman Catholic Church has long persecuted and demonized indigenous spirituality. As Virgilio Elizondo says of the new Christians who arrived with Christopher Columbus, "they sought to destroy that which was most sacred to the natives: the religious traditions of their ancestors. Without these, the natives' world would have no meaning or value; only chaos and emptiness would reign."¹³⁵

Yet despite the Catholic Church's best efforts to rid them of their religious traditions and beliefs, the beliefs and religious rituals of the indigenous people have prevailed. I have already mentioned that one way the latter were able to do this was by taking on some of the Catholic practices, such as venerating Mary, as a way of camouflaging their own ongoing practices. Of particular importance is their veneration of the Tepeyac Virgin or Our Lady of Guadalupe, which Virgilio Elizondo masterfully documented. Yet I have reservations about Elizondo's analysis. In the process of unraveling the spiritual situation of the mestizos that is intertwined with the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe, to my mind he buried all hope of indigenous resistance when he affirmed that now the future is mestizo. He says that indigenous deities were obliterated and that Nican Mopohua (the account of Our Lady of Guadalupe) had allowed the resurrection of that faith with a new identity:

¹³⁵ Virgilio Elizondo, *Virgen de Guadalupe Madre de la Nueva Creación* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), 14.

It seemed the sun had been permanently eclipsed, and the innermost darkness of the soul prevailed throughout the land and its native peoples. In the midst of the death cries of a vanquished people, a new life broke through to announce new life. This was the good news of Our Lady of Guadalupe – the gospel through the language and the imagery of the conquered people of the Nahuatl world.¹³⁶

Note that not all indigenous people in Abia Yala know this Mexican Virgen de Guadalupe tradition; therefore, it cannot be universal. The Maya/Mam Catholics in Guatemala have other kind of Mariologies.

Regarding the Virgin of Guadalupe, Marilu Rojas claims: "The Franciscan missionaries created Guadalupe. Antonio Valeriano painted the image of Guadalupe, as the image/icon had to play the role of catechizing. Therefore, the Guadalupe icon is created to fill the religious vacuum, now that the Indians had lost Tonantzin (Pacha Mama)."¹³⁷ The future will only be mestizo if the veil is not removed from the real Lady of Tepeyac, who is the original Tonantzin, whom the invaders would replace with the Iberian "Virgen de Extremadura" who was worshiped by Christopher Columbus and Hernan Cortez.¹³⁸ Even in the US, to predict a mestizo future would mean to ignore all indigenous peoples who have stoically withstood the onslaught of the United States empire; they still exist and are fighting for their rights. In addition to the local reality,

¹³⁶ Ibid., 22-23.

¹³⁷ Extract taken from lecture: Marilú Rojas, "About Our Lady of Guadalupe from a perspective of a mujer."

¹³⁸ In this regard, the Mexican Magazine *Proceso* says: "For seven centuries in the Spanish province of Extremadura the Virgin of Guadalupe has been venerated. Her image was brought to New Spain by the first evangelizers, which gave rise to the Mexican guadalupana. The Guadalupe Monastery managers are convinced: the Guadalupe of Mexico was inspired by it of Spain, and the apparitions to Juan Diego are only a "beautiful story". See the Newspaper "Proceso". La Redacción de Proceso. "Las Guadalupanas: La Mexicana, hija de la Española." Ciudad de México 12 de Diciembre, 2003, accessed October 31, 2016, <http://www.proceso.com.mx/258335/las-guadalupanas-la-mexicana-hija-de-la-espanola-2>.

there are thousands and thousands of Indians who are crossing the southern borders to constitute a group of indigenous people in the Diaspora.

True, the so-called "Mariofanía" (Marian apparition) of Our Lady of Guadalupe became the way of resistance and survival of indigenous and mestizo spiritualities in some countries of Abia Yala, like a religious chauvinism trying to prove they had their "own Virgin" as opposed to the "Virgin of the invader." But in the case of Mexico, we can see that, a religious camouflage occurred,¹³⁹ as we see in the apparent overlap of the virgin of Extremadura and the altar of Tonantzin, as we see in the apparent overlap of the virgin of Extremadura of Spain on the altar of Tonantzin, the Nahuatl divinity.

In this case, the biblical character of the "maternal face of God"¹⁴⁰ has been confirmed in the survival of Tonantzin within the indigenous spirituality.

The future will continue to be indigenous *and* mestizo, white, black, yellow, and all the colors of the rainbow. It will be a future in which we can no longer make invisible the indigenous and their own spirituality.

4.3 The Indigenous Spiritual Practice Within Indigenous Theology

With the boom in interest that accompanied the five hundredth anniversary of the so-called discovery (but actually invasion) of Abia Yala, there were many protest

¹³⁹ The issue of "camouflage" or "simulation" has already been explained in the previous chapter, when addressing the issue of indigenous resistance.

¹⁴⁰ The theme of the maternal face of God was developed in my research, Goyo De la Cruz, "La Virgen de Guadalupe en el Contexto de Resistencia Indígena," TC897 Our Lady of Guadalupe as a Resource for el Pueblo, (lecture, Mexico Travel Seminar, Comunidad Teológica de México, Marzo 6-15, 2015).

movements in the indigenous areas. Their claims were political and religious. As a product of the protest movements, Indigenous Theology emerged in the religious field, mostly driven by the Roman Catholic Church. The main driver was the “Centro Nacional de Ayuda a las Misiones Indígenas” or National Center for Assistance to Indigenous Missions (CENAMI)¹⁴¹ that was created in 1961 before the Second Vatican Council and with the support of bishops and the Mexican Episcopal Conference. In 1988, CENAMI became an autonomous pastoral indigenous entity. It is important to underline the presence of this pro-church organization for being the driver of the systematization of the different currents of Indian theology that proliferated at the time. CENAMI held several workshops about Indigenous Theology in Mexico, and Central and South America¹⁴² at which important documents were developed. One report about the Indigenous Theology explains:

For the children of the original inhabitants of this continent, the Indian Theology is to "give the reason for our ancient hope." It is the understanding we have of our whole life always guided by the hand of God. The reflexive discourse that accompanies the phrase explains and guides the journey of our Indian people throughout history. Therefore, it exists since we exist as people.¹⁴³

This form of expression of Indigenous Catholic theology constitutes an axis of systematic reflection of indigenous spirituality and the lines above confirm what I said

¹⁴¹ See the official website of the “Centro de Ayuda a las Misiones Indígenas” CENAMI, accessed December 7, 2015, http://cenami.org/?page_id=150.

¹⁴² CENAMI’s Indigenous Theology was promoted by the main support of the late “Tatic” (father) Samuel Ruiz, Bishop of Chiapas. The most visible leader of CENAMI is the Zapoteco indigenous Catholic priest Eleazar Lopez. I have participated in their different Workshops in Mexico, Guatemala, Panama, and Bolivia, as an invited Quechua indigenous protestant clergy person.

¹⁴³ Teología India, *Primer Encuentro de Taller Latinoamericano* (Mexico City: Cenami y Abya Yala, 1991), 7.

about the character of Maya/Mam spiritual practice being closely linked to its history and cultural experience.

4.4 The Indigenous Spirituality and Theology of Liberation

Undoubtedly, the emergence of Latin American's Theology of Liberation gave prominence to the development and systematization of the Indigenous Theology and served as a platform for indigenous people to "give the reason about their ancestral faith." But the CENAMI's document clarifies the relationship between Liberation Theology and Indigenous Spirituality by affirming that "the Indigenous Theology is part of the Latin American Theology, which is Liberation Theology. Moreover, the current Latin American theology is a continuation of the theology of resistance started 500 years ago by our ancestors."¹⁴⁴

Liberation Theology is more European, however. It does not take into account indigenous specificity, but as the previous document says it becomes the second moment of reflection. Indigenous Theology includes a broader panorama of plural identity, taking into account the effect of indigenous peoples and their practice of a spirituality of resistance.

We cannot deny the great impact this CENAMI effort has had in strengthening indigenous consciousness. The Zapatista movement was fueled by the strong leadership of "Tatic" Samuel Ruiz (the former Bishop of Chiapas), which evokes the work of Bartolomé de Las Casas, who centuries before him stood beside the oppressed. Ruiz has

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

enthusiastically supported Indian Theology and the indigenous pastoral work that the CENAMI has done in Mexico and other countries of Abia Yala. Of course, the Roman Catholic hierarchy disagreed with giving priority to the indigenous spiritualities, and so used as a basis for CENAMI the same platform of the Catholic Church (which in the past of course was tremendously brutal toward the Indigenous people); the reaction was swift, and as shown in the document below, it was vehemently attacked by Pope John Paul II and the Church's hierarchy. The priest Eleazar Lopez, the main promoter of the organization, was punished with forced removal to another diocese, and Indigenous Theology was censored, with the Church pronouncing that, Indigenous theology, at least as promoted by Bishop Ruiz, and ...the "Centro Nacional de Ayuda a las Misiones Indígenas" (CENAMI) is in direct opposition to the teachings of the Magisterium of the Church."¹⁴⁵ This document of response tried to deligitimize Indigeous Theology and calls it as "a pastoral perversity" and "a doctrinal malice."¹⁴⁶

Indeed, the entire attempt to systematize the indigenous spirituality is developed within the frame of the Roman Catholic Christian religion. Again, the question is: Why do the indigenous religions not have a spiritual indigenous leadership capable of writing about their ancestral spirituality?

Perhaps the answer can be found in the way the term "theology" appeared and the origin of these forms of systematization. On this topic, Celumiel says:

¹⁴⁵ See the Catholic magazine ACI-Press: "¿Se opone o no la 'Teología india' a las enseñanzas de la Iglesia?," accessed December 7, 2015, <https://www.aciprensa.com/controversias/teologiaindia.htm>.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

I want to make clear that the word theology does not appear in the language of the indigenous peoples and even less in the Mam culture. This term has been used by Christian agents who have indigenous roots and supporters of this theological current, to name the reflections built and developed in meetings, forums, and workshops that they themselves have organized and carried out in Latin America.¹⁴⁷

The "theology" of indigenous peoples is therefore not systematized in Western-style literary volumes. For the purposes of this research, it is better to speak of an "indigenous spirituality," which is translated into indigenous daily tasks, where clothing, community life, rites, myths, songs, dances, food, the respect for the natural environment and the cosmos define that innate spirituality that has remained to this day.

Before the "boom" of the five hundred-year anniversary celebration of the invasion of Abia Yala, it was very rare that anyone talked about "indigenous religions," "indigenous spiritualities" or "ancestral religions" because these were generally associated with esotericism, shamanism, and witchcraft. Today it is a much more normal practice because gradually there has been a decline in demonizing indigenous sacred places that exist in different countries and instead there is increasing respect; there are indigenous priestly organizations in Guatemala, Mexico, Peru and Bolivia. For example, in the latest inauguration of President Evo Morales, the special ingredient was not so much the omnipresence of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, as has been customary in most countries of Abia Yala, but of the "*Yatiris*" (Andean priests) and priestesses of ancient

¹⁴⁷ Celumiel Aguilar Morales, "Un Acercamiento a la Teología Indígena desde la Cultura Mam." (Thesis of Th. D., comunidad Teológica de México, 30 de Mayo, 2015), 5.

indigenous Quechua and Aymara culture,¹⁴⁸ who were escorting the new indigenous president, the first to hold that post in a country with an indigenous majority.

There are, therefore, clear intentions of mariologizing indigenous spirituality and to put it in a frame within a new Indian Theology of the Roman Catholic. Therefore, I wonder if we are not in fact simply finding new ways of legitimizing the status quo of Christianity, and once again discrediting the integrity of indigenous spirituality. Recall that the Christianization of Abia Yala started from the idea that the Indians, to become Christians, needed to be men first--understanding a man not simply as a rational being, but as being rational while thinking and living as a human being. And "for the Indian to be a man, it had to be civilized," i.e. "the Christianization of the Indian was conceived as a change of religion and as a refinement of person."¹⁴⁹ The despotic logic of the official religion always sees the Indians as "minors" incapable of owning their own spirituality. Today a similar tendency is expressed by assimilating other forms of faith, be it under the Marian mantle, or Indian theology, or European-oriented liberation theology. Faithful to its dogma that "outside the Catholic Church there is no salvation," modern Roman Catholic indigenous theologians continue actively to try misleading the ancestral intelligence that endures despite the many humiliations that it has suffered throughout history. At root, the teaching it promulgates unvaryingly is that

[T]he Church of Christ, despite the divisions which exist among Christians, continues to exist fully only in the Catholic Church, and on the other hand, that "outside of her structure, many elements can be found of sanctification and truth",

¹⁴⁸ The descriptor "indigenous priests or priestesses" is now being replaced by "Spiritual Guides."

¹⁴⁹ Gómez, 202.

that is, in those Churches and ecclesial communities which are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church. But with respect to these, it needs to be stated that “they derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church”.

Therefore, there exists a single Church of Christ, which subsists in the Catholic Church, governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him.¹⁵⁰

In fact, I think it is not the place of the Roman Catholic Church to give official license to other spiritualities as being "indigenous." It is not the Church's decision. Recall Pope John Paul II at the World Day of Prayer for Peace, held in Assisi, Italy, on October 21, 1986, where Christians, Buddhists, Muslims and Jewish representatives were united to pray. When news of the event spread, questions arose about the possibility that Christianity was giving concessions to other religions. Yet, faithful to the dogma of the Roman Catholic Church, before the event Pope John Paul II had said that it was not about "praying together," but of "being together to pray."¹⁵¹ Today it is common even among conservative Christian churches to speak of Christian ecumenism, by which is meant ecumenism exclusively within the communion of Christian Protestant churches, and yet it continues to be considered a sin to talk of a macro-ecumenism where we can "pray

¹⁵⁰ See articles 16-17 in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Declaration ‘Dominus Iesus’ On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church,” accessed October 15, 2016, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html.

¹⁵¹ Michel Fédou, *Religiones en Diálogo, Las Religiones Según la Fe Cristiana* (Bilbao: Desclee de Brouwer, 2000), 16-17.

together" with Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, and people of other religions. That is, indigenous spirituality will never fit the airtight dogmatic mold of Catholicism.¹⁵²

4.5 Indigenous Spirituality and Protestant Movements

As part of serious theological reflection, we must analyze the role fulfilled by Protestantism in the development of indigenous spirituality, as Gossen and Miguel León-Portilla affirm: "religion plays an increasingly significant role either as legitimator of the status quo or as a liberator from oppression in some sense."¹⁵³

First of all, I must clarify that it is not the same to talk about the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and Protestantism in the United States and the relationship of both faiths in Abia Yala. Recall that Protestant Europeans invaded the United States, while the Spanish Crown in tandem with the Roman Catholic Church oppressed Abia Yala. For example, currently in the United States the relationship between these two churches is cordial and the tragic incidents that have occurred in Abia Yala have not occurred here. Basically, the tense historical relationship of these two churches goes along with the leading role that the Catholic Church took in the invasion, as we saw in the first chapter. The zeal to preserve the hegemony and control of the invaded kingdoms and subsequently the enjoyment of influence they had and still have in

¹⁵² The Roman Catholic document "Dominus Iesus," cited above, is clearly defending Catholic Church's exclusivism position.

¹⁵³ Gossen and León-Portilla, 500.

some countries through the "Concordat,"¹⁵⁴ were factors that did not allow Protestantism to be welcomed in Abia Yala, for since the beginning of the invasion any outside religious groups were considered like pirates lurking with the intent to seize the booty of "treasure"—resources of all kinds, including humans and human minds-- found in Abia Yala.

Virgilio Zapata briefly explains the abrupt incursion of Protestantism into Guatemala:

During that period of almost 300 years, the first Protestant inroads in Guatemala and elsewhere in Central America happened, which produced 18 known martyrs, starting with William Cornelius, who was tried by the Inquisition in Antigua and then taken to the city of Mexico, where he was executed by the Inquisition and burned his body, in the center of this great city called 'Quemadero' in the year of 1568. The Catholic Guatemalan historian Ernesto Chinchilla Aguilar... attests to the names of at least 18 martyrs who were tried by the religious court, most of whom were put to death because of their Protestant biblical faith.¹⁵⁵

Only in the nineteenth century did a new incursion of Protestantism to Guatemala begin. As always, it was roundly opposed by the Roman Catholic hierarchy, but under the rule of liberal Justo Rufino Barrios (1835-1885) a great opportunity opened and was exploited later. That opportunity came in the new century, as a result of the church responding to the acute needs of the people.

¹⁵⁴ The Cambridge dictionary says: "Concordat: a formal agreement, esp. on religious matters, between the Roman Catholic Church and a particular country." See *Cambridge International Dictionary of English*, s.v. "Concordat."

¹⁵⁵ See the document of Centro Esdras: Virgilio Zapata, "Presencia del Protestantismo en Guatemala: Los últimos 25 años," Consulta 2009, 1, accessed October 25, 2016, <http://centroesdras.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Presencia-del-Protestantismo-en-Guatemala-Virgilio-Zapata.pdf>.

Scotchmer notes that two aspects that characterize rural Maya people are, first, “landlessness with ... problems of hunger.” Poor farmers could not benefit from the "green revolution" of that time. And the “second fact of Maya existence is the historic ethnic subordination of the Indian within the dominant ladino, or Spanish-speaking, culture.”¹⁵⁶ I think these factors were what allowed the successful incursion of Protestantism into Guatemala. The Presbyterian Church was the first to penetrate and then follow the American Mission Center, the Nazarenes and the Quakers. On their way, they planted schools and hospitals. And locals began participating in the new mission. The number of Protestant believers increased gradually, such that: "In 1937, Kenneth Grubb, an eminent scholar of missions conducted a census in the region. Grubb discovered 40, 627 Protestants in Guatemala of a total population of 2.2 million; in other words, less than two percent of the national population."¹⁵⁷

By the year 1982, Zapata records that the Protestant population was 1, 653, 546 or 22.23% of the total citizenship. The same author states that different types of Protestant churches currently exist: the historically Conservative, along with Pentecostals and Neo-Pentecostals. Moreover, the same author notes:

There are about 22,000 evangelical churches in the country, and just over 5 million evangelicals, some 500 evangelical colleges, 40 stations, (although some like Radio Cultural TGN has 36 repeaters and Stereo Vision has 32 stations), 2 TV channels (channel 27 already has 10 repeaters potentially reaching 8 million people, and channel 21 is bonded to the whole continent and Spain) and 4

¹⁵⁶ Gossen and León-Portilla, 498.

¹⁵⁷ See the document of Centro Esdras: Virginia Garrard-Burnett, “Una panorámica del Protestantismo Histórico,” Consulta 2009, 3, accessed October 26, 2016, <http://centroesdras.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Panoramica-del-Protestantismo-Historico-en-Guatemala-Virginia-Garrard-Burnett.pdf>.

regional channels. In addition, there is a considerable percentage of evangelical students in many theological seminaries and the 11 universities in the country, 3 of which are evangelical and a fourth is to be authorized.¹⁵⁸

Different statistics show that Guatemala (at national level) ranks as the country with the highest percentage of Protestants in Abia Yala. Virginia Garrard-Burnett identifies two factors that helped the Protestantism explosion in Guatemala: the first was the earthquake of 1976, in response to which Protestants organized and helped the victims. They capitalized on this aid with apocalyptic preaching of the gospel, which persuaded many to convert. The second factor to which Garrard-Burnett points is the armed conflict, during which Protestant churches continued to persuade people to convert using a message of hope against violence.¹⁵⁹ To this we must add that in 1962 a campaign of "Deep Evangelism"¹⁶⁰ mobilized many thousands of Protestant believers across the continent to do evangelism. According to the Evangelical Alliance of Guatemala (AEG): "there are 25,000 temples throughout the country, although only 18,000 belong to their organization. The rest are minority groups such as the Ecumenical Forum for Peace and the Conference of Evangelical Churches of Guatemala."¹⁶¹

We must emphasize that within Protestantism there emerged both progressive and conservative tendencies related to Mayan people. One was an "assimilationist" trend to

¹⁵⁸ Zapata, 6.

¹⁵⁹ See Garrard-Burnett, 5.

¹⁶⁰ Gossen and León-Portilla, 502.

¹⁶¹ See ProtestanteDigital.Com. "Guatemala es el país de Latinoamérica con mayor porcentaje de protestantes (40 por ciento)." Ciudad de Guatemala, 3 de Octubre del 2006, accessed October 31, 2016, http://protestantedigital.com/internacional/18534/Guatemala_es_el_pais_de_Latinoamerica_con_mayor_porcentaje_de_protestantes_40_por_ciento.

assimilate the indigenous into the culture of the missionary and Ladino (mestizo). The second trend emphasized a "revitalization" of indigenous cultures, with a gospel that fits indigenous cultures. The first trend was authoritarian and was strongly linked to the purposes of Pentecostal churches that preach the gospel of prosperity, while the second trend was more democratic and egalitarian, practiced by the historical churches such as the Presbyterian church, Mennonite Central, Methodists, and Quakers, among others. Scotchmer goes on to say that "the first looks to the national culture and to North American Protestantism for the meaning, function, and form of what is important spiritually and organizationally."¹⁶²

Current statistics tell us that, "According to the study of Prodatos 'So we Guatemalans,' in that year 39% said they belonged to the Evangelical Church, compared to 48% Catholics, while the remaining 13% did not profess any religion."¹⁶³ Thus, Protestantism that began with the visit of Presbyterian Crowe in September 1843 would become a dynamic movement that threatens to relegate Catholicism to the background.

From its inception, the United States government had much to do with the rise of Protestantism, but the most visible reason was that during the Cold War, Liberation Theology was gaining acceptance within the Catholic Church. There was, however, enough conservative Protestant support to counter these trends, as an article says:

¹⁶² Gossen and León-Portilla, 506-507.

¹⁶³ Sergio Morales, "Evangélicos ganan terreno en el país," *Prensa Libre*, Abril 22, 2014, accessed October 26, 2016, <http://www.prensalibre.com/noticias/comunitario/Evangelicos-ganan-terreno-pais-0-1124887528>.

The United States... launched an intense campaign of penetration in order to stop the advance of the Theology of Liberation: a reflection of Catholic priests who prioritized the so-called preferential option for the poor and political action. Washington considered that position as being close to communism.¹⁶⁴

But the question is: How have Protestant churches been allowed or permitted to develop indigenous spirituality? Recall that Roman Catholicism penetrated with blood and fire, committing sacrilege against the sacred places of indigenous people, but that the Catholic Church in time became more tolerant toward the religious dissimulation shown by indigenous peoples. However, when Protestantism arrived, it demanded a radical change of indigenous cultures, wanting them to assimilate to Western culture and disrespecting indigenous particularities.

However, both some progressive Protestants and Catholics have tried to respect indigenous spirituality a little, but even this sector has not been able to respect them as a specific religion or spirituality; at most they call it “popular religiosity,” “seeds of the kingdom,” or a “minor religion.”

Protestantism lost its opportunity to introduce to indigenous people the true Christ, the one concerned about the poor of the earth. They abandoned the true Christ; they left Him imprisoned in Europe and brought another Spanish Christ, another European impostor who served their own interests.

That is the country and the socio-religious context from which the Maya/Mam come who are now in El Redentor United Methodist Church. The family members of this group are relatively young; though they did not live through the awful years of armed

¹⁶⁴ See the article: ProtestanteDigital.Com.

conflict, no doubt that history has permeated their lives. The political situation has changed a bit, presidents have changed, but the oppressors and the oppressed are the same. Guatemala, for example, remains a country that has an indigenous majority but is governed by a minority Ladino (mestizo).

4.6 Singing in Foreign Lands: The Song of the Diggers

Where might we find some biblical wisdom about a situation such as the one in which the indigenous Maya/Mam people find themselves, both at home and in the U.S.? There are many biblical texts about the Jewish people during the Babylonian exile. I suggest that one of these, Psalm 137, helps us to understand the feelings of the Maya/Mam in exile. It is necessary to emphasize that in the Maya culture, we are talking about the descendants of the natives of this continent, who now paradoxically are treated as aliens. However, according to the biblical paradigm, so-called "foreign" Maya/Mam would be particularly under the divine protection (Leviticus 19:33-34 - NIV).

Psalm 137 helps us to understand what the Jewish people were feeling in exile, and from there we can draw a parallel with the situation of immigrants as economic exiles in the United States. This Psalm refers to the biblical story about the plight of the Jewish exiles when they were transported to foreign lands. They had left many memories and belongings behind. Behind were left the laughter and noise of children playing happily in the streets. An invading army had captured the city, killed the brave who defended and guarded the city, raped the women, and showed no respect for the elderly or children either. Many were taken as war trophies to an unknown country. Along the

way, Jewish exiles had their cultural experiences, language, and dress, if not in reality then in their hearts, dances, and songs. It is possible that on the way they were hungry and many died of thirst. But, even in this very unfortunate situation, their enemies asked them to sing their songs, to show their cultural background.

It is tempting to draw parallels between this and the details of the harrowing journey I have been told by the Maya/Mam immigrants about traveling through Mexico by bus, then on the train called "The Beast," then walking through the dangerous desert to the border. In addition to going through a series of vicissitudes such as hunger, thirst, assaults, rape, and threats of death, once they arrived in the United States, these immigrants faced the problem of "cultural shock" with the new language, food, and customs there.

I wonder how uncomfortable it is to practice our original spirituality in a foreign country, where we do not have the proper documentation, where we do not speak the dominant language, where we work for minimum wage, and where we feel the discriminating gaze and actions of most of the people around us. The Maya/Mam decided to practice their spirituality regardless of their difficult situations.

Another Bible passage that helps us understand God's purposes for the Maya/Mam people is found in the Book of Jeremiah. Here God tells the prophet Jeremiah to buy land while the people besieged by the Babylonians are about to be taken into exile. They were about to lose everything, including their dignity and their rights. The will of a foreign power hovered over the families. Jeremiah is in prison, accused of treason to the country; however, in this stark reality he received a command of God, and began to

purchase tracts of land. We do not know if Jeremiah bought a large farm or a small cornfield from his cousin Hanameel in Anathoth for seventeen pieces of silver; it seems that the cousin was not acting in good faith, he knew at the time of sale who would gain from it. We do not know what motivated the cousin of the prophet Jeremiah to perform the commercial transaction; however, judging by the political context, he had to have felt happy to have sold the property and even perhaps have done for a good price, and maybe then he went out to celebrate the business with a binge. The fact is that Jeremiah was walking more by faith than by sight, for the prophet only obeyed God's voice.

Legal documents of sale involving Baruc and other witnesses were drafted in accordance with the business protocols of that era. Having received the message from God, Jeremiah knew that there was hope to enjoy their new lands in the future foreseen by God. Hence this action is a symbolic act of hope, it is an act of faith, for everyone knows that this is the worst time to buy land while one is being sent into exile from it. It was a good time to sell anything; it was better to have money in one's pocket than to have a property that one might never enjoy. So, it may seem as if the cousin was mocking Jeremiah's faith. The captivity would last seventy years and by then the small amount for which Jeremiah had bought the land would have increased many times over. But at that particular moment, such a business act was an insult to the intelligence. Jeremiah took a risk and then relied entirely on the will of God. Do not forget that during the commercial transaction Jeremiah was imprisoned. He did not have much freedom of movement, but still he took the risks and made the transaction guided by the eyes of faith.

To paraphrase the biblical passage from Jeremiah 32, we see that the Maya/Mam resemble Jeremiah by buying land in the midst of the danger of death. We might see the cousin of Jeremiah personified in the imperial system of this country, which enjoys making life miserable through their free trade policies, plundering its riches, closing doors to people when they immigrate, deporting people, using them as “piñata” in their political campaigns, and using them as cheap labor to build this great nation of the United States. Amid the great feast of vultures, like Jeremiah these Maya/Mam people rise like the phoenix bird in the midst of their misery, trying to survive as a nation with dignity and effort. The Maya/Mam continue their activities as if everything were going well: though marginalized, they continue to do business, they drive vehicles without a driver’s license, they work so hard and well that employers prefer to hire them since they put so much effort into their work, they marry, have children, join the church and sing with feeling, and spare no effort when it comes to buying properties or building houses in Guatemala. They see the future with great hope despite all the problems around them.

Maya/Mam: Modern Diggers

In the seventeenth century, there arose a movement called the Diggers. Gerrard Winstanley, an English Protestant religious reformer and political activist, valued the land as a "common treasury." His perspective on biblical interpretation about God and "Mother Earth" –because it is similar to Indigenous thinking-- help us to understand the indigenous immigrants and their beliefs, even in a different cultural context and strange lands. The Diggers suffered bullying and repression by authorities when they tried to recuperate the lands in order to work them as the common lands they understood them to

be. It was maybe a crazy initiative, but in comparison to the current situation of indigenous in the diaspora, it begins to make sense.

New Diggers Singing in Foreign Lands

As I have mentioned in Chapter II, El Redentor United Methodist Church used to have a “Festival of Culture.” I intentionally created this event in order to maintain and value the indigenous spiritual and cultural traditions of the Maya/Mam people in diaspora. Preparations for The Festival of Cultures began at least six months before the event. Members would ask their relatives in Guatemala to send them traditional dresses to use them specifically at that cultural event.¹⁶⁵ The booths were decorated with display boards, national symbols, cultural souvenirs, and traditional food, like “pepián” (soup in a base of seeds), “tamalitos” and “chuchitos.” They also use to dance the traditional “mayan son” with “marimba” music. Designated persons coordinated all the preparations for the event. Children and adults were involved in the organization of the event. A strong sense of community prevailed.

We are aware of the great barrier of language and culture between the Maya/Mam and the White membership of Asbury; therefore, the main reason for the Festival of Cultures was to find a moment of intercultural dialogue between Maya/Mam and Caucasian brothers and sisters. The Maya/Mam, as modern Diggers, tried to break down barriers through the universal language of food, music, and their own cultural customs.

¹⁶⁵ Also, when I worked with Maya/Mam people in Forest, Mississippi (2003-2009), they bought their traditional musical instrument, the Marimba, often paying more than \$ 3,000.0 for it. They used to play that instrument in worship services and at the Festival of Cultures.

The Maya think there are many ways to live together in community, and despite not speaking English could communicate with their brothers and sisters through this Festival.

The Maya/Mam are the modern Diggers or Levellers. They now have become protagonists of a reverse migration, as Sergio Sosa, a Guatemalan US-based organizer says:

Mams and Qanjobales face poverty and isolation, even the possible disappearance of their identity. But they didn't choose this. People from Europe and U.S. crossed our borders to come to Guatemala and took over our land and economy. Migration is a form of fighting back. Now is our turn to cross borders.¹⁶⁶

The indigenous are in strange land trying to retrieve their rights as the first nations who have lived for millennia on this continent. They try to keep alive these millennia of culture and spirituality, despite adverse situations like having no driver's license, no Social Security Card, no English language ability, no Caucasian skin--just a Mayan/Mam trying to dig deeply into the United States culture.

4.7 The Two Loves: Towards Maya/Mam and Christian Spirituality

The Maya/Mam population is between two loves: love and respect for their ancestral traditions (Maya/Mam spirituality) and love and respect that embraces their new faith as Methodist Protestant Christians. The Roman Catholic Church has historically condemned all practices of the ancient Maya/Mam, but has been lenient with certain indigenous religious practices and customs, as long as they are modified into the Christian pantheon.

¹⁶⁶ David Bacon, *Communities Without Borders: Images and Voices from the World of Migration* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), xiv.

When the Protestant tradition — born in Europe as a spiritual radicalization against the abuse of the official church—was introduced to these lands, it changed the religious practices of the Maya/Mam people drastically. Protestantism was not lenient toward older indigenous religious practices. It condemned those practices, and demanded the people's radical conversion to the new faith of the missionaries, despising and demonizing any Maya/Mam spiritual practices, including cultural practices.

Regarding indigenous religions, Gomez Diez explains: "While the missionary places great emphasis on the salvation of the soul and spiritual well-being, mainly the indigenous religions insist on preserving the cosmic order. The single has no value in itself, but as to how much it can contribute to the maintenance of that order."¹⁶⁷ In this sense, many spiritual practices of the indigenous do not match the demands of their new faith, creating a conflict of faith and spiritual identity.

Theological Miscegenation in the Maya/Mam Spirituality

So far we have seen the daily lives of indigenous spirituality and we have also seen possible ways for them to syncretize the two. But a question remains: Is there indigenous spirituality in its original expression, as it existed over five hundred years ago? Obviously, the answer is that we cannot really talk of spirituality that has been frozen in time. Times change, cultures have their own dynamics of changes, and spirituality practices change and conforming to each new situation in some way. It would be too romantic to say that religion and spirituality as it existed before the European invasion has been preserved.

¹⁶⁷ Gómez, 155.

A sector of the Catholic Church assumes that indigenous spirituality was completely assimilated by Catholic Christianity, as the pantheon of gods and saints, virgins, and cathedrals replaced sacred places of antiquity. Others place the indigenous spirituality in a phase of strong recovery having vigorously resisted over five hundred years of persecution. Others still locate indigenous spirituality within the framework of a religious mix. So where is the Maya/Mam spirituality practice located in southeast Memphis? It is relevant to ask: Do the Maya/Mam still maintain their ancestral spirituality, or have they fully assimilated the Christian faith?

The military invasion of the continent was always accompanied by the incursion of foreign religions. More than five hundred years after the beginning of the invasion, today we have a range of religions trying to gain followers in the Maya/Mam communities. For example, within indigenous communities Maya/Mam who were on the side of Mexico, Quintana and Rosales explain, as well as Catholics, there are “traditionalists, charismatic, liberation theology and Indian theology. In parallel, beliefs coexist called evangelical groups, such as inclined to historic Protestantism, Pentecostal churches, millenarian movements and marginal Protestant churches.”¹⁶⁸

The two religious alternatives persist in the Maya/Mam thinking. So they move between two loves. As Celumiel, an indigenous Mam of Chiapas, says in his thesis: "The Mame can move in both sectors; they can gather in church, listen to the homilies, but can also visit the healer."¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Quintana and Rosales, 46.

¹⁶⁹ Aguilar , 37.

During my pastoral experience of over thirteen years with the Maya/Mam indigenous, I have seen with astonishment how they combine both loves. When they have serious family problems or have legal problems with immigration, they send money to pay a Maya priest for advice. In other cases, the "prophetess" of some charismatic Pentecostal church replaces the character of the indigenous Shaman or priest/priestess, and they make the same type of inquiry. In the first case, they might call it "consulting a witch," while in the second case there is a clear substitution of "old witch" with a person of any Pentecostal denomination who can read her fate and give predictions of the future. That is to say that many of them are baptized in the Methodist Church, they are leaders and have several years gathering as a congregation; yet they see no dichotomy between their new faith and the faith of their ancestors. Nor do they invite anyone to take the place of traditional Mayan priest.

In another anecdotal case, a Maya/Mam woman who is church lay leader had a son on whose wrist he placed a red ribbon immediately after his birth.¹⁷⁰ Thus, the child wearing his hospital identification had a doll, while the other was carrying an indigenous spiritual symbol in the form of a red ribbon that identified him with the ancestral Maya/Mam faith of his parents. Just to see the reaction of the mother, I inquired about the meaning of the red ribbon on the baby's wrist. The answer was blunt: "So that nothing bad happens to the baby." I added, "Then let's pray for that protection to be even stronger."

¹⁷⁰ This practice is common in many indigenous peoples throughout Abia Yala. For example, in the case of Peru, some parents placed some objects such as "huayruros" (red and black sedes of a deep color) or a bit of soap inside the red ribbon.

I agree with Elizondo when he talks about "religious miscegenation" with reference to the miscegenation of Jesus the Galilean emigrating with his parents to Bethlehem, to Egypt, and then to Galilee; Elizondo also refers to the incident between Paul confronting Peter in Jerusalem "for a new cultural and religious synthesis for pagans was allowed."¹⁷¹ That is, it is a utopian myth to speak of a pure theology or a pure culture, because somehow we are all permeated by either internal or external influences. In the case of Abia Yala, we have virtually imposed a religious crossbreeding that ultimately has tried to hide the other reality. The ancestral spirituality has been latent in many cultures of Abia Yala; if such spirituality is lost, we would be talking about the total disappearance of a culture like Maya/mam.

The Maya/Man have managed to combine their two loves in a way that makes sense for them living in a new place. They are not syncretistic or polytheistic; they are not monotheistic like Christians. Rather, they combine well their ancestral traditions with the new faith they profess. Sometimes they eat hamburgers and hot dogs, but be sure, they never forget their *chuchitos* nor their *tamalitos de chipilin* or tortillas!

If Christianity accepts the pagan Halloween celebration, or puts Santa Claus in Christmas celebrations, why do Christians not understand the immense Maya worldview or Mayan spirituality as being an acceptable way of worshiping God in their own way? They live under the convenient grace of God, they live under the justifying and

¹⁷¹ Virgilio Elizondo, *El Futuro es Mestizo, Vivir Donde se Juntan las Culturas*, trans. Rosa María Icaza, (San Antonio: Mexican American Cultural Center, 1997), 93.

sanctifying grace of our good God, so no one should dare to judge the Maya/Mam spirituality.

4.8 The United Methodist Church and Indigenous Spiritualities

The United Methodist Church is much more open than the fundamentalist Christians toward some ancestral traditions. But how open is the Methodist Church to the religious practices of the Indigenous?

John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church, did not have a good experience in his first encounter with the natives during his short pastoral ministry in Georgia. Although he struggled to get close to them, he identified them as "noble savages" and treated them as "greedy," "drunk," and "hypocritical."¹⁷²

But today, *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* in the United States has two separate paragraphs of guidelines about Native Americans. It also created a special Sunday in the year, the third Sunday of Easter, to collect offerings in every local church as a reminder of their gifts, stating: "This Sunday serves to remind the Church of the gifts and contribution made by Native Americans to our society."¹⁷³

Maya/Man radical spirituality in the Methodist context

At the time of the Reformation, there was a transcendental change in history. Within the Reformation, there were moderates and reformers who were radicalized by

¹⁷² Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley y el Pueblo Metodista* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 61-64.

¹⁷³ *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2008* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2008), 193-194. Also see *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church 2012* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012), 585-587.

taking up weapons to seek changes in the Christian church at that time. Today, it is urgent to develop a practical spirituality (love for God and neighbors) that is able to transcend the walls of the Methodist churches. It is necessary to implement a radical practice of spirituality that will break the mold of mono-cultural aged Methodism (a church for old whites only) and be oblivious to the current demographic changes. The southeast of Memphis is no longer a center surrounded by houses of white families. Eighty percent of the neighborhood is now made up of Hispanic families, African-Americans, and other races. Only an authentic spirituality will reverse the dangerous path that the local anglo church has taken to maintain an unsustainable reality.

As a pastor, I worry about the flock of Maya/Mam young families (whose average age is 28) in my parish, especially the second generation born in the United States, who may no longer have the opportunity to maintain the Mayan spiritual practices of their parents. Currently, we mainly work with adults, but it is necessary to prepare children (whose average age is five) to face the future. I confess that this thesis raises more questions than it gives answers, but to opt for a genuine radical spirituality always poses a challenge. If indigenous spirituality managed to resist more than five hundred years of marginalization and contempt, it may also continue to resist for many more years, not least by cultivating its own radical spirituality.

The point of intersection in which we find ourselves is complex: the United States is a country that practices discrimination against the first native nations of this country; the Mayan/mam belong to a Methodist parish composed of a mostly white membership congregations reluctant to redirect toward a multicultural church; indigenous peoples

within The United Methodist Church are largely invisible for everyone thinks they are part of the Hispanic/Latino group. There is no enabling environment for Maya/Mam to be accepted. On the other hand, the Hispanic/mestizo society does not understand them and take advantage of them, they have no documents, health insurance, cannot drive a car because they cannot get a Social Security card and driver's license: at the moment, most everything is against them being treated as full human beings with equal rights and opportunities. However, we must remember that someone started digging the hill, someone thought that the land should be distributed equally to all, someone manifested their disagreement with the religious society in the sixteenth century and the Christian church changed dramatically, someone offered his house and his church to the "wetbacks" who come only to work. The Maya/Mam people is that someone who wants to change the closed structure of the Methodist Church and American society. They are the ones who, after more than five hundred years of oppression, continue to maintain a radical spirituality of resistance and peaceful struggle.

If we review the history a little, apparently the United Methodist Church is not really the one to receive a heterogeneous membership. Let's point out some negative events that happened in the past: one of the most high-profile massacres of United State indigenous was committed by a Methodist pastor on November 29, 1864.¹⁷⁴ On the other

¹⁷⁴ One of the massacres against the elderly, children, and innocent indigenous women, was committed precisely by a Methodist pastor, and it has been called "Sand Creek Massacre." See Sam Hodges, "Delegates Recall, Lament Sand Creek Massacre," *United Methodist Interpreter* Vol. 60, No. 4 (July-August 2016): 51.

hand, John Wesley, when he was in charge of the Anglican Church in Georgia, had no qualms about insulting the natives of this country.

It is true that the behavior and words of John Wesley were not the most appropriate contact with the first inhabitants of the United States. However, it is no less true that his theology regarding the "non-Christians" or "pagans" falls within the parameters of a wider ecumenism. Based on Romans 2: 11-15 John Wesley shows an open mind in the knowledge of God by the Gentiles (pagans) when he affirms:

The traces of truths ... are found in all nations.... God has in some measure given to everyone "The true light that [...] was coming into the world." So even those who "don't have the Law", that have no written copy of the Old Testament Law, nevertheless see the "Law in themselves". These people of the world "show the proof of the Law", in their lives. They understand the basic principles of it. Though they don't have the actual Scriptures, still the Law is "written on their hearts" by the same hand which wrote on the tablets of stone, "their consciences affirm it", whether they end up being faithful to what they know or not faithful to it.¹⁷⁵

Along the same lines as Wesley, John Hick criticizes the exclusivity of Christianity, citing the centrality of God. Ptolemy said that the earth was the center of the universe, while Nicolaus Copernicus (437-1543) argued that the sun, not the earth, was the center of the universe; similarly, Hick says that Christianity is not the center of the

¹⁷⁵ Justo Gonzales, ed., *Obras de Wesley, Tomo IV, Sermones, IV* (Franklin: Providence House Publishers, 1996), 115. The following statement of John Wesley confirms this position: "I do not think any living being has the right to sentence all pagan and Mohammedans to damnation. It is better to leave it in the hands of Him who made them, who is the Father of all spirits and all flesh, who is also the God of the pagans as well as Christians, and whoever does not hate or abhor anything that has fact. See César Paredes, "Soberanía de Dios" *Wesley Hereje* (Blog), August 16, 2011, <http://destino.blogcindario.com/2011/08/00182-john-wesley-hereje.html>.

religious universe but God is the center and around Him orbit Christianity and other faiths.¹⁷⁶

I think that The United Methodist Church, despite its limitations and the momentary outbursts that its founder John Wesley uttered in the past, is a church that has theological and biblical bases that favor a better understanding of indigenous spirituality; therefore the incursion of the Maya/Mam in this United Methodist Church should be accompanied by a Methodist leadership that can understand this population, pulling it out of invisibility and helping it to develop in this country, while also respecting their ethnic and religious specificity.

The Maya/Mam spirituality concept of God is dual. This particular way to practice their spirituality seems like prophet Jeremiah buying a property in the midst of the Babylonian exile, or like the English Levellers trying to keep alive the dream and the reality of an equitable distribution of the common land. They were expelled from their original land and now they try to sing in foreign lands, practicing their own spirituality in this new social and religious context, combining their ancestral Mayan faith and Christian faith, within The United Methodist Church.

¹⁷⁶ Jean Claude Basset, *El Diálogo Interreligioso, Oportunidad para la Fe o Decadencia de la Misma* (Bilbao: Desclee de Brower, 1999), 41-42.

CHAPTER 5

A TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP PROPOSAL

In order to turn this research into some concrete actions, in this chapter I make some practical transformative proposals for how the Metro District of The United Methodist Church in Memphis, Tennessee can better understand the situation of their new brothers and sisters of Mayan/Mam indigenous origin, appreciate and allow everyone to practice their particular kind of Christian spirituality, and become a more inclusive church. The path that I'm proposing for the transformation of the church will give visibility to Mayan/Mam spirituality. That path necessitates an aggressive internal campaign of information and acceptance of the new reality within its denominational boundaries. The reward will be to enrich the denomination and avert a catastrophe among the second generation Maya/Mam by both accepting them and welcoming their practice of spirituality.

5.1 Toward Transformative Leadership

Fluker says: “Every great leader who has brought about creative change and transformation has done so with a community of fellow travelers who are organized around vision, mission, and specific goals and strategies.”¹⁷⁷ In the case of El Redentor, I

¹⁷⁷ Fluker, 6.

wanted to take a practical theological approach to change. In a way that is particularly helpful for our case of the deeply historically embedded Maya/Mam that now find themselves in a very alien contemporary Memphis context, Claire E. Wolfteich explains that

practical theology is concerned, among other things, with critical and transformative appropriation of historical traditions in and for contemporary contexts. ... We have yet to realize this vision of an “aesthetic-ethical correlation” toward the end of developing not simply prophetic but rather “mystical-prophetic practical theologies.”¹⁷⁸

The Asbury United Methodist Church definitely needs a change in leadership if the Mayan/Mam congregation is to feel welcome and flourish there. Currently, the Mayan/Mam members are made to feel like second-class citizens at that church, particularly now, after the changes, when they are no longer treated as partners but simply a strange tenant. Something needs to be transformed in this unequal reality.

James MacGregor Burns speaks of two types of leadership by pointing out differences between transactional and transforming leadership.¹⁷⁹ The transactional leadership creates political patronage, while the second “looks for potential motives in followers, it seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower.” In the case of Metro District UMC and our “landlord” Asbury UMC, it seems that those in leadership are trying to hold on to their power to maintain the status quo. But in so doing,

¹⁷⁸ Claire E. Wolfteich, “Practices of ‘Unsayings’: Michel de Certeau, Spirituality Studies, and Practical Theology,” *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 12, no. 2 (2012): 163.

¹⁷⁹ James MacGregor Burns, *Transforming Leadership: A New Pursuit of Happiness* (New York: Grove Press, 2003), 5.

they are not leading the current ecclesial environment to a real transformation. There is a transactional type of leadership.

How can The United Methodist Church as a denomination and Asbury UMC in particular partner with its Maya/Mam members so that they no longer feel anonymous, and in a way that does not add more pain to the daily suffering that happens because they are poor and exploited indigenous immigrants, moreover immigrants who are very much in the minority? The leadership of the denomination can use its administrative structures to transform the poverty and marginalisation of the Maya/Mam so that they receive equal treatment from any Caucasian church. In particular, I have observed that Mayan/Mam families would welcome a comprehensive program for children born in the United States and those who have recently migrated. For example, it will be good to take advantage of the annual United Methodist Lakeshore Camp's summer camp, so that especially immigrant children and their parents can get involved in it. At the same time, the “El Redentor” church should organize Bible clubs and studies with bilingual leaders hired for this purpose.

According to the commitment that some members of Asbury UMC are showing with the well-being of children, it seems that closer work to help the Maya/Mam and their children is particularly an attainable goal.

5.2 Confronting Challenges

This research would be incomplete if it did not suggest concrete proposals for transformative actions for the community I engage in my ministry.

As I wrote in Chapter three about “Maya/Mam resistance,” we are not referring to a group of people who are completely assimilated into the culture of the United States, in so doing diluting their identity and spirituality. On the contrary, we are talking about a living people that for over five hundred years has withstood all the ideological, religious, economic, social, and cultural subjugation that the invaders imposed on them. No wonder they can shout: "They ripped our fruits, cut our branches, burnt our trunks, but they could never kill our roots."¹⁸⁰

So how might we mitigate the daily drama that these indigenous migrants experience living in the U.S.? What to do on behalf of the second generation of Maya/Mam immigrants? Or for those youth and those children who are born with Anglo-Saxon names but with the Mam indigenous surnames, babbling the Maya/Mam language, the Spanish language and English language, so that these and future generations of Maya/Mam can preserve their cultural roots and the rich but ebbing diversity of this world?

The fourth verse of the National Anthem of Guatemala, composed in 1887, states:

“Recostada en el Ande soberbio,
de dos mares al ruido sonoro,
bajo el ala de grana y de oro
te adormeces del bello **quetzal**;
Ave indiana que vive en tu escudo,
paladión que protege tu suelo,
-ojalá que remonte su vuelo
más que el **cóndor** y el **águila real!**
CORO
-¡Ojalá que remonte su vuelo

¹⁸⁰ This is a common saying among the different movements of Abia Yala continent, to refer to the continuity of cultures that still refuse to die.

más que el **cóndor** y el **águila real**,
y en sus alas levante hasta el cielo,
Guatemala, tu nombre inmortal!”¹⁸¹

(Leaning against the imposing Andine Mountains,
with the mighty rumbling of two seas
under a wing of crimson and gold
you drowse on the shadow of the beautiful **Quetzal**

Indian fowl that lives on your crest,
paladin that protects your land,
¡Might it fly even higher
than the **condor** and the bald **eagle**!

CHORUS

¡Might it fly even higher
than the **condor** and the bald **eagle**
and upon its wings carry up to heaven,
Guatemala, your undying name!)¹⁸²

This evokes the indigenous thought of the immortality of the mythical Kiché indigenous hero Tecum Uman¹⁸³ who, after his death in the battle against the European invader, is said to have become the majestic bird Quetzal. This bird represents the hope of the resurrection of the Maya people. The author of the National Anthem shows us his

¹⁸¹ Taken from deguate.com “Himno Nacional de Guatemala,” accessed February 20, 2017, <http://www.deguate.com/artman/publish/hist-simbolospatrios/el-himno-nacional-de-guatemala.shtml#.WJzW3RiZORs>. The author of the lyrics was the Cuban poet José Joaquín Palma, who shared the libertarian dreams of the hero of the Cuban independence, José Martí.

¹⁸² English version of the Guatemalan National Anthem, taken from Lyrics Translate, the bold highlighting is mine, accessed February 20, 2017, <http://lyricstranslate.com/es/himno-nacional-de-guatemala-guatemalan-national-anthem.html>.

¹⁸³ Although the government of Guatemala declared him a national hero in 1960, the historicity of Tecun Human has been questioned. However Robert Carmack brought to light in 1973 the ancient Indian manuscript entitled K'oyoi through which he could prove the historicity of the national hero Kiché Tecun Human. Guillermo Paz Cárcamo, *La máscara de Tekum, Ri Uk'oj Tekum* (Guatemala City: Editorial Cholsamaj, 2006), 15, 97. See also the following document, in which Carmack refers to Tekum: Roberto M. Carmack, *Kik' Aslemaal Le K'iche' Aab'*, *Historia Social de los K'iches* (Guatemala City: Editorial Cholsamaj, 2001), 39. Also, see Issuu web page about Titulo K'oyoi, the ancient Kiché history, accessed February 9, 2017, https://issuu.com/mesoamericana/docs/cronicas_ii.

wide vision of the great homeland "Abia Yala" took into account the mythical symbols of the three regions of the continent.

Looking to the future, there may be a possibility that the Maya/Mam community and other indigenous nationalities of South América and Central America can join the indigenous movements in México, the United States, and Canada, in an effort to revive the myth of the union of the condor, the quetzal, and the eagle, where the condor represents the peoples of Abya Yala South, the quetzal represents Abia Yala Center, and eagle represents Abia Yala North (México, United States and Canadá)¹⁸⁴ to claim their rights, to share their struggles and their rich spiritual heritage as indigenous under a common situation in the Diaspora and in the oppression, even when they live in their own country. However, I do not think we'll find reliable handholds in this country for such a thing to happen, since it has completely marginalized us as the original nations of "Turtle Island" (the name of U.S. in the indigenous language) through the ill treatment that Catholic invaders inflicted on the first nations of this country. Think of the shocking and violent usurpation of their lands, of the ethnic holocaust the U.S. has committed,¹⁸⁵ think

¹⁸⁴ This myth is a common dream in the thinking of indigenous movements of Abia Yala, which expresses the desire and efforts of unification in the continent. An attempt to articulate this dream (although it does not have in its agenda the theme of indigenous spirituality) can be found on the "Enlace Indígena" website, which describes the common axes of vindication like: Indigenous Peoples, - self determination, - territoriality, Biodiversity, - self-development and interculturality, and other key issues affecting Indigenous Peoples, including also International Agreements such as ALCA, CAFTA, TLC, NAFTA, and MERCOSUR. Enlace Indígena, Cumbre Continental de Pueblos y Organizaciones Indígenas, "El Encuentro del Cóndor, el Quetzal y el Águila," Buenos Aires, Agosto 15, 2005 accessed February 8, 2017, http://www.movimientos.org/es/enlacei/show_text.php3%3Fkey%3D5124.

¹⁸⁵ This cumulative figure is being revealed by the current protest movements against the arbitrary construction of pipeline that will pass through Indian reservations in Canada and the United States, especially the Sioux of the North, with the slogan "Reject the Dakota Access Pipelines." See: "Stop the Dakota Access Pipeline," accessed October 31, 2016, <https://actionsprout.io/AA7D52/initial>.

of how they have turned a majority into a minority group, of how they have imposed on indigenous survivors the shameful system of "indigenous reservations" through which Indians lost the right to land ownership.¹⁸⁶

Undoubtedly, the author who wrote the words of the national anthem of Guatemala was deeply moved by the idea of an Abia Yala united under the symbol of the wings of the sacred birds, the condor, the eagle, and the quetzal that go up the mountains of oppression and pain, towards the skies of hope and freedom of the Abia Yala peoples who have been dominated since the European invasion.

But on the other hand, at the church level, it might be a good idea to contact the Native American and Indigenous Ministries in the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church and explore possibilities of coordination of initiatives on behalf of all our marginalized peoples. Perhaps through these church offices we can offer an alternative to help transform the current situation of indigenous people in the Diaspora, trying to join forces to seek the well being of the indigenous Native American Churches and the indigenous churches of South America, Central America, and Mexico in the diaspora.

In light of the ill-treatment that the Native American indigenous are currently receiving in situations like this planned pipeline across their lands, it is possible that the targets of the new Trump government's attack are not only Muslims and other immigrants, but also the indigenous people of the United States. This confirms that the Abia Yalan indigenous live under a common denominator: oppression and disrespect for their rights.

¹⁸⁶ For more details about the indigenous situation in the United States, see the document of the International Working Group on Indigenous affairs, in, IWGIA, Grupo Internacional de Trabajo Sobre Asuntos Indígenas, "Pueblos indígenas en los Estados Unidos," accessed October 26, 2016, <http://www.iwgia.org/regiones/america-del-norte/estados-unidos>.

Since the near extinction of the original inhabitants of the United States, the annexation of the northern states of Mexico, and the treatment of "Chicanos," Chinese, and African-Americans, the history of the United States has been permeated by the struggle of the civil rights of those who are not white-skinned Caucasians. Within The United Methodist Church such discrimination has cost a lot, and even today it is difficult for the Hispanic population to enjoy the same privileges of the white membership. With much effort, in 1992 the office of the "National Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministry" was created within The United Methodist Church; also before that, the Hispanic caucus created the "Methodists Associated Representing the Cause of Hispanic Americans" (MARCHA),¹⁸⁷ in order to represent the interests of the Spanish-speaking membership resident in the United States and Puerto Rico. The magazine "The Interpreter" and other materials are also published in Spanish. A space has been created within the church to care for lay and clergywomen, and MARCHA has emphasized youth and Hispanic/Latinos in the area of leadership training for children. On the other hand, many Methodist churches in United States have opened their doors to Hispanic ministries; some Conferences allocate a budget for Hispanic Ministry and have offices specifically

¹⁸⁷ MARCHA was created in 1971 to provide care to the Hispanic population. In regards to the Hispanic/Latino population, we find the following data on the websites of The United Methodist Church:

"The Hispanic/Latino population is expected to more than double from 53.3 million to 128.8 million by 2060, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The United Methodist Church, with more than 12 million members, has 72,811 Hispanic/Latino lay members, served by 664 clergy in more than 400 churches," by Tim Tanton, "MARCHA focuses on what Hispanics could give," Boston, August 29, 2013, accessed October 25, 2016, <http://www.umc.org/news-and-media/marcha-focuses-on-what-hispanics-could-give>.

dedicated to this ministry. As I mentioned before, the indigenous presence is invisible within the cluster "Hispanic/Latino" and among The United Methodist Church in general.

How can we present a transformative project for the Maya/Mam and other peoples of Abia Yala so that they may have a place of welcome to live in this country, in which their ethnicity –and by extension their spirituality—is treated with the respect it deserves?

This is the challenge going forward: To develop a transformative task starting with my community and reaching to the level of other conferences of The United Methodist Church in the United States.

5.3 No Birds or Mice: The Second Generation of Maya/Mam Indigenous

The bat is an animal that has the body characteristics of a mouse, but also resembles a bird because it has wings and can fly. So it is a land animal, or a bird? Similarly, the second generation descendants of Maya/Mam immigrants in some senses do not seem to have a clear ethnic identity; their parents speak Mam but now also communicate in Spanish, they lived in poverty and now they are in the Diaspora, struggling to survive in the unfamiliar environment of the United States society and in the midst of a precarious immigration limbo that does not allow them to live in peace. Children hear some of the native language of their parents, but they also go to school where they learn to eat Cheetos and burgers, and are addicted to Coca Cola and electronic games. No longer are their heroes *Hun Hunan Puj* or *Tecun Human*; now they love to go to McDonalds and their heroes are Spiderman and Mickey Mouse. They no longer want

to eat tortillas, *chuchito* or the "*tamalitos de chipilín*." As they learn to speak English with facility, they quickly move away culturally from the Maya/Mam environment of their heritage. They are living between three different worlds which cannot be identified 100%, for it is hybrid. This new generation are not Hispanic/Latino, doesn't have Caucasian features, yet they are not considered indigenous Mam, although they have physical features that clearly identify them as being such.

5.4 A Tentative Proposal

My tentative proposal in response to this fast-evolving situation is to transform the current church situation into a multicultural church where the Mayan/Mam members are visible, treated as subjects, and have an active role in the parish.

Specifically in this local church, by understanding their origins and idiosyncrasies, the English-speaking community will be able to better understand their Mayan/Mam brothers and sisters in Christ. With that knowledge, there will be a greater possibility that a transformational multicultural ministry can and will develop in the Methodist Metro District of Memphis, Tennessee.

The Anglo congregation can also work to understand the daily pressures and fears under with the Maya/Mam live. This living nightmare of Mayan immigrants pursued by the Immigration Office Emanuel Perotti describes from his own experience:

This discriminatory persecution and mass deportation of thousands of immigrants are causing a profound irreversible and irreparable damage to thousands of families, mainly children who have been separated from their parents, or at least one of their parents; the damage is not only economic loss which obviously cause many immediate impacts on families, but also the emotional damage; the possible psychological trauma due to anxiety and anguish of suffering this separation, or at

least it gets to happen to the family, creates a continuous and severe depression to anxiety in thousands of these children of immigrants."¹⁸⁸

The situation described by Perotti becomes still more dramatic when he emphasizes the consequences of this immigration drama for children of immigrants:

These children of immigrants are condemned to live a marginalized life, full of shortcomings, to be considered a "low class," "a pariah," "unaccepted" and "misfits" by the dominant society. They are condemned to live in "ghettos" or slums, where people of limited resources live, where crime and violence are rampant.¹⁸⁹

These are more than sufficient reasons to pay attention to this ethnic community; for this research includes an integral advocacy of their migratory status,¹⁹⁰ and because they are now members of a historic church called The United Methodist Church. This justification also lies in the vulnerable situation of these families who are in danger of condemning to an imminent misery the second generation of the Maya/Mam.¹⁹¹ Are Christians not called to respond to such persons, the "least of these"?

¹⁸⁸ Emmanuel Perotti, *I.C.E.: Robando Sueños, Destruyendo Vidas, La Continúa Luchas de los Inmigrantes por Una Vida Digna en los Estados Unidos* (Bloomington: Xlibris Corporation, 2009), 25. This is a testimonial book in which Perotti tells how he suffered in his own flesh the horrors of being an undocumented immigrant in the United States.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ At the moment, fear and panic have taken over indigenous families, due to the decrees issued by President Trump allowing the hunt for immigrants in order to deport them. They will need legal counsel, psychological and spiritual care, and programs the church can provide to protect the integrity of indigenous families. See the White House's document. The White House Office of the Press Secretary, Executive Order: Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements, January 25, 2017, accessed February 20, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/25/executive-order-border-security-and-immigration-enforcement-improvements>.

¹⁹¹ In order to do something concrete for the reign of God, I am attaching in the appendix a tentative project called "kojb'il" (Community) INDIGENOUS PASTORAL RELIEF.

5.4.1 Levels of Organization

At the local level, the idea is to organize the Mayan/Mam community of the El Redentor UMC to begin a plan to support their primary and urgent needs, not losing sight of the need to pay attention to their children, who constitute the second generation of indigenous migrants. The initial task will be to address their concerns regarding their migratory situation, creating a contingency for para-legal support, and spiritual counseling in the face of possible mass deportations that the new Trump administration has already begun to implement. Outside the "El Redentor UMC" community, it will be necessary to attend indigenous churches in the Memphis metropolitan area, which are mostly Pentecostal groups with undocumented indigenous leadership. It will necessary to articulate an indigenous movement in Memphis, TN and to seek alliances with indigenous movements and civil rights movements within and outside The United Methodist Church.

Native Americans have a representation in The United Methodist Church through the Native American and Indigenous Ministries General Board of Global Ministries and they seek institutional repentance from the Methodist church in the face of historical abuses against them. It might make sense to add to their agenda the protection of the civil rights of indigenous people from the southern Turtle Island.

5.4.2 Other Resources

It may be possible to request other resources from the World Council of Churches (WCC), of which The United Methodist Church is a member; in the WCC there is an extension unit that works to support the vulnerable indigenous peoples of the world.

Finally, I will plan to seek an international articulation regarding the solidarity of indigenous, trade union, peasant organizations, and civil rights protection organizations (of immigrants and refugees) at the regional and global level, in order to find protection in eventual cases of aggression against the physical and spiritual integrity of this indigenous population in the diaspora.

5.4.3 Koj'bil: Indigenous Pastoral Relief

If I learned anything from this wonderful doctoral program of the School of Theology of the University of Boston, it is the challenge that theoretical work should land on concrete proposals and transformative actions for the Maya/Mam communities in the Diaspora. There are thousands of beautifully elaborate dreams in diverse academic centers that are the fruits of thousands of hours of research. Moreover, investigated subjects (guinea pigs) have received little or no reward for their valuable contributions. Indigenous communities are tired of being filmed and photographed because they know that many of their contributions have only served to feed the morbid and voracious appetite of intellectual societies; their indigenous knowledge has been patented with no reward to them; many books on anthropology, sociology, theology, psychology, medicine, novels, science fiction, and films have been produced, whose profits are rarely if ever shared with the real owners of that intellectual property, who are the Indigenous peoples. Many academic centers have not been able to produce transformative results, capable of attacking the roots of problems and their work has remained purely descriptive. My project attempts to apply a transformative and pragmatic action plan to the Maya/Mam indigenous population in Memphis, TN; in other words, it is a matter of

converting the noun into a verb; the aim is to improve the standard of living of indigenous people in the diaspora, promoting their cultural values by providing them with comprehensive care of themselves and their children; it is a matter of imitating Christ who put into practice what he preached, although his pragmatic attitude cost him death on the cross.

The ultimate intention of this thesis project is to produce a radical transformation in leadership in the Metro District of The United Methodist Church in Memphis so that it can become an inclusive church that accepts and assimilates the challenges of the current reality that surrounds it, especially with the presence of an indigenous community of faith that is struggling for its physical and spiritual survival.

The phenomenon of the second generation of indigenous people will need understanding and the implementation of a serious plan of action so that those children do not drop out of school and join the growing army of unemployed and unfulfilled youths who will later become a burden on American society.

The tentative proposal includes the implementation of a plan of action that helps to organize the indigenous community at the local level and has connections with other social forces that help them to enforce their rights. The plan of action might include the following areas:

To support the education of indigenous children and youth. Although education is officially ‘free,’ they need an alternative education in their own culture, and some resources are necessary to avoid “bullying” problems and

desertions. In addition, it is necessary to create scholarship funds for indigenous students and children.

To improve the living standards indigenous immigrant families. We can improve living conditions by offering paralegal attention, language assistance (ESL), medical care, and employment that offers fair wages/salaries.

To promote cultural and spiritual values. To enhance the life of the community by organizing cultural workshops, children's holiday weeks, pastoral visits, women's welfare groups and spiritual care.

To create general assistance funds and help. To avoid dependency, it is better to offer help that will in time become unnecessary. In the meantime, transportation and translation service will be necessary in some cases. Also, some families will need clothes and material assistance.

The following activities might be executed:

- Organize a cultural survival program for children, youth, and adult indigenous that would include language, clothing, music, dance and arts.
- Promote health assistance for indigenous immigrants
- Organize workshops about their legal rights as indigenous immigrants
- Offer psychological therapy attention for youth and children

- Create an after-school program for indigenous children and youth
- Organize transportation and translation services for immigrants
- Implement indigenous family counseling
- Organize a Festival of Cultures
- Support Guatemalan mobile consulates
- ESL classes for adult indigenous
- Create contingency actions in case of deportations
- Organize a Sanctuary Movement for indigenous immigrants
- Create a paralegal service to help people with immigration issues
- Offer Maya/Mam culture workshops to the public

In order to implement the aforementioned action plan, it will be necessary to create an Indigenous non-profit organization, with human and material resources to serve the indigenous in the diaspora. The first step will be a consultation with the District Superintendent and the Bishop, in order to coordinate an effective "Extension Pastoral Ministry" for indigenous immigrants, within The United Methodist Church structure.

This work does not end here. This is a starting point for a transformative ministry with the United Methodist Church, seeking to improve the work of the Church that Jesus inaugurated more than two thousand years ago.

CONCLUSIONS

The Maya/Mam population of my parish is a community struggling to maintain their spirituality amid an adverse situation. The ancestors of this community have resisted the invasion, colonization, and extreme poverty for more than five hundred years. I have attempted to take a radical position regarding the narrative of the indigenous Maya/ Mam history.

There is a White Legend and a Black Legend through which one chooses to see their history, but in the final analysis, we must exercise moderation to recognize the contribution of both worlds, in order to cultivate a practical spirituality.

The Maya/Mam have to fight a world that has treated them badly, living in a context that is depressing and full of racial exploitation and environmental degradation, on account of which they have had to migrate north to survive. After reaching the United States they have encountered a reality that causes them further suffering, first because they have no documents, and then because they are invisibilized by society and by The United Methodist Church to which they now belong.

The practice of radical spirituality of the Maya/Mam intertwines love for the land of their ancestors, their food, clothing, art, culture, and their ancient spirituality expressed through rituals and myths. Many indigenous sectors have lived their spirituality through camouflaged expressions, as a way to try to maintain their culture and faith. They have developed many ways of resistance and survival over the course of five hundred years.

The practice of indigenous spirituality is much older than the theology of Liberation in Latin America. They believe in God as a duality, they are not polytheists or animists, nor pantheists. Sometimes their spirituality seems monotheistic but in fact the Maya/Mam maintain a singular spiritual practice. The Maya/Mam are the modern Diggers, acting like Jeremiah in adverse situations and singing in a strange land where native indigenous are suffering marginalization. The situation of such migrants is difficult, but they are not alone in this struggle. The Maya/Mam also have to choose to live with the two loves: Christian spirituality and indigenous spirituality.

Finally, the Maya/Mam are a vulnerable ethnic group in a precarious migrant situation that needs a comprehensive plan of advocacy. In addition, the second generation of Maya/Mam in the U.S. needs special attention; it is necessary to create a transformative project for them, because there are neither a “bird” nor a “mouse” but a “bat.” Because of this lack of clearly recognizable identity, they will have problems in the future, for example in advancing in their education. They will also experience the lack of cultural groundedness in the spirituality of their parents and grandparents because of living in the Diaspora where it is hard to continue one’s culture and become assimilated and respected.

It is these practical ways of transformation that I am proposing The UMC invest in on behalf of and in partnership with the Maya/Mam United Methodists in the United States.

APPENDIX 1 Proposal Plan: Koj’bil: Indigenous Pastoral Relief

*METRO DISTRICT
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

*EL REDENTOR
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

“kojb’il”
(Community)

INDIGENOUS PASTORAL RELIEF

By:
Rev. Goyo De la Cruz

*“They ripped our fruits,... They cut our branches,...
They burned our trunk,... but they could not kill our roots”*

Introduction:

The United States of America is a country on the basis of Formed Continuing migration from all continents. Particularly in the state of Tennessee, we can see a rich mix of cultures that the Methodist Church has to take them into account to apply a comprehensive mission and efficient delivery of the Gospel of Salvation.

In this geographic segment of North America, diverse cultures converge. Apart from First Nations (Native -Americans), we have the White Anglo-Saxon culture and African-American; we also have a good percentage of immigrant population from Mexico, Central America and South America; also we have people from the Caribbean, Asia and the latest European migrations (like the Irish) who maintain a rich cultural heritage. However, there is a quite invisible Maya/Mam Methodist indigenous community from Guatemalan origin, which needs an urgent attention, because these families are in the oblivion, and the second generation of Mames is in a vulnerable situation.

Contextual Gospel:

Christ is the example of true contextualization, which became human to rescue us (John 1:14). The Methodist Church with its motto “open minds”, “open hearths” and “open doors” aims to reach all cultures, respecting the diversity of each one of them. The project takes the form of cultural inclusiveness, considering that God speaks to each culture in its own language and in their particular context.

1. NATURE OF PROJECT:

Integral attention to the indigenous community from Abia Yala origin, at Metro District UMC and El Redentor UMC (Counties: Shelby, Fayette and Tipton)

A) Vision – *Where we want to go?*

Where there is no vision, the people perish; (Prov. 29:18 KJ21)

Our Overall Vision:

- ❖ Connecting to the new *kojb'il* (community)
- ❖ Connecting Indigenous families to Make a Difference

The vision is to develop a healthy indigenous community and fully serving God and the community. The Indigenous Pastoral Ministries proposed:

(1) - Maintain a balanced foundation between gospel, culture, fellowship, education, and social develop to the indigenous in the Diaspora.

(2) - Effectively fulfil the purpose of our Lord Jesus Christ to be one, as the Popol Wuj says: May **all rise** up, may **no one** be **left behind**.”

(3) - Making a difference serving God and the neighbourhoods.

B) Mission – (*How Kojb’il will achieve the vision?*)

1. To support the education of indigenous children and youth. Although education is officially ‘free’, they need an alternative education in their own culture, and some resources are necessary to implement in order to avoid “bullying” problems and desertions. In addition, it is necessary to create a scholarship funds for indigenous students and children.

2. To improve the living standards indigenous immigrant families. We can improve living conditions through para-legal attention, language assistance (ESL), medical care, and jobs with fair wages.

3. To promote cultural and spiritual values. To enhance the life of the community by organizing cultural workshops, children’s holiday weeks, pastoral visits, women’s welfare groups and spiritual care.

4. Create general assistance funds. In general, it is better to provide assistance that will enable people to become independent. However, transportation and translation service will be necessary in some cases. Also, some families will need clothes and material assistance.

2. MINISTRY TO THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY:

Working beyond intra -ecclesial work and extra-ecclesial work, as well as John Wesley said, "The world is my parish":

- a) Cultural survival program for children, youth and adult indigenous: Language, clothing, music, dance, and art.
- b) Health assistance for indigenous immigrants
- c) Psychological therapy for youth and children
- d) Workshops about their legal rights as indigenous immigrants
- e) After-school program for indigenous children and youth
- f) Transportation and translation service for immigrants
- g) Indigenous family counseling
- h) Festival of Cultures
- i) Guatemalan mobile consulate
- j) ESL classes for adult indigenous
- k) Contingency plans to deal with deportations
- l) Sanctuary Movement for indigenous immigrants
- m) Paralegal services for immigration issues
- n) Maya/Mam culture workshops for the public.

3. GENERAL OBJECTIVES AND SECONDARY PURPOSES:

- a) Provide comprehensive attention to the indigenous immigrants and their families.
- b) Empowering the rights of immigrants.
- c) Providing advocacy and compassionate programs for immigrants.
- d) Promote intercultural dialogue between the indigenous and other cultures.

4. STRATEGIC PLAN: Our focus will be all immigrant populations in the area; however, our specific emphasis will be the indigenous immigrant families.

5. ACTIVITIES AND CHRONOLOGICAL BENCHMARKS

July 2017

- a) Have a Vision/Core Values/ and office location
- b) Have a budget and donors list contacts
- c) Checking indigenous churches in the Metro District area
- d) Have a Indigenous Pastoral Committee Board in the District
- e) Immigration advocacy – Paralegal services
- f) Have a list of indigenous families to assist
- g) Health assistance for indigenous immigrants
- h) Transportation and interpretation services

July 2018

- a) Have a consolidated Indigenous Pastoral Committee Board in the District that meets every month
- b) Promote ESL classes with 30 students and 3 teachers (3 levels)
- c) Health assistance for immigrants
- d) Have a weekly cultural program for children
- e) Have an after-school program for 50 indigenous children
- f) Transportation and interpretation services
- g) Promote Festival of Cultures in multicultural churches (October)
- h) Support Guatemalan Mobile consulate with El Redentor /Asbury/Peace Tree/ Aldersgate, and Trinity UMC (November)
- i) Promote a Sanctuary Movement Committee in the District area coordinating with two churches.

July 2019

- a) Have a consolidated indigenous pastoral Committee Board in the District meet every month
- b) Continuing ESL classes with 60 students and 5 teachers (3 levels)
- c) Health assistance for immigrants
- d) Continue after-school program for children
- e) Transportation and translation service for immigrants

- f) Continue Festival of Cultures in 3 multicultural churches (October)
- g) Attending Guatemalan mobile consulate with El Redentor /Asbury/Peace Tree/ Aldersgate, and Trinity UMC (November)
- h) Have 2 churches serving the “Sanctuary Movement”

July 2020

- a) Have a consolidated indigenous pastoral Committee Board in the District meet every month
- b) Continuing ESL classes for 100 students and 6 teachers (3 levels)
- c) Health assistance for immigrants
- d) Continue after-school program for children
- e) Transportation and translation service for immigrants
- f) Continue Festival of Cultures in 3 multicultural churches (October)
- g) Attending Guatemalan mobile consulate with El Redentor /Asbury/Peace Tree/ Aldersgate and Trinity UMC (November)
- h) Have 4 churches serving the “Sanctuary Movement”

6. AREAS OF INFLUENCE:

The influence areas are Shelby County, Tipton County, and Fayette County in Tennessee and Desoto County in the north of Mississippi.

7. RECIPIENTS OR BENEFICIARIES, DIRECT AND POTENTIAL

Our program will benefit primarily Maya/Mam indigenous, and potentially indigenous populations from Mexico, Central America, and South America; also the beneficiary group will be brothers and sisters from other countries.

8. Human resources, members of the commission, coordination group:

- a) District
- b) District Churches
- c) Indigenous Pastoral Committee Board
- d) Volunteers

9. Financial resources:

BUDGET

OPERATING/MINISTRY EXPENSES	BUDGETED AMOUNT
* <i>Budget Expenses</i>	\$ 120,000.00
* <i>Indigenous Ministries</i>	9,700.00
* <i>Marketing</i>	4,000.00
* <i>Outreach Ministry</i>	33,325.00

TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET

\$ 157,025.00

** Items are broken down below*

BUDGETED EXPENSES

Salaries	120,000.00
Pension	
Insurance	
<i>Total Expenses</i>	<u>120,000.00</u>

INDIGENOUS MINISTRIES

Office Supplies	2,000.00
Stationary	1,000.00
Maintenance	1,000.00
Internet	1,200.00
Phones	1,500.00
Education Expense	500.00
Conference Expense	2,000.00
Miscellaneous	500.00
<i>Total Indigenous Ministry Expenses</i>	9,700.00

MARKETING

Facebook <i>Indigenous</i> Ministries	600.00
---------------------------------------	--------

Website <i>Indigenous</i> Ministries	1,200.00
Mail Outs <i>Indigenous</i> Ministries	500.00
Printed Items <i>Indigenous</i> Ministries	500.00
Meals <i>Indigenous</i> Ministries	1,000.00
Miscellaneous	200.00
<i>Total Marketing Expenses</i>	4,00.00

OUTREACH MINISTRY

ESL Classes	\$ 6,325.00
Festival of Cultures	1,500.00
Medical Assistance	1,000.00
Immigration Assistance (Paralegal services)	20,000.00
Transportation Mileage	3,000.00
Sanctuary Movement for the indigenous Immigrants	500.00
Guatemalan mobile consulate	500.00
Miscellaneous	500.00
 Total Outreach Ministry	 \$ 33,325.00

APPENDIX 2 Letter to the Superintendent Rev. Dr. Harry Durbin and the Bishop Bill MacAlilly

01/30/17

Rev. Dr. Harry Durbin
Superintendent of Metro District UMC
Memphis TN.

Dear Doctor Harris,

It was a blessing to have had conversation with you the last January 26, where, among other things, I talked about missionary work with the immigrants living in the Memphis TN area.

As you are aware, my work in the mission area of the Metro District has to do with helping immigrants of different nationalities in the following matters: City Courts, Immigration Court, County Detention Center, Immigration Detention, Health Care, Vehicle Tickets payment, Police Affairs, Filing of Forms, Pastoral Counseling, Labor Matters, etc. In addition, I'm open a new Hispanic Ministry at Aldersgate UMC.

However, there is a good social segment made up of indigenous (non-Hispanic) immigrants who are suffering discrimination: because they are indigenous, not to speak Spanish or English, because they do not have documents and because they are poor. In the case of women indigenous, the matter is further aggravated; in addition, their children, as a second generation of indigenous immigrants, have several problems of adaptation between their ancestral background and the US society. For this reason, and with the knowledge of the Boston University School of Theology, where I'm doing my DMin studies, I have developed a project that I wish to carry out in the Memphis TN area.

For reasons of functionality, I hereby request that the Memphis Annual Conference UMC, through the Metro District UMC, provide me with the necessary legal procedures to execute the project as a "Non-Profit Organization" attached to the Metro district or to the Memphis Annual Conference in order to operate as an extension of the pastoral ministry toward these marginalized communities. To this end, I am attaching the Project "kojb'il" ("Community" in Maya/Mam language, which is the majoritarian indigenous group living in Memphis area) INDIGENOUS PASTORAL RELIEF (IPAR), to bring into consideration the Metro District and administrative instances of the Memphis Annual Conference UMC.

Please do not hesitate in call me if you need additional information.

In the love of Christ,

Rev. Goyo De la Cruz

- Copies: Bishop McAlilli

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Published Materials

- Abya Yala Publicaciones. “¿Quiénes Somos?” Accessed September 2, 2015.
<http://www.abayala.org/presentacion.php>.
- ACI-Press. “¿Se opone o no la ‘Teología india’ a las enseñanzas de la Iglesia?” Accessed December 7, 2015. <https://www.aciprensa.com/controversias/teologiaindia.htm>.
- Adogame, Afe, Rosswith Gerloff and Klaus Hock, eds. *Christianity in Africa and the African Diaspora: The Appropriation of a Scattered Heritage*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008.
- Agren, David. “Fearing Rape, Female Migrants Are Taking Birth Control Before Crossing The Border”, Fox News World,
<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2014/04/23/fearing-rape-female-migrants-are-taking-birth-control-before-crossing-border.html>.
- Aguilar Morales, Celumiel. “Un Acercamiento a la Teología Indígena desde la Cultura Mam.” Thesis of Th. D., comunidad Teológica de México, 30 de Mayo, 2015.
- ALAI. "Why GM crops are a threat to farmers, food sovereignty, health, and biodiversity on the planet." Accessed October 20, 2016. <http://www.alainet.org/es/active/76040>.
- Alvarado G., María Ester and Patricia Velásquez M. “El Español de las Mayorías y Minorías en México: ‘Crónica de Una Política de la Enseñanza del Español.’” In *El Español Lengua del Mestizaje y la Interculturalidad*, Manuel Perez Gutierrez and José Coloma Maestre, eds., 113-118. Madrid: Septiembre del 2003.
- Bacon, David. *Communities Without Borders: Images and Voices from the World of Migration*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006.
- . *El derecho a quedarse en casa: Cómo las políticas de Estados Unidos influyen en la migración Mexicana*. Mexico City: Grupo Planeta, 2015, Kindle.
- . *Illegal People: How Globalization Creates Migration and Criminalizes Immigrants*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2008.

- Baez, Fernando. *Nueva Historia Universal de la Destrucción de Libros: De las tablillas sumerias a la era digital*. Mexico City: Editorial Océano, 2014), Kindle.
- Barrera Vásquez, Alfredo and Silvia Rendón. *El Libro de los Libros de Chilam Balam*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1990.
- Basset, Jean Claude. *El Diálogo Interreligioso, Oportunidad para la Fe o Decadencia de la Misma*. Bilbao: Desclee de Brower, 1999.
- Bastos, Santiago y Aura Cumes. *Mayanización y vida cotidiana: La Ideología Multicultural en la Sociedad Guatemalteca. Volume 2, Los Estudios de caso*. Guatemala City: Cholsamaj, 2007.
- BBC Mundo, Redacción 2016. “Las verdaderas cifras de los hispanos en EE.UU. y cuánto poder tienen.” (March 15). Accessed October 30, 2016. http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2016/03/160304_internacional_elecciones_eeuu_2016_cifras_latinos_if.
- Burgos, Elizaberth. *Me Llamo Rigoberta Menchú y Así Me Nació la Conciencia*. Mexico City: Siglo XXI Editores, 2007.
- Burns, James MacGregor. *Transforming Leadership: A New Pursuit of Happiness*. New York: Grove Press, 2003.
- Busqueda de Espacios Para la Vida, I Encuentro Continental de Teologías y Filosofías Afro, Indígena y Cristiana*. Quito: Editorial Abya Yala, 1994.
- Cabrera, Edgar H. *El Calendario Maya, Su Origen y su Filosofía*. San José, CR: Ediciones Liga Maya, 1995.
- Carmack, Roberto M. *Kik' Aslemaal Le K'iche' Aab'*, *Historia Social de los K'iches*. Guatemala City: Editorial Cholsamaj, 2001.
- Carreño, Alberto María. *Vocabulario de la Lengua Mame: Compuesto por el Padre Predicador Fray Diego de Reynoso de la Orden de La Merced*. Mexico City: Departamento de Imprenta de la Secretaría de Fomento, 1916.
- CENAMI. Accessed on December 7, 2015. http://cenami.org/?page_id=150.
- Cervera, César. “El mito del ‘Genocidio español’: las enfermedades acabaron con el 95% de la población.” España – Madrid: April 28, accessed September 28, 2016. <http://www.abc.es/espana/20150428/abci-mito-genocidio-america-201504271956.html>.

- Chapela, Luz and Raquel Ahuja. *La Diversidad cultural y Lingüística*. Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública, Coordinación General de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe, 2006.
- Chomsky, Noam. *Hegemony or Survival, America's Quest for Global Dominance*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003. Kindle.
- Comisión Editorial de Yucatán. *El Obispado de Yucatán, Historia de su Fundación y de sus Obispos, Primer Tomo 1519 – 1676*. Mérida: Primera Edición, Fondo Editorial de Yucatán, Febrero de 1979.
- Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. “Declaration ‘Dominus Iesus’ On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church.” Accessed October 15, 2016.
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html.
- Cruz, Alberto. *Pueblos Originarios en América, Guía Introductoria de su Situación*. Pamplona: Aldea Alternatiba Desarrollo, 2010.
- CUC. “Lucha, Resistencia e Historia.” Accessed October 20, 2016.
<http://www.cuc.org.gt/materiales/historiadecuc.pdf>.
- de la Garza, Mercedes, compiler. *Literatura Maya*. Venezuela: Biblioteca Ayacucho, segunda edición, 1992.
- de Las Casas, Bartolomé. *Breve Relación de la Destrucción de Las Indias*. Sevilla: Impresa por Juan F, Hurtel, 1821.
- Diccionario histórico, geográfico, estadístico y biográfico del estado Lara*. Barquisimeto: Imprenta y Librería de J. A. Segrestáa, 1883.
- Deguate.com “Himno Nacional de Guatemala”, accessed February 20, 2017,
<http://www.deguate.com/artman/publish/hist-simbolospatrios/el-himno-nacional-de-guatemala.shtml#.WJzW3RiZORs>.
- de Landa, Diego. “Relación de las cosas de Yucatán.” Barcelona: Red ediciones S.L., 2016. Kindle edition.
- de Monterroso, Matilde y Tomás Barrientos Quezada. “La Interculturalidad de los Lugares Sagrados: una perspectiva desde los sitios arqueológicos,” Guatemala City, 2009. Accessed March 27, 2017,
http://uvg.edu.gt/publicaciones/revista/volumenes/numero-22/Revista_22_22-28.pdf.

- de la Torre Villar, Ernesto. "Ah Nakuk Pech Historia y Crónica de Chac Xulub Chen." *Lecturas Históricas Mexicanas*, Universidad Autónoma de México. <http://www.historicas.unam.mx/publicaciones/publicadigital/libros/lecturas/histmex01.html>.
- Delavega, Elena. "2015 Memphis Poverty Fact Sheet (Data from 2014 ACS)," accessed April 17, 2017, <http://www.memphis.edu/socialwork/pdfs/20152povertyfactsheetwebversion.pdf>.
- Díaz-Polanco, Héctor. "Etnia, clase y cuestión nacional", Ponencia presentada al XIV Congreso Latinoamericano de Sociología, que tuvo lugar del 5 al 9 de octubre de 1981. <http://www.cuadernospoliticos.unam.mx/cuadernos/contenido/CP.30/30.6HectorDiaz.pdf>.
- Domingo Baguer, Ignacio. *Para Qué Han Servido los Libros*. Saragoza: Prensa de la Universidad de Saragoza, 2013.
- Dussel, Enrique. 1492 *El Encubrimiento del Otro "Hacia el origen del mito de la modernidad"*. La Paz: Centro de Información para el Desarrollo, 1994.
- Elizondo, Virgilio. *El Futuro es Mestizo, Vivir Donde se Juntan las Culturas*. San Antonio: Mexican American Cultural Center, 1997.
- . *Virgen de Guadalupe Madre de la Creación*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997.
- Enlace Indígena, Cumbre Continental de Pueblos y Organizaciones Indígenas. "El Encuentro del Cóndor, el Quetzal y el Águila," Buenos Aires, August 15, 2005 accessed February 8, 2017, http://www.movimientos.org/es/enlacei/show_text.php3%3Fkey%3D5124.
- Fédou, Michel. *Religiones en Diálogo, Las Religiones Según la Fe Cristiana*. Bilbao: Desclee de Brouwer, 2000.
- Fluker, Walter E. *Ethical Leadership: The Quest for Character, Civility, and Community*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2009.
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. "El Suelo," accessed October 30, 2016, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/006/w1309s/w1309s04.htm#TopOfPage>.
- Fundación Jubileo and Brot für Die Welt-Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst. *Informe sobre Normativa Minera en Bolivia*. La Paz, 2013.
- Fundación Rigoberta Menchú, accessed October 20, 2016, <http://www.frmt.org/en/>.

- Galeano, Eduardo. *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1997. Kindle.
- García, José Alejos, ed. *Dialogando Alteridades: identidades y poder en Guatemala*. Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2006.
- Garrard-Burnett, Virginia. “Una panorámica del Protestantismo Histórico, Consulta 2009.” Accessed October 26, 2016. <http://centroesdras.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Panoramica-del-Protestantismo-Historico-en-Guatemala-Virginia-Garrard-Burnett.pdf>.
- Gómez Díez, Francisco Javier. *El Impacto de las Religiones Indígenas Americanas en la Teología Misionera del Siglo XVI*. Bilbao: Desclée De brouwer, S.A, 2000.
- Gonzales, Justo, ed. *Obras de Wesley, Tomo IV, Sermones, IV*. Franklin: Providence House Publishers, 1996. Gossen, Garry H. and Miguel León-Portilla, eds. *South and Meso American Native Spirituality, From the Cult of the Feathered Serpent to the Theology of Liberation*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997.
- Gutiérrez González, María Eugenia. *Diosas de los Antiguos Mayas*. Buenos Aires: LibrosEnRed, 2013, Kindle.
- Heitzenrater, Richard P. *Wesley y el Pueblo Metodista*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001.
- Hodges, Sam. “Delegates Recall, Lament Sand Creek Massacre.” *United Methodist Interpreter* Vol. 60, No. 4, (July-August 2016).
- Holder, Arthur, ed. *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*. Oxford: Blackwell Pub. 2005.
- Holmes, William H. “Proceedings of the Second Pan American Scientific Congress, Section I Anthropology, Vol. I.” Washington, DC: Washington Government Printing Office, 1917. Accessed February 14, 2017, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=osu.32435030638340;view=1up;seq=254>.
- Hunter, Melany. “Immigration Advocate Blames US for Flood of Illegals: We Have Raped Their Lands.” Accessed October 21, 2016, <http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/melanie-hunter/immigration-advocate-immigrants-want-stay-home-we-have-raped-their-lands>.
- Hurtado, Leonor. Food First, “Pueblos Indígenas de Guatemala Rechazan Protocolo de Nagoya.” October 6, 2016. Accessed October 20, 2016, <https://foodfirst.org/pueblos-indigenas-de-guatemala-rechazan-protocolo-de-nagoya/>.

- Instituto Centroamericano de Estudios Fiscales. *La Minería en Guatemala: Realidad y Desafíos frente a la Democracia y el Desarrollo*. Guatemala City: Instituto Centroamericano de Estudios Fiscales, 2014.
- IWGIA, Grupo Internacional de Trabajo Sobre Asuntos Indígenas. “Pueblos indígenas en los Estados Unidos”, accessed October 26, 2016, <http://www.iwgia.org/regiones/america-del-norte/estados-unidos>.
- Jiménez Sánchez, Odilio. “Los Caminos de la Resistencia: Comunidad, Política e Historia Maya en Guatemala.” Doctor of Philosophy diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 2008.
- La Prensa Latina, “Población del Condado de Shelby crece en diversidad, según censo.” 03 to 09 July 2016, https://issuu.com/laprensalatina/docs/lpl_07032016.
- Lara Figueroa, Celso A. “Las Cofradías Guatemaltecas: El Envoltorio Sacro del Mito” *La Hora*, Septiembre 20, 2013, accessed February 20, 2017, <http://lahora.gt/hemeroteca-lh/las-cofradias-guatemaltecas-el-envoltorio-sacro-del-mito/>.
- Leon-Portilla, Miguel. *La Visión de los Vencidos*. Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma de México, 2010.
- Lhuillier, Alberto Ruz. *Los Antiguos Mayas*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, tercera edición 1995. Kindle.
- Lopez Molina, Ana. “Maximón y el Cristo de Esquipulas en La Pedrera, zona 6, Ciudad de Guatemala.” Tesis de Licenciatura en Antropología Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, Escuela de Historia, 2003. Accessed March 2017. http://biblioteca.usac.edu.gt/tesis/14/14_0325.pdf.
- Lyrics Translate. <http://lyricstranslate.com/es/himno-nacional-de-guatemala-guatemalan-national-anthem.html>.
- Mackay, John A. *The Other Spanish Christ: A Study in the Spiritual History of Spain and South*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011.
- Mendiz Bolio, Antonio, trans. *Libro de Chilam Balan de Chumayel*. Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1988.
- Mindek, Dubravka. *Mixtecos, Pueblos Indígenas del México Contemporáneo*. Mexico City: Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas y Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo, 2003.

- Morales, Sergio. “Evangélicos ganan terreno en el país.” Prensa Libre, Abril 22, 2014, accessed October 26, 2016. <http://www.prensalibre.com/noticias/comunitario/Evangelicos-ganan-terreno-pais-0-1124887528>.
- Mottesi, Alberto. *América 500 Años Después, Hacia un Nuevo Liderazgo para el Año 2000*. Fountain Valley, CA: Asociación Evangelística Alberto Mottesi, 1992.
- Muenala, Fabian. “Espiritualidad Indígena”, Kichua Hatari, accessed December 8, 2015, <http://kichwahatari.org/2015/04/24/espiritualidad-indigena/>.
- On Hing, Bill. *Ethical Borders: NAFTA, Globalization, and Mexican Migration*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010.
- Paredes, César. “Soberanía de Dios.” *Wesley Hereje* (Blog), 16 de Agosto, 2011, <http://destino.blogcindario.com/2011/08/00182-john-wesley-hereje.html>.
- Paz Cárcamo, Guillermo. *La máscara de Tekum, Ri Uk’oj Tekum*. Guatemala City: Editorial Cholsamaj, 2006.
- Perez Gutierrez, Manuel and José Coloma Maestre, eds. “El Español Lengua del Mestizaje y la Interculturalidad.” Madrid, 2003.
- Perotti, Emmanuel. *I.C.E.: Robando Sueños, Destruyendo Vidas: La Continua Luchas de los Inmigrantes por Una Vida Digna en los Estados Unidos*. Bloomington: Xlibris Corporation, 2009.
- Perrin, David B. *Studying Christian Spirituality*. New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Pope Paul III. Papal Encyclicals Online, Sublime Dei. accessed October 15, 2016. <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Paul03/p3subli.htm>.
- Proceso. La Redacción. “Las Guadalupanas: La Mexicana, hija de la Española.” Ciudad de México. Accessed October 31, 2016. <http://www.proceso.com.mx/258335/las-guadalupanas-la-mexicana-hija-de-la-espanola-2>.
- ProtestanteDigital.Com. “Guatemala es el país de Latinoamérica con mayor porcentaje de protestantes (40 por ciento).” Ciudad de Guatemala, 3 de Octubre del 2006. Accessed October 31, 2016. http://protestantedigital.com/internacional/18534/Guatemala_es_el_pais_de_Latinoamerica_con_mayor_porcentaje_de_protestantes_40_por_ciento.

- Quintana Hernández, Francisca and Cecilio Luis Rosales. *Mames de Chiapas: Pueblos Indígenas del México Contemporáneo*. Mexico City: Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, 2006.
- Relaciones de Yucatán. *Colección de Documentos Inéditos Relativos al Descubrimiento, Conquista y Organización de las Antiguas Posesiones de Ultramar, Segunda Serie, Tomo Número 13*. Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia 1900. Accessed April 24, 2017. <https://archive.org/stream/agz9105.0002.001.umich.edu#page/402/mode/2up>.
- Resinos, Adrian, trans. *El Popol Vuj, La Antiguas Historias del Quiche* (San José, CR: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana), 1994.
- Ruz Lhuillier, Alberto. “Los Antiguos Mayas.” Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, Primera edición electrónica, 2011. Kindle Edition.
- Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. “Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefit Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity.” Montreal, 2011. Accessed October 20, 2016, <https://www.cbd.int/abs/doc/protocol/nagoya-protocol-en.pdf>.
- Su Casa. “Hispanic Immigration in Memphis.” Accessed October 29, 2016, <http://sucasamemphis.org/about-us/>.
- Tanton, Tim. “MARCHA focuses on what Hispanics could give”, accessed October 25, 2016, <http://www.umc.org/news-and-media/marcha-focuses-on-what-hispanics-could-give>
- Teología India. *Primer Encuentro de Taller Latinoamericano*. Mexico City: Cenami y Abya Yala, 1991.
- The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2008*. Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2008.
- The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church 2012*. Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012.
- Thompson, J. Eric S. *Historia y Religión de los Mayas*. Mexico City: Siglo XXI Editores, 1998.
- Tiscareño, Froylan. *Flexible Domiciles*. Bloomington: Xlibris Coroporation, 2013.
- Título “K’oyoi.” *Crónicas Mesoamericanas Tomo II*. Accessed February 9, 2017 https://issuu.com/mesoamericana/docs/cronicas_ii.

Todorov, Tzvetan. *La conquista de América: El problema del otro*. Mexico City: Siglo XXI Editores, Decimotercera edición, 2003.

Tuhiwai Smith, Linda. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Otago University Press, 2012.

United American Indians in New England. "National Day of Mourning." Accessed December 7, 2015. <http://www.uaine.org>, accessed October, 26, 2016.

United Nations, Convention on Biological Diversity. "Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefit arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity." Accessed October 20, 2016, <https://www.cbd.int/abs/doc/protocol/nagoya-protocol-en.pdf>.

———. "Informe del Relator Especial de Naciones Unidas sobre los derechos de los pueblos indígenas, James Anaya, Adición: Observaciones sobre la situación de los derechos de los pueblos indígenas de Guatemala en relación con los proyectos extractivos, y otro tipo de proyectos, en sus territorios tradicionales." Accessed October 20, 2016, http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/indigenous/rapporteur/docs/GuatemalaIP16th_AUV.pdf.

———. "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, James Anaya" and its adendum "Preliminary note on the application of the principle of consultation with indigenous peoples in Guatemala and the case of the Marlin mine", Accessed October 10, 2016, http://www.unsr.jamesanaya.org/docs/special/2010_special_guatemala_preliminary_note_en.pdf.

United States Census Bureau. "Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin: 2010." <http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>.

———. "Hispanic or Latino, percent, July 1, 2015." <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/4748000,47157>.

Universidad Autónoma de México. "Ah Nakuk Pech, Historia y crónica de Chac Xulub Chen, Lecturas históricas mexicanas." Accessed on July 28, 2016. <http://www.historicas.unam.mx/publicaciones/publicadigital/libros/lecturas/histmex01.html>.

We American People. "Stop the Dakota Access Pipeline." Accessed October 31, 2016, <https://actionsprout.io/AA7D52/initial>.

White House. "Executive Order: Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements." January, 2017, accessed February 20, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/25/executive-order-border-security-and-immigration-enforcement-improvements>.

Winstanley, Gerrard. "The True Levellers Standard Advanced: Or, The State of Community Opened, and Presented to the Sons of Men." Accessed October 30, 2016. <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/winstanley/1649/levellers-standard.htm>.

Wolfteich, Claire E. "Practices of 'Unsayings': Michel de Certeau, Spirituality Studies, and Practical Theology", *Spiritus, A Journal of Christian Spirituality*, Volume 12, Number 2, (2012): 161-171.

Zapata, Virgilio. "Presencia del Protestantismo en Guatemala: Los últimos 25 años," Consulta 2009. Accessed October 25, 2016. <http://centroesdras.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Presencia-del-Protestantismo-en-Guatemala-Virgilio-Zapata.pdf>.

Zimmermann, Klaus. *Modos de interculturalidad en la educación bilingüe. Reflexiones acerca del caso de Guatemala*. Ciudad de Guatemala: Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos, 1997. Adobe PDF eBook.

Zúñiga, Mario. "Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda: La Guerra Justa Como Ejercicio Patriarcal para la Fundación de la Modernidad", *San José, Departamento Ecueménico de Investigaciones, Pasos N. 137*, (Julio-Agosto 2007): 27, accessed February 14, 2017, http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/Costa_Rica/dei/20120706030658/juan.pdf.

Lectures and Coursework

Cervera Milan, Raul S. J, "About Virgen de Guadalupe y religiosidad Popular." TC897: Our Lady of Guadalupe as a Resource for el Pueblo, Mexico Travel Seminar, March 6-15, 2015, Lecture, Mexico Travel Seminar, Comunidad Teológica de Mexico, Marzo 11, 2015.

De la Cruz Cutimanco, Goyo. "La Virgen de Guadalupe en el Contexto de Resistencia Indígena, TC897 Our Lady of Guadalupe as a Resource for el Pueblo," Lecture México Travel Seminar, Comunidad Teológica de México, Marzo 6-15, 2015.

Hernández, Francisco. "Seminar: The Influence of Our Lady of Guadalupe on National Identity," TC897: Our Lady of Guadalupe as a Resource for el Pueblo, Mexico Travel Seminar, March 6-15, 2015. Lecture, Comunidad Teológica de México, Marzo 9, 2015.

Rojas, Marilú. "About Our Lady of Guadalupe from a perspective of a mujer," TC897:

Our Lady of Guadalupe as a Resource for el Pueblo, Mexico Travel Seminar. Lecture, Comunidad Teológica de México, March 6-15, 2015.

Roldán-Figueroa, Rady. "Radical Spirituality," Online Cohort TH915 OL." Lecture, Boston University, December 22, 2015.

VITA



