

# H-Net Reviews

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**Robert Curley.** *Citizens and Believers: Religion and Politics in Revolutionary Jalisco, 1900-1930.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2018. 400 pp. \$65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8263-5537-9.

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Robert Curley's examination of the Cristiada in Jalisco (1926-29) demonstrates the existence of an influential urban component to the conflict that provided the movement with financial resources, media access, legal resources, and an ideological platform. Urban Catholics in Guadalajara, the author argues, rose up against the government due to a change in the political sphere that prevented them from accruing power and influencing their communities as they were accustomed or wished to. As Curley puts it, "they opted to fight in defense of their customs, their temples and their own particular language of politics" (p. 22).

Curley situates the Cristero War as both an urban and rural phenomenon led by citizens, complementing works that argue for it primarily as a movement from below. He also makes clear that it was part of the revolutionary process of state formation and citizenship. Cristeros challenged the revolutionary liberal, anti-church ethos of the victors by using language that highlighted religious sacrifice and emphasizing mass political participation. This parallel idiom eventually made its way into the narrative of the Mexican Revolution, persisting despite the wishes of the victorious revolutionaries. Catholic intellectuals developed the idea of martyrdom, while also working to present the Cristiada as a political struggle. Thus, Curley's work demonstrates that the urban Cristeros had a political agenda, but also included heavy doses of emotional language highlighting sacrifice.

Curley aligns with other scholars arguing that another way to look at the Cristiada is to simply examine when the revolution arrived to the west-central re-

gion of Mexico. Once the revolutionaries fighting for national control threatened ancestral forms of organizing at the local level, Jalisco rebelled, as had happened earlier in Chihuahua, Morelos, and Sonora. Unlike other parts of Mexico, Curley argues that it was urban, intellectual Catholics who gave Jalisco's entry into the revolution a specifically Catholic basis.

Chapter 1 sets up the region's importance by noting that Guadalajara was the second-largest archdiocese in the nation after Mexico City. This meant, among other things, that formal Catholic institutions, from temples to schools, effectively influenced this region. In addition, west-central Mexico was predominantly mestizo, which shaped this region's idiosyncratic interpretation of Catholicism. As a result, a particular version of political Catholicism based on community-wide concerns emerged successfully once the revolution arrived. Curley points to the extraordinary network of parishes already in place as the instrument utilized by Catholics to carry out rebellion. The logic of the revolution compelled urban Catholics to address social concerns and ailments, making the movement ready for massive adherence once the revolution arrived to Jalisco in earnest in 1923.

Chapter 2 argues that "the construction of a Catholic sociology occurred during the first decade of the twentieth century" (p. 24.). This is important because Curley suggests that the Cristiada developed over a thirty-year period, which culminated with the armed rebellion of 1926. Curley suggests that Catholics in Jalisco did not have many reasons to rebel in 1910, but this did not mean that they sat there and watched. Curley explains that the

possibility of political opening captivated the region. In fact, many joined the nascent Maderista movement in an effort to redefine the role of Catholic men and women in the coming new order. This gave way to the formation of a National Catholic Party (PCN) in 1911 as an instrument for Catholics to enter politics. Curley also suggests that the PCN was the first modern political party in Mexico, giving the Cristiada yet another component to make it one of the main engines defining citizenship and state formation in revolutionary Mexico.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine General Victoriano Huerta's rebellion in 1913. Curley makes the distinction between the PCN in Mexico City and Jalisco. He explains that the PCN nationally supported the Huerta rebellion, while the Jalisco branch was more concerned with local issues. Nevertheless, once Madero was toppled by General Victoriano Huerta in 1913, the PCN nationally decided to support the latter. This meant the beginning of the end for the PCN and the start of the anti-Catholic era in earnest once the liberals return to power and declared Catholics betrayers of the revolution. Curley demonstrates that despite this perception at the national level, the PCN in Jalisco made concerted efforts to improve life for the populace after significant electoral victories throughout the 1910s. In fact, even after Huerta's exile, the PCN in Jalisco still controlled the state legislature, while the revolutionary liberals controlled the governorship.

Chapters 5 and 6 examine the political struggle between Catholics and the victorious liberal faction to control Jalisco. The treatment of Catholics in general, including the confiscation of temples and the desecration of valued Catholic symbols, alienated large groups of people. The exile of Archbishop Orozco y Jimenez in 1913 also added to the discontent. These actions gave Catholic leaders and intellectuals fuel to expand the struggle. In addition, the 1915 execution of Antonio Delgadillo, a Catholic lawyer, by liberals became a watershed event. Future Cristero intellectual and military leader Anacleto Flores witnessed this execution.

The following chapter looks at the efforts by Catholics in Jalisco to organize workers. As a result of revolutionary logic that dictated mass participation as the basis for political power, Catholic leaders formed labor unions among workers in Jalisco to remain viable and as an alternative to unions contesting power structures as their ultimate goal. Catholic unions did not promote class struggle and more closely resembled mutual aid societies of the time. Nevertheless, their suc-

cess speaks for itself, at least for Jalisco. Through the use of mass political events and media, Catholics gained allegiance among workers. Newspapers such as *La Palabra*, *El Obrero*, and *El Archivo Social*, and organizations like the Centro Obrero Catolico and Union of Catholic Worker Syndicates reached thousands of people in Jalisco and beyond. Numbers vary, but scholars have estimated a membership ranging from 2,000 to 100,000 workers affiliated to the Catholic Union movement represented by the Catholic Confederation of Labor, or CCT (p. 170). Tangible benefits included higher wages and sick leave, but these unions never challenged the existing economic structure of society, thus limiting their appeal at a time when radicalism dominated the narrative.

The entrance of highly motivated liberal governor of Jalisco Jose Guadalupe Zuno in 1923 pushed many Catholics to armed rebellion. Zuno, among other things, prevented Catholics from exercising control over their political sphere even more than before 1923. After yet another national rebellion, this time Adolfo de la Huerta's in 1923, liberals in Jalisco quickly moved to quell any hints of rebellion. Curley argues that Catholics in Jalisco did not support de la Huerta. Nevertheless, liberals used this rebellion to enact draconian policies against Catholics, including the infamous Decree of 1926. The Decree, based on the 1917 Constitution, closed temples, limited numbers of priests and expelled those who were foreigners, prohibited political participation based on religious terms, and confiscated property. When the liberals did not expropriate church property entirely, Catholic leadership closed the temples and left them in control of laymen. This decision to leave laymen in charge of church spaces, Curley suggests, should be highlighted, as it provided the masses with a space of their own, which they then defended effectively. Perhaps more notably still, it immediately provided the movement with an extensive network of parishes, capable of quickly talking to each other and organizing relatively rapidly in large numbers, providing more evidence to support the Cristiada as a social movement fueled by demands coming citizens.

In his last chapter, Curley analyzes Anacleto Flores's life, actions, writings, and speeches. Flores's influential work emphasized sacrifice and martyrdom, while at the same time making efforts to address social justice issues of the time in progressive and sometimes radical ways. This chapter deviates from the narrative of the Cristiada as a movement fueled by citizens, but it offers a good window into the thinking of Catholic intellectuals at the time, the venues utilized to promote them, and the motivations behind these actions and ideas. Urban Catholic

intellectuals, such as Anacleto Flores Gonzales, and Jesus Alfredo Mendez Medina, drew on Pope Leo XIII's 1891 *Rerum Novarum* as they wrote scores of essays, pamphlets, and speeches aimed at persuading Catholics to actively seek social change. These ideas gave the Cristero movement an intellectual component that helped it consolidate nationally and eventually served as the basis and motivation for the sacrifice of many.

Curley's overarching theme is that the Cristero rebellion "was a fight over the construction of secularity in the Mexican Revolution" (p. 255). He illustrates this by highlighting the massive numbers, including women, participating in the political and eventual armed rebellion, both rural and urban. He suggests that the rebellion forced the emerging liberal political leadership in Mexico City to acquiesce to certain demands based on community-side concerns once Catholics demonstrated the ability to galvanize mass support. In fact, when the conflict took on a larger magnitude, once armed scimmages expanded to adjacent states, the Catholic leadership and the liberal revolutionaries ended the conflict.

Once peace arrived, laymen left the temples, not always of their own volition, and the parishes returned to ecclesiastical control. Curley's analysis of space as a source of power for urban Catholics is effective, despite the lack of citations indicating his clear reliance on David Harvey's work.[3] The parishes' return to official control, drastically curtailed the masses' ability to organize. Luis Gonzales's *Pueblo en Vilo* (1968) demonstrates similar motivations behind the defense of the temple in his study of the Cristiada.

Curley's research furthers our understanding of how the Cristiada was far more than a debate over church-state relations. Like other scholars, he demonstrates how an examination of local dynamics illustrates the complex causes generating the conflict and its reach. Curley also shows how the contestation of space served as a source of power for the Cristeros. As Curley notes throughout his study, the conflict between liberals and Catholics in Mexico during the revolution needs further examination going back to the Reforma, as well as at both the national and regional levels. Finally, Curley effectively navigates the tension between church-state relations and local dynamics as a cause of the conflict. This monograph will serve anyone examining the revolutionary period in Mexico in general and church-state relations in particular. It will also serve well in a comparative course examining urban, rural, and regional history, as well as for those studying space as a basis of power for certain underrepresented members of society.

#### Notes

[1]. Jennie Purnell, *Popular Movements and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico: The Agraristas and Cristeros in Michoacan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); Luis Gonzales y Gonzales, *Pueblo en Vilo, microhistoria de San Jose Gracia* (Mexico City: Colegio de Mexico, 1968); and Moises Gonzales, *Cristeros y Agraristas*, vols. 1-4 (Mexico City: Colegio de Mexico, 2000).

[2]. Moises Gonzales Navarro, *Masones y Cristeros en Jalisco* (Mexico City: Colegio de Mexico, 2000).

[3]. David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Berkeley: University of California, 2000).

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