

A Long Walk,
a Gradual Ascent

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The Story of the Bolivian Friends Church in Its Context of Conflict

NANCY J. THOMAS

with a chapter by HAROLD R. THOMAS

Foreword by Pablo Alberto Deiros

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American Society of Missiology Series

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Dedicated to the Quaker historians who were also our personal mentors and friends:

- Anna Nixon, author of *Centuries of Planting* (1985, Friends in India)
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Of all that was done in the past,
you eat the fruit, either rotten or ripe.
And the Church must be forever building,
and always decaying and always being restored.

O Father, we welcome your words,
And we will take heart for the future,
Remembering the past.

—T. S. ELIOT, FROM “CHORUSES FROM ‘THE ROCK’” (1934)

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Preface to the American Society of Missiology Series

The purpose of the ASM Series is to publish, without regard for disciplinary, national, or denominational boundaries, scholarly works of high quality and wide interest on missiological themes from the entire spectrum of scholarly pursuits, e.g., theology, history, anthropology, sociology, linguistics, health, education, art, political science, economics, and development, to articulate but a partial list. Always the focus will be on Christian mission.

By “mission” in this context is meant a cross-cultural passage over the boundary between faith in Jesus Christ and its absence. In this understanding of mission, the basic functions of Christian proclamation, dialogue, witness, service, fellowship, worship, and nurture are of special concern. How does the transition from one cultural context to another influence the shape and interaction of these dynamic functions?

Missiologists know that they need the other disciplines. And other disciplines, we dare to suggest, need missiology, perhaps more than they sometimes realize. Neither the insider’s nor the outsider’s view is complete in itself. The world Christian mission has through two millennia amassed a rich and well-documented body of experience to share with other disciplines.

Interaction will be the hallmark of this Series. It desires to be a channel for talking to one another instead of about one another. Secular scholars and church-related missiologists have too long engaged in a sterile venting of feelings about one another, often lacking in full evidence. Ignorance of and indifference to one another’s work has been no less harmful to good scholarship.

The promotion of scholarly dialogue among missiologists may, at times, involve the publication of views and positions that other missiologists cannot accept, and with which members of the Editorial Committee do not agree. The manuscripts published reflect the opinions of their authors and are not meant to represent the position of the American Society of Missiology or the Editorial Committee of the ASM Series.

PREFACE TO THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF MISSIOLOGY SERIES

We express our warm thanks to various mission agencies whose financial contributions enabled leaders of vision in the ASM to launch this new venture. The future of the ASM series will, we feel sure, fully justify their confidence and support.

WILLIAM J. DANKER, CHAIRPERSON
ASM Series Editorial Committee

Foreword

As it is with love, the history of the Christian testimony is always the narrative of a two-sided experience. On the one side, it tries to reconstruct the experience of those who gave testimony of their faith. On the other side, it tries to recreate the story of those who received that testimony. The work of the Friends in Bolivia is such a narrative. However, the players on each side of the equation are unique and with very particular characteristics.

On the one side, there are the Aymara Indians, one of the most outstanding native peoples in the Andean area. They reside mostly around Lake Titicaca and on the high planes of Bolivia and Peru, but have expanded to the southeast of Bolivia and the northwest of Argentina. Their traditional religion is closely related to their rural activities. They are devoted to the earth spirit, *Pachamama*. However, today, the religion of the Aymara Indians is deeply syncretistic. It is interesting to note that a good number of their religious beliefs and values are similar to Christian values. Because of this, missiologists have seen in this culture open opportunities for the proclamation of the gospel, with excellent results. This book, written by two distinguished missiologists, offers an extended case study of this phenomenon.

On the other side, there are the various expressions of the Friends' testimony as brought by the missionaries from the Northwest which are also unique. As it is the case with the Aymara, Friends missionaries in Bolivia have shared, in singular ways, the richness of their extraordinary tradition. This is a marvelous combination of diverse elements.

Taken as a whole, the Friends missionary testimony in Bolivia has been a combination of piety and praxis. The Spanish proverb "*A Dios orando y con el mazo dando*" (To God praying and with the mallet hammering), has been fulfilled down through the years by the faithful witness of the Friends Mission in Bolivia, and today by the indigenous Friends Church.

As we go through the pages of this well-researched history of the Friends Mission in Bolivia and the development of the Bolivian Friends Church, we perceive groups of women and men becoming a community of authentic Christ-followers, compelled to change the world around them. Their intentional pursuit is to passionately reach out to those who do not follow Jesus.

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In the beginning of the story, every possible effort was made to evangelize the Aymaras as a people group. This commitment to the proclamation of the good news is only understood as it is considered in the light of the deep valuing and love for the Aymara Indians on the part of the Friends missionaries. The goal of their sharing the gospel has been to create communities of connection and belonging, true communities of the kingdom of God.

As Aymara Friends believers began to develop as a church, they strove to combine evangelization with works of social significance, such as primary schools, literacy programs, medical assistance, and agricultural programs. In this regard, the Friends have perhaps exceeded other larger denominations. At times their sacrificial giving has been exemplary, stemming from gratitude and dedication. Seeing needs and responding to them practically, emotionally, and spiritually has not been the exception.

But none of this has been easy or automatic. The Bolivian context has always been complex. In geographic terms, there is not one but three Bolivias: the Andean region, the central valleys, and the jungle. In anthropological terms, there are also at least three indigenous Bolivias: the Aymara, the Quechua, and the Guarani. To this add the complexity of the mestizo and upper Spanish classes. The multiplicity of different languages is accompanied by a diversity of religious expressions. Worldviews vary from one region to another. For foreign missionaries or nationals moving from one region to the other, the task of contextualization is challenging. The only way to cope with this kaleidoscope is to be ready to learn in direct contact with people. Success in learning a different language, understanding diverse worldview perspectives, and building redeeming bridges between various ways of worshipping God is always the result of deliberate apprenticeship. The Friends missionaries have been responsibly involved in this kind of contextualization. But also, they have sought to form national believers in the knowledge, skills, and opportunities that have been entrusted to them as confessing Christians.

How can this small evangelical denomination celebrate with authentic Christian pride all these years of faithful witness in Bolivia? Growth has not been astronomical, the transformation of society on a national level has not been significant, recognition by those in power has been limited. However, their contagious enthusiasm is well evidenced when they are together. Their worship services show Friends believers experiencing laughter, joy, and fun. Of course, this is not a big issue when you are recognized, appreciated, and rewarded. But when your Christian testimony has been subject to trials, opposition, discrimination, and, at times, persecution, to keep worshipping is the expression of a great human spirit, a spirit filled with the Spirit of God. Bolivian Friends today seek to follow God with courageous innovation and a total commitment to the lordship of Christ. They may be a small denomination, but they are a great people of God.

FOREWORD

This is the fascinating adventure that Nancy and Hal Thomas are inviting us to explore in this history of the development of the Friends Church among the Aymara people of Bolivia.

PABLO ALBERTO DEIROS

Historian, Educator, Missiologist

Author of *Historia del cristianismo en América Latina*, 1992, 2018

(“History of Christianity in Latin America”)

Acknowledgments

We wrote this book as part of a team and in the company of many to whom we owe our gratitude. Our first acknowledgment goes to Arthur O. Roberts, late Quaker philosopher, historian, professor, and poet. He was also our friend and mentor. Arthur encouraged us, many years before we began this project, to make our final missionary contribution as historians, to not let slip from memory the story of the development of the Bolivian Friends Church. The Oregon Yearly Meeting (now Northwest Yearly Meeting) had poured many lives into this effort and needed, not only to see the results, but to learn from all the successes and failures accumulated along the way.

We committed to using primary resources, and thanks to the universities, yearly meetings, and other organizations that gave us access to their archives, we were able to do this. In 2013 and 2014, Evangelical Friends Church Southwest superintendent, Stan Leach, opened to us their archives in Yorba Linda. In researching the beginnings of the work in Bolivia, we sorted through boxes of yearly meeting minutes dating back to 1898, mission board minutes from 1912–1958, early newsletters (the *Christian Workman* and the *Harvester*) and correspondence, records from the Ramona Friends Church between 1892–1904, and especially records of the mission to Guatemala. These gave us valuable information about William Abel and Juan Ayllón, the two men recognized as seed-planters and founders of the work in Bolivia.

Thanks also to Azusa Pacific University's Special Collections and its librarian, Ken Otto, for permission to access their archives back to the school's foundation as the Training School for Christian Workers in 1900, where William Abel was the second student to enroll. Through school records, copies of the *Quarterly Bulletin of the Training School for Christian Workers*, and US census records, we were able to clear up some of the mystery surrounding William Abel.

In 2014, we visited the headquarters of the Ramona Unified School District in Ramona, California, where William Abel attended grade school. We were also able to spend time in the Guy B. Woodward Museum, where we viewed copies of the town's newspaper, the *Ramona Sentinel*, dating back to the 1890s. We found news items about Abel and advertisements for his butcher shop, the Nuevo Meat Market.

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While on the same trip to Southern California, we also visited the San Pasqual Indian Museum and Cemetery. Abel was born in San Pasqual in 1870 while it was still a federal reservation for the Kumayaay Indian group. The cemetery where his parents might have been buried had twenty-seven markers, only two of which were readable.

In Valley View, California, we met with Kumayaay tribal leader, David Toler, and the tribal historian, Wilda Toler. Neither of them had heard of William Abel but they were fascinated by our research. The historian gave us a clue about a man named Peter Abel who was murdered in 1870. He could have been William Abel's father or the rancher his family worked for.

That same year, 2014, we traveled to Indiana. In Westfield, we had access to the archives of the Union Bible College and the Central Yearly Meeting of Friends, where we researched the beginnings of the Friends missionary movement to Bolivia from 1919 to 1924. We also had a delightful interview with former Central Friends missionaries Imogene Hendrickson and Rachel (Enyart) Edwards Peters who gave us information about Juan Ayllón and Mattie Bount, as well as Carroll Tamplin.

In Marion, Indiana, the World Gospel Mission gave us access to old files of Peniel Mission, where we found some information about William Abel as he was sent out as a missionary from this group.

Tom Hamm, librarian of the Quaker collection in Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, helped us find information in their archives of the Five Years Meeting in the late 1920s and early 1930s. This provided background for the Oregon Yearly Meeting's acceptance of Bolivia as its mission field in 1930.

From 2015 to 2018, our documentary research came mainly from two archival collections: the archives of the Bolivia Yearly Meeting (INELA) in La Paz, Bolivia, and the archives of Oregon/Northwest Yearly Meeting, held in the library archives of George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon.

I spent several years in the archives of George Fox University where archivists Zoe Clark (retired in 2015) and Rachel Thomas (2015 and following) helped me sort through the files and boxes of documents, information about the Friends Mission to Bolivia accumulated since 1930. Minutes of the mission board, field council minutes, reports, personal correspondence, stories for the various newsletters, and a vast collection of slides and photos provided a rich resource of primary documents for the years from 1930 to 2002.

When we began the project in 2013, the archives of the INELA in La Paz were not so neatly organized as those in George Fox University. But we were blessed to have one of our team members be a professional archivist, working at that time in one of the Bolivian government offices. Victoria Tazola is a third-generation Quaker from the *altiplano* community of Laja. The executive council (*mesa directiva*) of the INELA graciously gave the team permission to organize the boxes of documents, and Vicki took on this task. Documents were scarce during the first decades of the church's development, as it took place in an oral culture. But starting from the 1960s,

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the amount of official minutes and reports grew exponentially and almost threatened to overwhelm us. Thanks in large part to Vicki's help, we were able to work through it all, a valuable resource as this was input from the Bolivian national perspective, in contrast to the mission perspective.

The other key resource in our investigation came from personal interviews. Most of these took place in Bolivia as our Bolivian team members spoke with the grown children and grandchildren of former leaders who had died, as well as with former leaders still living. Some of these interviews happened in focus groups of people involved in specific decades in the development of the church. Over one hundred interviews were conducted, many of these filmed. These helped us triangulate with primary documents from the Bolivian perspective, primary documents from the mission perspective, and field interviews.

We were able to coordinate our research efforts because of an agreement between the NWYM and the INELA, reached in 2013 and 2014, to cooperate in the project, yearly meeting to yearly meeting. The NWYM Board of Global Outreach made available to us the ministry funds that had accumulated through our supporters up to the time of our formal retirement in 2014, thus allowing us to travel to Bolivia once a year for the duration of the project. They also made it possible for people in the Northwest to continue making contributions; these were designated to help with the expenses of the Bolivian team. The INELA *mesa directiva* fixed up a small apartment at their headquarters for us to use during our visits, and an office exclusively for the project. We're grateful for all of this.

Most of all, we're grateful for our Bolivian team members whose participation allowed us to approach the history of the church from a joint insider/outsider perspective. In 2014, the INELA approved the creation of a history commission, with the intention that its membership remain stable throughout the project, from 2013–2018.

Within the commission we organized ourselves, naming Hal Thomas as the overall coordinator, to serve as the liaison between the two yearly meetings. We named Reynaldo Mamani as the Bolivian coordinator, in charge of the field office; Humberto Gutiérrez as the writer for the book in Spanish, who was able to base a large part of his work on my investigations in English; Félix Huarina in charge of the documentary film; and myself, Nancy Thomas, as researcher and writer for the book in English. As mentioned above, Victoria Tazola served as the archivist. David Mamani worked as the technician, in charge of setting up and maintaining the computer system. David Tintaya was secretary and Marcos Mamani, treasurer. Arminda Tintaya also participated on the team, as did Dionisio Lucasi. At the level of personal commitment and enthusiasm, the team was outstanding, and this continued for the duration of the project, which extended into 2019. I can't imagine completing this project on my own. Our community made it possible.

We're grateful for another community, that of supporters in the Northwest who continued to encourage us, pray for us, and contribute financially, both as individuals

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and as churches. The Friends churches who made us a part of their regular offerings included North Valley, Reedwood, and Cherry Grove. Thanks also to Hal's parents, William and Esther Thomas (who died in 2015 and 2016), for their generous contributions that swelled our ministry fund and made possible our yearly trips to Bolivia. Thanks to Ron Stansell, fellow missionary to Bolivia during the 1970s and 1980s, for his help in reading and commenting on the manuscript. We also acknowledge those who loaned us letters and shared from their own time of service of Bolivia: Geraldine Willcuts, Martha Puckett, Gene and Betty Comfort, Ed and Marie Cammack, Quentin and Florene Nordyke.

We thank our families who encouraged us throughout this journey and provided us with the joy of their relationship: son David and Debby Thomas, with our grandchildren Bree (now married to Jade Becker), Aren, Gwen, and Alandra; daughter Kristin and Jon Gault, with our grandchildren Reilly, Paige, and Peter.

As the main author of this book in English, I want to acknowledge my husband, Hal, who actually headed up the whole history project. He accompanied me in each phase of the investigation, traveling with me to Southern California, Indiana, and Bolivia. He was my chief encourager and critic. His authorship of the chapter on the Aymara culture (chapter 2) and his cultural insights throughout the project helped all of us on the team interpret the history of the Bolivian Friends Church.

Most of all, we both give thanks to Jesus, the Head of the Church, the One who invited us on this wild adventure and who accompanied us each step of the way. To God be the glory.

List of Abbreviations

AFBFM	American Friends Board of Foreign Mission
ANDEB	<i>Asociación Nacional de Evangélicos Bolivianos</i> (National Association of Bolivian Evangelicals)
APU	Azusa Pacific University
BIM	Bolivian Indian Mission
BMC	Bolivian Mission Council
BQEF	Bolivian Quaker Education Fund
CALA	<i>Comisión de Alfabetización y Literatura en Aymara</i> (Commission of Literacy and Literature in Aymara)
CETI	<i>Centro de Educación Teológica Integral</i> (Center for Holistic Theological Education)
CIPCA	<i>Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado</i> (Center for Investigation and Promotion of Rural Populations)
COAL	<i>Comité Organizador para América Latina</i> (Organizing Committee for Latin America, a part of FWCC)
COB	<i>Central de Obreros Bolivianos</i> (Bolivian Workers Central)
COMIBOL	<i>Corporación Minera de Bolivia</i> (Mining Corporation of Bolivia)
CTA	<i>Centro Teológico de Los Amigos</i> (Friends Theological Center, part of the UEB)
CYM	California Yearly Meeting
EBAD	<i>Educación Bíblica a Distancia</i> (Distance Theological Education)
EFA	Evangelical Friends Alliance

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFCI	Evangelical Friends Church International
EFCS	Evangelical Friends Church Southwest
FWCC	Friends World Commission on Consultation
FYM	Five-Years Meeting
GFU	George Fox University
GPWM	Guy P. Woodward Museum (Ramona, CA)
INE	<i>Instituto Nacional de Estadística</i> (National Institute of Statistics)
INELA	<i>Iglesia Nacional Evangélica de Los Amigos</i> (National Evangelical Friends Church)
IQA	International Quaker Aid, an arm of the FWCC
ISETA	<i>Instituto Superior de Educación Teológica Los Amigos</i> (Friends Institute for Theological Higher Education)
MAS	<i>Movimiento al Socialismo</i> (Movement Toward Socialism)
MD	<i>Mesa Directiva</i> , executive body of the INELA
MIR	<i>Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria</i> (Leftist Revolutionary Movement)
MNR	<i>Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario</i> (Nationalist Revolutionary Movement)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHMS	National Holiness Missionary Society
NWYM	Northwest Yearly Meeting
OYM	Oregon Yearly Meeting
QBL	Quaker Bolivia Link
SEAB	<i>Sociedad Evangélica de Amigos Bolivianos</i> (Evangelical Society of Bolivian Friends)
SEAN	<i>Sociedad Evangélica de Amigos Nacionales</i> (Evangelical Society of National Friends)

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SETALA	<i>Sociedad Evangélica de Tecnología Apropriada de Los Amigos</i> (Friends Evangelical Society for Appropriate Technology)
TEE	Theological Education by Extension
TSCW	Training School for Christian Workers
UAC	<i>Universidad Autónoma Católica</i> (Autonomous Catholic University)
UBC	Union Bible College, in Westfield, Indiana
UCB	<i>Universidad Católica Boliviana</i>
UEB	<i>Universidad Evangélica Boliviana</i>
UEELA	<i>Unidad Educativa Evangélica Los Amigos</i> (Friends Evangelical Educational Unit)
UFINELA	<i>Unión Femenil de INELA</i> (Women's Union of Bolivian Friends)
UJELAB	<i>Unión de Jóvenes Evangélicos de Los Amigos de Bolivia</i> (Union of Evangelical Friends Youth of Bolivia)
WTSN	<i>The Witness and Training School News</i>

Glossary of Spanish and Aymara Terms

<i>acapacha</i>	Ay., realm of the present earth
<i>Actas de la Junta Anual</i>	Yearly Meeting Minutes (INELA)
<i>Actas de la Mesa Directiva</i>	Executive Committee Minutes (INELA)
<i>allaxpacha</i>	Ay., realm of the heavenlies
<i>altiplano</i>	high plain; the area between the eastern and western arms of the Andes in western Bolivia
<i>Awki</i>	Ay., God the Father
<i>ayllu</i>	Ay., old Aymara communities interconnected by complex kinship ties
<i>Buen Amigo</i>	Good Friend
<i>Buen Samaritano</i>	Good Samaritan
<i>cargo</i>	task; a community service role and the way an individual or couple participates in a traditional Aymara community
<i>catequista</i>	catechist in the Catholic Church
<i>ch'amakani</i>	Ay., shaman, specialist who deals with the darker powers
<i>cholo</i>	an urbanized indigenous person; a <i>mestizo</i> who is more indigenous than Spanish
<i>chuyma</i>	Ay., heart, place of the emotions and will
<i>colonos</i>	Indians that lived as serfs on the haciendas
<i>comité jurado</i>	pastoral oversight committee

GLOSSARY OF SPANISH AND AYMARA TERMS

<i>comunitarios</i>	Indians cultivating land in a free community
<i>conquistadores</i>	Spanish conquerors
<i>corregidor</i>	Spanish official appointed to represent the king in a rural town
<i>cursillo</i>	short course
<i>departamento</i>	state (of the country) or department (of an organization)
<i>encargado</i>	someone given a temporary pastoral leadership role in a local church
<i>encomendero</i>	Spanish settler who lived on an <i>encomienda</i> as the governor
<i>encomienda</i>	Spanish land grant that governed relations between the colonists and the indigenous peoples
<i>Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia</i>	Plurinational State of Bolivia
<i>estatutos</i>	statutes; the constitution of the church
<i>evangelistas</i>	evangelists; the Catholic term for Protestants in the early twentieth century
<i>gorro</i>	knitted wool cap with ear flaps worn by Aymara men
<i>hacienda</i>	large ranch belonging to a Spanish overlord who managed the serfs who lived on it for agricultural production in the years between the Spanish conquest in the 1500s and the revolution of 1952
<i>jaqechasiña</i>	Ay., to marry, to become a complete person
<i>jaqi</i>	Ay., the complete person, a good person
<i>jilakata</i>	Ay., political and ceremonial leader of a community
<i>Junta Anual</i>	Yearly Meeting, referring either to the annual sessions or to the denomination, a Quaker term
<i>Kollasuyo</i>	Ay., extensive region of the Incan Empire south of Cuzco

GLOSSARY OF SPANISH AND AYMARA TERMS

<i>kuraka</i>	Ay., leader of the upper part of an Aymaya community (the nobility)
<i>layka</i>	Ay., specialist who deals with the darker powers
<i>mallku</i>	Ay., Aymara leader of a large geographical region
<i>malo</i>	bad
<i>manqhapacha</i>	Ay., realm of the underworld
<i>mesa directiva</i>	executive council; sometimes referred to as <i>mesa</i> , and sometimes as <i>directiva</i>
<i>mestizo</i>	mixed Spanish and Indian race, edging toward the middle class
<i>mita</i>	in the colonial period, the system of forced labor of Indians, especially in the mines
<i>nayrapacha</i>	Ay., the ancient past
<i>obrero</i>	lay leader, usually someone in pastoral training with a few years left; an official title on the local church level
<i>originario</i>	original (native) inhabitants of a country; synonymous with “indigenous”
<i>Pachamama</i>	Ay., “Mother Earth,” important Aymara deity directly involved with agricultural production
<i>padrinazgo</i>	system of god-parents or sponsors
<i>pueblo</i>	town
<i>q'ara</i>	Ay., the irresponsible person
<i>quilliri</i>	Ay., curer
<i>rutuche</i>	rite of the first haircut
<i>salteña</i>	Bolivian vegetable-meat pastry
<i>señorita</i>	young unmarried woman
<i>taypi</i>	Ay., the center, the place of equilibrium and balance

GLOSSARY OF SPANISH AND AYMARA TERMS

<i>umasuyo</i>	Ay., eastern mountains, <i>altiplano</i> , and valleys in the times of the Aymara kingdoms and the Incan Empire
<i>urkosuyo</i>	Ay., western mountains, <i>altiplano</i> , and valleys in the times of the Aymara kingdoms and the Incan Empire
<i>usos y costumbres</i>	practices and customs; a reference to whatever cultural customs members of a particular community practice
<i>yatiri</i>	Ay., diviner

Introduction

The Aymara people have a proverb that goes, “*K’achat k’achat wali jayaruw sara-ñani*” (Slowly, slowly, we can journey a long distance). The image that comes to mind is a group of people, perhaps a family, walking up and down a mountain trail, herding a few sheep. They are dressed for the cold with their layers of sweaters, their ponchos and shawls, the *gorros* that cover their heads and ears. Their possessions bundle on their backs. Heads down, they face into the wind. Slowly and steadily they plod onward and upward. They have a great distance to travel, and they know the journey will take a long time.

The saying and the image convey persistence, patience, and hope. They serve as a metaphor for the development of the Friends Church among the Aymara peoples of the Bolivian Andes. Although the story contains its share of drama and some miraculous events, by and large it chronicles “a long walk, a gradual ascent” to maturity. This book aims to tell that story.

The book’s subtitle, “The Story of the Bolivian Friends Church in Its Context of Conflict,” sets the stage. Conflict, instability, and, at times, violence, have characterized Bolivia’s history from the time the church began up to the present. In addition, the culture in which the church grew, the Aymara people, is recognized to be a culture of conflict, as will be seen as the story unfolds. It may be an irony that this should be the setting for the development of a “peace church” such as the Quakers; or it may be a sign of grace.

The particular church this book chronicles goes by the acronym INELA, standing for *Iglesia Nacional Evangélica de Los Amigos* (National Evangelical Friends Church). Other Friends denominations also rose up in Bolivia, coming from different missionary roots, and developing separately. This book focuses on the INELA, although the other groups enter the story. It also tells the story of the mission that accompanied the INELA for seventy-one years of its journey (1931–2002), the Friends Mission from Oregon Yearly Meeting (OYM), now Northwest Yearly Meeting of Friends (NWYM).

The beginnings of the INELA go back to the years between 1915 and 1924 as the first congregation rose up spontaneously and mysteriously on the shores of Lake Titicaca. The first officially recognized Friends church was established in 1924 in La Paz by missionary Juan Ayllón. Today the INELA spreads out into fifteen districts

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and has somewhere around two hundred congregations. It is an independent yearly meeting with a broad roster of ministries. The INELA is still predominantly Aymara, although it is reaching into other cultures and even other countries.

Our interest in this project began many years ago, but it wasn't until our friend and mentor, Arthur O. Roberts, urged us with his perception that not only did the history of the INELA need to be written, but that we were the ones to do it, did we actually take on the task. We were still under the sponsorship of NWYM as missionaries, with little free time for another project. But the sense of urgency grew until in 2012, the Board of Global Outreach gave permission for us to add this to our job description and we began making plans. After our formal retirement in 2014, we were able to devote more time to the research and writing. We entered this project aware of its demands and the time it would take, but also sensing the call of God to give ourselves to this task.

At the time we began the project, we were seconded by the mission board to an educational organization that offered a PhD in theology to leaders across Latin America (PRODOLA, *Programa Doctoral Latinoamericano*). The job required frequent travel and enabled us to regularly visit Bolivia. We shared with the brethren our task of writing the history of the INELA for the people back home in the Northwest, and their instant response was the recognition of a need for such a history in Spanish for the INELA's constituency. The church's young people represent the fourth and fifth generation of Bolivian Quakers, and most of them do not know the story of their own church. The conversation was spurred on by the fact that the church would soon be celebrating its centennial.

So we began planning together. The idea quickly gained the enthusiasm of the leaders of the INELA. In 2013 and 2014, the INELA and the NWYM (through the Board of Global Outreach) formally agreed to cooperate in the project of writing the history of the INELA. In their annual representatives meeting in January of 2014, the INELA named a history commission to work with us (Hal and Nancy Thomas) in a five-year project, running from 2013 through 2018.

Teamwork defined our methodology throughout the project and allowed us to present the story from both insider (INELA) and outsider (mission) perspectives. Hal and I traveled to Bolivia once a year for a two-month (or longer) stay where we shared our research, discussed the results, and planned the next steps. The commission met once a month throughout the year and included us, while we were in the United States, via Skype. We maintained regular contact.

We defined our research methodology as follows: "The basic research will be documentary, supported by extensive interviews and placed in the historical and cultural contexts in which the INELA has developed. The data collected will be submitted to a process of analysis and interpretation in community."¹

1. Bolivian Friends History Project Proposal, 2013.03.

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While in Bolivia, we gathered with our team to check and verify the facts we had gleaned from the archives and field interviews. It was an arduous but necessary task. We included many different leaders in our times of reflection, asking questions of the text, noting the patterns, trying to determine significance and meaning. We attempted to do the work of historical interpretation as a community. It proved a rich and stimulating experience.

We defined our purposes, what we hoped to achieve, for this book in English as follows:

- That readers would come to an understanding of the development of the INELA in its historic and cultural context and thus to a deeper understanding of this church today, as well as insight into the vital role of context in the planting and growing of a church.
- That readers would come to an understanding of the mission's role in the development of the church and how this might apply to an ongoing mission outreach in other parts of the world.
- That readers would appreciate and understand the complexities of denominational emphasis (in this case, Quakerism) in raising up a church in another context.
- That readers would experience a sense of gratitude for all that God has done and a renewed faith in what God is doing and will do in building the church around the world.

As we met together with our Bolivian colleagues to reflect on the different periods of the church's development, we brought four questions to the text, chapter by chapter. These reflected our specific objectives for the book in English. The Bolivian leaders also brought their own questions, reflecting the issues in each decade. The four basic questions were as follows:

- How did the history of the country and/or the Aymara culture affect the development of the INELA in this period?
- What missiological principles or strategies do we see in this period, as reflected by the relationship between the mission and the national church?
- How did the theology and practices of the Friends affect the development of the INELA in this period?
- Where do we see the Spirit of God at work in the development of the INELA in this period?

Some of the results of these rich and challenging discussions come out in the sections entitled "Reflections on the Decade," at the end of each chapter, and in the conclusion to the book.

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The meditations on the last question of the movement of the Spirit of God were especially revealing. In the midst of all the struggles, it was often hard to recognize the presence of God building the church. It would have been easy to turn cynical, reflecting on different conflictive periods of the history. But by deliberately asking for wisdom and insight, we were able to discern the slow, steady hand of God on God's people. We were able to recognize growth and transformation through the years, along with the challenges the church still faces. Seeing God's faithfulness in the past, in spite of the hard times and failures, gives courage to face the future, knowing the church belongs to God, and God accompanies God's people as they continue the long walk to maturity.

Before jumping into the history in chapter 1, we need to explain some of the terms used in the book. The first is the word "Indian" in reference to a person or a people native to an area. The Bolivian government refers to them as "original inhabitants" (*originarios*), and in the United States we've been taught to use the term "Native American." This is changing, at least in the United States. While "Native American" is still politically correct, many of the tribal people prefer to call themselves Indians, with respect and in recognition of their heritage. All the mission documentation from the 1920s through the 1950s refers to the Aymara Indians. We've chosen to vary the terms as we refer to the Aymara and other original groups in Bolivia.

"Indigenous" is another word important to this story, and we use it in two different senses. The first is a reference to a person or tribal society native to a context. The Aymara, Quechua, and Guarani are all indigenous peoples of Bolivia, having inhabited the land for centuries before the coming of the Spaniards.

But the word "indigenous" also refers to a missiological theory important to the story of the Friends in Bolivia. A mission that adopts the indigenous principle of church planting intends to develop an independent national church that is self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating. The theory applies whether or not the recipients are the original inhabitants of a country.

We trust the context makes clear which meaning the word "indigenous" carries.

In a work of this size, covering so many periods and handling so many details, there will be errors. We take full responsibility for those. But we hope that the overall picture this story paints will be true and will serve to encourage the church and glorify that church's Lord.

1

Amacari, Abel, and Ayllón

The Beginnings of the Bolivian Friends Church (1915–1924)

In the community of Amacari, nestled on the eastern shores of Lake Titicaca, a series of unusual events took place between the years 1915 and 1924; these resulted in a gathering of believers unrelated to any denomination or missionary outreach. In Southern California, William Abel, a young man from the Kumeyaay Indian tribe, converted to Christianity in a Friends Church and began in 1900 to prepare for missionary service. Meanwhile, a boy named Juan Ayllón of mixed Aymara/mestizo background migrated from the Yungas valleys in Bolivia to the city of La Paz and encountered Christianity in a life-changing experience. The believers in Amacari, William Abel, and Juan Ayllón would later converge, and the Bolivian Friends Church (INELA) would be born. This chapter explores the joining of these three narrative streams.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The Bolivian Friends Church was not born in a vacuum. Events and movements taking place early in the twentieth century in Bolivia and, indeed, in the rest of the world, would influence the shape this new work would take.

Historians have identified the period between 1880 and 1932 as one of radical political transformation in Bolivia.¹ The most dramatic event of 1880 was Bolivia's defeat to Chile in the War of the Pacific, resulting in the loss of her Pacific coast. Related to that disaster, in the same year the government changed from a military caudillo regime to a system that "represented the first viable republican government of a civilian oligarchic nature."² A small group of elite citizens would make the laws and govern the country, and this would remain the norm up through 1934.

1. See especially Klein, *Concise History*, locs. 2635–3228, and Gotkowitz, *Revolution*, 1–130.

2. Klein, *Concise History*, loc. 2638.

As historian Herbert Klein observes, “In terms of the Indian peasant masses there was nothing democratic or participatory about the republican governments that existed after 1880.”³ The Bolivian indigenous peoples, although composing a majority of the country’s total population (estimated at 51 percent in 1900)⁴ played no part in its government. By law they were not even considered citizens; they were not literate, did not own land, and did not earn money for their labor, all requirements for citizenship.

For the first twenty years, government was controlled by the conservative political party, and it took a civil war in 1898/99 for the liberal party to gain the upper hand. In order to succeed, the liberals decided to arm the Indians and, with promises of future justice, encourage the masses to join the revolt.

Shortly after taking over, the new government disarmed the Indians and basically reneged on all their promises. Under the liberal government, suppression of the indigenous populations continued as strong as ever;⁵ however, under the surface, Indian resistance was growing, occasionally expressing itself in bursts of violence.

The political development of the country was intimately tied to its economic development. The rise of the twentieth century saw Bolivia’s mining industry pass from silver to tin, in a period of prosperity. Bolivia’s indigenous populations (mainly Aymara, Quechua, and Guarani) made up most of the mines’ working force, and the government was concerned with maintaining and controlling this resource. Regard for civil and human rights was not a priority. In fact, during this period the hacienda system, which used Indian serfs “owned” by the landowner, expanded, while the free Indian communities diminished.⁶

Concurrent with these political and economic changes, Protestantism began making inroads. Although a few attempts had been made in the late nineteenth century, especially with the British and American Bible Societies, at the ascendancy of the liberal government around the turn of the century, five pioneer mission groups began work in Bolivia, these being the Methodists, the Brethren Assemblies, the Canadian Baptists, the Bolivian Indian Mission, and the Seventh-day Adventists.⁷ In 1906 the Bolivian constitution was amended to include religious liberty, and for a time, religious persecution was at a low ebb. That would change in 1920. The years between 1920 and 1935, when the INELA experienced its beginnings, saw a return to conservative politics and, at times, strong persecution of the Protestant church. Yet the constitutional guarantee of religious freedom was still on the books.⁸

3. Klein, *Concise History*, loc. 2709.

4. Klein, *Concise History*, loc. 2704.

5. Klein, *Concise History*, loc. 2720.

6. Klein, *Concise History*, loc. 2991. See the next chapter concerning the differences between hacienda Indians and free community Indians.

7. H. Thomas, “Bolivia,” *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, 136–37.

8. For more detail on early Protestant missions in Bolivia, see chs. 2 and 3 (16–92) of Peter

On a larger scale, in the early part of the twentieth century World War I was raging in Europe (1914–1918). Bolivia was relatively isolated from the rest of the world at that time. The conflict negatively affected the tin economy for the duration of the war, but prices rose again a few years afterward.

This is the context surrounding the beginnings of the Friends work in Bolivia among the Aymara-speaking indigenous people. A certain amount of mythology swirls around all three narratives that form these beginnings: the events in Amacari and the figures of William Abel and Juan Ayllón, the two men considered to be the founders of the Bolivian Friends Church (INELA). Sifting fact from fiction is one of the first tasks of the historian.

THE AMACARI STORY

Amacari is an Aymara fishing and agricultural community on the eastern shores of Lake Titicaca. In the early twentieth century the small Catholic chapel occupied a place of honor in the central plaza, but a priest only rarely visited, and the people were free to practice their traditional animistic customs. Small subsistence farm plots dotted the hills around the village. As a free community, never part of the oppressive hacienda system of the time, people in Amacari were accustomed to making their own decisions. Though relatively isolated, they were free to travel as they wished.

This village is the scene of the first church in what would one day become a group of congregations known as the Bolivian Friends Church (INELA). The descendants of that early gathering in Amacari remember the stories their grandparents handed down. As is typical with oral history several versions of the events compete.

According to one version, the story of the Friends Church in the lake region began perhaps as early as 1915 when Cruz Chipana, a local community leader, made a trip to La Paz, heard the gospel message preached on the street, and experienced conversion. The messages of the preaching evangelist made such an impression that Chipana remembered and repeated them to himself in the following years. He returned to Amacari, told his wife about his experience, but decided to hide it from others for fear of reprisals.⁹ Slowly news spread and a small group began to secretly gather.

Wagner's *Protestant Movement in Bolivia*.

9. Carrillo, *Los Amigos*, 31–33.



A community on Lake Titicaca (NWYM)

A different version of the Amacari story begins earlier with a boy named Sebastián Ticona, who traveled with his parents from Amacari to the highland city of Oruro sometime around 1905. While in Oruro, young Ticona heard the gospel story. He memorized some Scripture and learned to read and write. At the age of seventeen, Sebastián Ticona returned to Amacari and privately shared his knowledge of the gospel with Cruz Chipana. Chipana, deeply impressed by this message, became a Christian at that time and secretly began sharing the message with others, gathering a clandestine group of worshipers in his home.¹⁰

At some time between 1918 and 1924, a crisis forced Chipana out into the open. In an annual fiesta in the large town of Tiquina, where the active participation of the surrounding communities was obligatory, the citizens of Amarcari gained first place in the traditional dance competition. Chipana himself was the leader of the dance and apparently the dancers were the members of his secret church.¹¹ The people of Tiquina responded to Amacari's triumph with envy and the two groups broke out

10. Juan Ticona, interview with Harold Thomas and Nancy Thomas, January 9, 2015, La Paz.

11. Carillo, *Los Amigos*, 31–33.

in a rock-throwing fight. In the melee, one of the Amacari men broke the foot of the political leader, the *corregidor*, of Tiquina, and people fled back home in fear.¹²

There are several versions of what happened next. One report is that the dance troupe returned to Amacari the next day, were apprehended, and spent time in jail.¹³ Another version has the troupe leaders paying a fine and being released to go home.¹⁴ Whether jailed or merely fined, all those involved talked it over, deeply regretting their actions in Tiquina. They together affirmed, “We should change our behavior. We should no longer drink alcohol, get drunk or participate in fiestas because all this brings on consequences of punishment and suffering. Rather we should more firmly convert to the gospel that teaches us not to get drunk or go to fiestas and warns us that the Day of Judgment will come soon and God will destroy evil-doers.”¹⁵

At that point the group formed an open congregation, naming Cruz Chipana as pastor. A group met in Chipana’s home and other congregations soon opened in the lake communities of Calata and Chicharro.¹⁶ They met without any relation to an established church or mission.¹⁷

According to Juan Ticona,¹⁸ concurrently with the story of Cruz Chipana’s conversion (whichever version), in the nearby village of Chicharro, Manuel Alvarado Cañawakito was serving as a *catequista* in the Catholic Church and as a helper to the priest in the central town of Tiquina. Alvarado’s parents had migrated from Tacna, Peru, to Chicharro when Manuel was still a boy. As a *catequista*, Alvarado was learning much from the Word of God, but things about the Catholic practice and doctrine bothered him, and he decided on his own to separate himself from the Catholic faith. Alvarado seems to have been a natural theologian, and through his study of the Scriptures he developed his belief in the sovereign power of God, who is greater than all the animistic forces that filled the Aymara cosmos and inspired fear in the people, who protects his people and frees them from curses and disease. He also came to believe that people should not worship idols or the images of saints and virgins, that these were merely man-made statues and carried no power. He insisted that followers of

12. Carrillo, Ticona, and Aruquipa coincide in this incident in Tiquina and its importance, although the details vary.

13. Carillo, *Los Amigos*, 31–33.

14. Juan Ticona, interview with Harold Thomas and Nancy Thomas, January 9, 2015, La Paz.

15. Carillo, *Los Amigos*, 32.

16. Carillo, *Los Amigos*, 32.

17. An alternate version has Cruz Chipana, not yet a Christian and deeply shaken by the Tiquina incident, going to La Paz in 1919, and becoming a Christian at that time in an open-air meeting. This version also has him purchasing his first Bible from William Abel (Cirilo Aruquipa, quoting his grandfather, Baltazar Yujra, in an interview with Harold Thomas and Nancy Thomas, January 20, 2015, La Paz).

18. This part of the story comes from my interview with Juan Ticona in La Paz (January 9, 2015), as well as from an unpublished manuscript by Ticona (no date) given to Humberto Gutiérrez in 2015. Ticona himself gives contradictory versions of some of the details.

A LONG WALK, A GRADUAL ASCENT

Jesus should not participate in the ritual drunkenness that was part of the syncretistic blend of Aymara animism and Catholicism.¹⁹



Manuel Alvarado and wife, ca. 1930 (NWYM)

Several versions of the connection between Manuel Alvarado and the believers in Amacari exist. One has Alvarado coming to Amarcari around 1917 to preach the

19. Details about Alvarado's theology and messages come from Humberto Gutierrez's interviews with the adult children of Baltazar Yujra (Josefina Yujra), Nicolás Cáceres (Celso Cáceres), and Manuel Poma (Andrés Poma), who were part of the early church in Amacari. The interviews were conducted on May 20, 2015, in Amacari. INELA archives.

gospel, leading to the conversions of Sebastián Ticona and Cruz Chipana.²⁰ Another version has it that Alvarado heard about the believers who were already gathered in Amacari and came to visit them. He began teaching them some of what he had learned about the Bible from his time as a *catequista*. It was Alvarado who told the believers of Amacari that they needed to give up chewing coca as part of their worship, along with some of their other cultural customs.²¹

However it happened, the ministry of Manuel Alvarado in Amacari contributed to the stability of the group of new believers. Several conversion stories strengthen this conclusion. Baltazar Yujra was one of the early leaders of this church. He became a believer thanks to the message of Alvarado, who told him he need not fear the evil spirits that were threatening to kill him, that God was all-powerful and could protect him against any threat.²² Another testimony comes from Nicolás Cáceres, one of the early believers, who claimed to have seen the devil, which always resulted in death, but Alvarado told him to go to the believers in Amacari for prayer, and he would be healed from the curse.²³

Alvarado was a gifted evangelist, and, according to INELA historian Humberto Gutiérrez, “Manuel Alvarado’s participation was fundamental in the diffusion of the message of the gospel”²⁴ in the whole area around Lake Titicaca. According to the testimony of Josefina Yujra, daughter of Baltazar Yujra, Alvarado spent years evangelizing, mounted on his grey donkey and wearing his wide-brimmed hat. Rumors have it that he lived to a very ripe old age; some say he was around 145 years old when he died.²⁵ His influence extended beyond the Friends, but certainly included them.

In spite of differing versions and dates, part of the nature of oral history, what we can glean is that God was clearly at work in Amacari and other areas around Lake Titicaca before the appearance of missionaries. The names Cruz Chipana, Sebastián Ticona, Baltazar Yujra, and Manuel Alvarado appear in many of the stories, as well as in other documents of the early Friends Church in Bolivia. The Spirit was preparing the way, drawing people to God, getting ready for the planting of the Friends Church in Aymara soil.

THE STORY OF WILLIAM ABEL

The second narrative stream in the beginnings of the Friends Church in Bolivia takes us north to a Native American tribe in Southern California, and a series of events that would lead to La Paz in 1919. Although William Abel’s actual time as a missionary in

20. Juan Ticona, unpublished manuscript, n.d., INELA archives.

21. Juan Ticona, interview with Harold Thomas and Nancy Thomas, January 9, 2015, La Paz.

22. Josefina Yujra, interview with Humberto Gutiérrez, May 20, 2015, Amacari. INELA archives.

23. Celso Cáceres, interview with Humberto Gutiérrez, May 20, 2015, Amacari. INELA archives.

24. Humberto Gutiérrez, interview with Harold Thomas and Nancy Thomas, January 26, 2016, La Paz.

25. Josefina Yujra, interview with Humberto Gutiérrez, May 20, 2015, Amacari, INELA archives.

Bolivia was less than a year, Bolivian Friends consider him one of their founders and a hero of the faith.

Cultural-Historical Background

William Abel was born around 1870²⁶ in San Pasqual, California, a village that had been reserved for members of the Kumeyaay tribe.²⁷ At the time of his birth there were estimated to be about 195 members of the tribe living in the village,²⁸ along with some Euro-American and Mexican squatters. Within a decade all the Indians would be gone from San Pasqual.

The Indians had inhabited this land for centuries.²⁹ Traditionally, the Kumeyaay tribe was believed to have been composed of different bands living in semipermanent settlements near water sources during certain seasons and dispersed for hunting and gathering during other seasons.³⁰

Beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, three succeeding conquering forces would disrupt and forever change the Kumeyaay culture. In 1769, the Spanish *conquistadores*, followed by the Catholic missions, entered what is today Southern California, dominating and subjugating all indigenous tribes in the region. The Franciscan Mission established at San Diego had jurisdiction over the San Pasqual Valley, and many Indians were forced to live at the mission and work the lands, while others continued on their original lands, but not as free people. As historian Bernard Duffy notes, “This missionization process disrupted all aspects of [Indian] culture,”³¹ and, along with the foreign diseases, resulted in a high death rate.

Historian Richard Carrico adds that, “in spite of the efforts of the Spanish missionaries to convert the Kumeyaay to Christianity and of the presidial military forces to subdue them, large segments of the Kumeyaay population resisted and resented the European intrusion.”³²

26. In the 1880 national census, the man he was living with in Ballena, California, identifies Abel as being twelve years old, thus putting his birthdate at 1868. The 1890 census for California was destroyed in a fire. In the 1900 census, Abel, then living in Whittier, California, identifies himself as being thirty years old, putting his birthdate at 1870. Several years earlier, in 1897, he reported being “about” twenty-five years old, with a birthdate in 1872. Obviously, he didn’t know exactly when he was born. Based on the fact that the 1870 census bears no record of a child named William Abel, we have some basis to conclude that he was probably born after June of 1870.

27. They are also referred to as “Mission Indians” or “Northern Diegueño Indians.” For a history and description of the Kumeyaay, see Carrico, *Strangers*; Peet, *San Pasqual*; or Roberts, *San Pasqual*.

28. Carrico, *Strangers*, 84.

29. Archeological evidence indicates that the area has been inhabited for 9,500 years. Evidence for the Kumeyaay tribe dates back 2,000 years (Carrico, *Strangers*, 1–17).

30. For a more complete description of Kumeyaay life before 1769, see Carrico, *Strangers*, 1–17.

31. Bernard Duffy, unpublished manuscript, n.d., 161, GBWM archives. See also Carrico, *Strangers*, 19–49.

32. Carrico, *Strangers*, 31.

The people entered a new historical period in 1821 when the Mexican republic overthrew the Spaniards. The years between 1821 and 1848 saw a decreasing of the influence of the missions. In 1838, the Mexican overlords had declared San Pasqual an Indian *pueblo*, and many of the mission Indians returned to live there.³³ Yet under Mexican government, “the Indians became serfs, trespassers on their own lands, rebels, or fugitives.”³⁴

The period of Mexican domination was followed by that of the United States at the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848. Under neither of the two groups did the fate of the Indians improve for long.

In 1850 the State of California passed a series of state regulations known as “An Act for the Government and Protection of Indians,” also referred to as the “Statute for the Punishment and Protection of Indians,” or, simply, “The Indian Act.” Section 3 of the statute legalized indentured servitude of Indian children, a custom already being practiced. Another section of the statute prohibited mistreatment, but this provision was hard to enforce. The statute did nothing to guarantee Indian land rights. This statute was the law of the land for more than thirty years.³⁵

The Common School Act of 1855 legalized the exclusion of minority children from public schools. In 1866 the law was modified to allow schooling for mixed-blood Indians and for Indian children living as indentured servants with white families. An 1874 law provided for separate Indian schools, with a provision that if no such school were available, an Indian child could attend a white school.³⁶ These various laws would directly affect William Abel as he grew up.

When he assumed office as president of the United States in 1869, U. S. Grant began to put into action an Indian Peace Plan, an attempt to rectify past injustices. He instituted a Board of Indian Commissioners to help establish reservations and disburse funds. Interestingly enough, this included “placing many of the Indian Agencies in the hands of Quakers, eliminating much of the patronage that had led to the spoils system being rife in Indian affairs, and lessening the power of the military in Indian affairs.”³⁷

On January 31, 1870, President Grant signed an executive order establishing the San Pasqual Indian Reservation, including four thousand acres in the San Pasqual Valley. During the rest of the year, California newspapers and legislators campaigned heavily against the reservation, responding to the demands of the settlers. As a result, on February 25, 1871, Grant revoked his order, placing more than sixty-nine thousand set-aside acres throughout the United States in the public domain, open to the land

33. Carrico, *Strangers*, 43.

34. Bernard Duffy, unpublished manuscript, n.d., 161–62, GBWM archives.

35. Carrico, *Strangers*, 53–57.

36. Carrico, *Strangers*, 57–58.

37. Carrico, *Strangers*, 109.

claims of any settler.³⁸ Duffy reports that “immediately after the executive order was revoked, non-Indian settlers moved in and filed homestead claims on Indian lands in the San Pasqual Valley and surrounding regions. The settlers then had the sheriff evict the Indians from their adobe homes, farms, orchards and grazing lands.”³⁹ While some Indians left immediately, there is evidence that the eviction gradually took place throughout the 1870s, but by the end of the decade, no Indians were left in the San Pasqual Valley. In 1910, a reservation for the San Pasqual Kumeyaay Indians was established in Valley Center, north of the San Pasqual Valley, in land that is hilly, rocky, and much less fertile than their ancestral lands. Today it continues as a reservation and tribal center.⁴⁰

In 1870, in the midst of this turmoil and trauma, William Abel was born in San Pasqual.

Ethnicity and Family Origins

In the literature William Abel is usually referred to as an “Indian,” and, in fact, this is how he self-identifies.⁴¹ However, other sources refer to him as a “half-breed Indian,”⁴² a “Mexican,”⁴³ or a “Mexican-Indian.” A few secondary sources refer to a “Dutch Jewish” father.⁴⁴ The name William Abel is neither Mexican nor Indian.

Both Bernard Duffy and Mary Rockwood Peet, historians, record the presence of a settler in San Pasqual named Peter Abel during the years immediately preceding William Abel’s birth. Duffy affirms that he was a non-Indian American “squatting on the public lands in San Pasqual” in 1869.⁴⁵ Peet entitles one chapter in her history of San Pasqual, “Who Killed Abel?” Peter Abel owned a horse ranch, and he was killed in a squabble with another settler around 1870. The name of the killer remains a mystery (hence the chapter title) and there exist several versions of the story of his death. One version has it that a neighbor’s cows jumped the moat Abel had built around his vegetable garden, thus ruining his broccoli and cucumbers. As Abel ran in the house to get his gun, the neighbor shot him in the back.⁴⁶

38. Bernard Duffy, unpublished manuscript, n.d., 156–57, GBWM archives; Carrico, *Strangers*, 108–13.

39. Bernard Duffy, unpublished manuscript, n.d., 157, GBWM archives.

40. For more information on the current situation, visit the tribal web site at <http://www.san-pasqualbandofmissionindians.org>.

41. For example, in a letter from the Philippines back to K. C. Beckwith of the Ramona Friends Church in 1911, he calls himself “Your Indian brother in Jesus” (“Philippine Islands,” *Pacific Friend* 20, no. 7 (1911) 8, EFCS archives.

42. CYM Minutes, 1930, 53, EFCS archives.

43. Tilman Hobson, “Church Work, Ramona,” *Christian Workman* 7, nos. 2–3 (1899) 10, EFCS archives.

44. “Through His Grace,” *Friends Minister*, October 14, 1920, 6, UBC archives.

45. Bernard Duffy, unpublished manuscript, n.d., 156, GBWM archives.

46. Peet, *San Pasqual*, 56.

Was there a relationship between Peter Abel and William Abel? William Abel claimed that by the age of eight he was an orphan. If Peter Abel was his father, William could have been born and bereft of one parent in the same year, with his mother dying several years later. Or it could have been that the Indian lad was indentured to Peter Abel and took his last name (or had it given to him) from the white family.

We can conclude that his ancestry largely stems from the San Pasqual Kumeyaay tribal group, with perhaps some Mexican blood in his background. In a testimony he wrote in 1900, Abel differentiated himself ethnically from the “Americans.” He wrote that, “living as I did among the Americans, and my studies all being in English, I forgot for the most part my own language.”⁴⁷ When writing of “my language” or “my people,”⁴⁸ he was referring to his Indian heritage.

Childhood

William Abel was born and lived in San Pasqual for at least some of his childhood years. By the time he was eight years old, he was orphaned. This time span corresponds to the revoking of the land treaty in 1871 and the gradual eviction of the Indians.

Historian Elizabeth Judson Roberts came from a family of settlers that moved into San Pasqual in 1875. She was a child at the time, and her memories of the Indian village paint a picture of what would have been William Abel’s childhood experience. She described the Indian village as consisting of small adobe houses on the slopes of the hills and brush huts on the flat land. Writing of the Indians, she noted, “I was never afraid of the Indians and a favorite diversion was to mount the pretty black pony Father had given me and gallop down to the Indian Ranchería. Tying my pony to a willow tree, I would then wander from hut to hut through the village, watching the brown, more or less naked, children play or the squaws as they washed their clothes on a stone at the edge of the lagoon, or pounded acorns and grain into meal in their stone *metatas*.”⁴⁹

We don’t know where William Abel lived—on the slope of the village in an adobe house, in the flat places in a brush hut, or on the settlement of a white squatter. Judson Roberts also mentions a small Catholic chapel in the village and the priest, Father Uback, who came once a month to hold services for the Indians.⁵⁰

47. William Abel, “Work among the Spanish People,” *Christian Workman* 1, nos. 5–6 (1900) 7, EFCS archives.

48. William Abel, “Work among the Spanish People,” *Christian Workman* 1, nos. 5–6 (1900) 8. This testimony was originally published in a magazine called *Spanish Evangel* in 1900 and reprinted in the *Friends* magazine, *Christian Workman*. It may have represented the concern of the Rev. A. B. Case, a missionary with the Spanish Missionary Society of California and teacher of Spanish in the Training School for Christian Workers at the time when William Abel was a student. Case would naturally have focused on the Mexican side of Abel’s ethnicity.

49. Roberts, *San Pasqual*, 19.

50. Roberts, *San Pasqual*, 20, 23.

A LONG WALK, A GRADUAL ASCENT

William Abel had lost both parents by the age of eight and found himself living for a time with his grandfather in the mountain village of Julian. He noted that he “was left mostly to look after myself.”⁵¹ In his 1900 testimonial, written semi-anonymously as “A Goat Herder,”⁵² he gave a brief picture of his ten years in the area around Julian and his work herding first goats, then pigs, and finally, cattle. In his first job, herding goats, he said he made his living, “such as it was,” and earned \$5 a year. This corresponds to the conditions and customs of an indentured child servant. Summing up his misadventures as a child goatherd, Abel wrote,

But I didn't know how to herd goats, and the American for whom I worked was hard on me, oftentimes my flock would wander away from my care. The goats would climb up the mountain, on and on to the highest rock and there lie down. I would follow and by the time I was with them at the top, I would think it was a good place to lie down too. I was tired and while the goats were resting I would go to sleep.⁵³

He added that once upon waking and finding the goats escaped, he became frightened of the consequences and ran away, thus ending two years as a goat herder.

Abel tells of his next two years herding pigs, noting, “I didn't know how to herd hogs any better than I did goats.”⁵⁴ This probably was from 1880 to 1882 and corresponds to the US Census records for the township of Ballena, in a valley near Julian. The 1880 census states that William Abel, a twelve-year-old Indian, was part of the household of Lyman and Rose Graves, ages twenty-eight and twenty-two, with no children of their own at that time. Lyman was a farmer, Rose a homemaker, and they record Abel as being a herder. The recorded age is obviously a guess, as Abel did not know the date of his birth. He was more likely ten years old at the time of the census.⁵⁵

He goes on to explain the details of being fired from this job after two years: “The occasion of my leaving them [the hogs] was this: I had let them run into the dry foxtail so much that, strange as it may seem, the eyes of many had become destroyed, the eyeballs emptied by the barbs which had pierced them. My master, when he discovered this, accused me of having punched out their eyes with my thumb, and so he fired me.”⁵⁶

51. William Abel, “Work among the Spanish People,” *Christian Workman* 1, nos. 5–6 (1900) 7, EFCS archives.

52. William Abel, “Work among the Spanish People,” *Christian Workman* 1, nos. 5–6 (1900) 7–8, EFCS archives.

53. William Abel, “Work among the Spanish People,” *Christian Workman* 1, nos. 5–6 (1900) 7, EFCS archives.

54. William Abel, “Work among the Spanish People,” *Christian Workman* 1, nos. 5–6 (1900) 7, EFCS archives.

55. US Census of 1880.

56. William Abel, “Work among the Spanish People,” *Christian Workman* 1, nos. 5–6 (1900) 7, EFCS archives.

William Abel would then have been about eleven or twelve years old, and here he notes that his life changed for the better. He got a job herding cattle and was given a horse to ride. And “yet,” he writes, “I was still a child, and didn’t well understand my business for occasionally my charge would get into the unfenced grain fields. I always had to stand the blame, and lots of it.”⁵⁷

During his ten years as an indentured servant herder, he had not gone to any school. But by the time he was eighteen years old and free, William Abel had saved enough money to move to the nearby town of Ramona and begin his education. This would have been around 1888. At that time, Ramona was a town of between five hundred and six hundred people, known as a farming, fruit, and stock raising region.⁵⁸

In Ramona William Abel obtained room and board with “an American family” and enrolled in the first grade. He described this experience: “I did not know my letters, but entered the public school. I was put in the first grade with the little children. I was ashamed, but I staid by and in three years I had passed the sixth grade, leaving the little ones behind, but I worked for it, studying almost night and day.”⁵⁹ He would have graduated around 1891.

We don’t know what Abel’s relationship to the American family was, but there is some indication he may have been apprenticed to a butcher. Copies of the Ramona newspaper, the *Sentinel*, between the years of 1893 and 1897 carry an advertisement for the Nuevo Meat Market. (Nuevo was the original name of Ramona.) The ad informs: “Fresh meat always on hand. Fresh sausage every week. Meat delivered at San Pasqual, Poway and the surrounding country. Give me your patronage. Main Street, Nuevo, Cal. Wm. Abell, Prop.”⁶⁰

It’s worthy of note that this young man had come from an Indian village and a childhood of indentured servanthood, without schooling, to become the owner of a respectable business in town, a position that he held for at least seven years, until he moved from Ramona in 1900. The news column of an issue of the *Sentinel* in June of 1897, “Here and There,” notes simply that “William Abel is in San Diego.”⁶¹ The rest of

57. William Abel, “Work among the Spanish People,” *Christian Workman* 1, nos. 5–6 (1900) 7, EFCS archives. An undocumented biography of Abel, published in the *Friends Minister*, of the Union Bible College, Westfield, Indiana, in 1920 gives a different version of Abel’s childhood. This version of the story has Abel leaving Julian after only one year, not mentioning a grandfather, and has him returning to live in San Pasqual with a cousin, Thomas Curo, until he was fifteen, at which time he goes to Ramona (“Through His Grace,” *Friends Minister*, October 14, 1920, 6–7, UBC archives). Given the fact of the eviction of Indians from San Pasqual, this doesn’t seem likely.

58. Q. A. R. Holton, “Ramona,” *Christian Workman* 5, nos. 2–3 (1897) 11, EFCS archives.

59. William Abel, “Work among the Spanish People,” *Christian Workman* 1, nos. 5–6 (1900) 7, EFCS archives.

60. *Sentinel*, newspaper of Ramona, California, July 27, 1893; February 15, 1894; February 22, 1894; June 24, 1897. Other editions of the *Sentinel* were not available. Abel’s name was spelled in a variety of ways: Abel (the most common), Abell, and Able. GBWM archives.

61. *Sentinel*, June 24, 1897, GBWM archives.

the column is filled with similarly brief tidbits about local Anglo citizens. It seems that William Abel had become an accepted member of Ramona society.

Apparently problems with drinking and gambling interfered with his work.⁶² In a 1911 letter sent from the Philippines to Friends in Ramona, he remembered that “Ramona is the home town of my young days and where I spent my life, mostly in pleasure and sin.”⁶³ This picture of drinking and carousing, part of his conversion testimony, needs to be balanced with the picture of William Abel, proprietor of the Nuevo Meat Market.

Conversion

The history of the Ramona Friends Church dates back to 1883 with the arrival of the Q. A. R. Holton family to the town. They were joined in 1887 by a Quaker minister from Kansas, W. E. Mills, along with J. H. Thomas, James Williams, and their families. They made plans to establish a Friends work in Ramona, beginning with a Union Sunday School open to Christians of all denominations. The first regular Friends meeting was established in 1891, under the leadership of Mills, and in July of 1892, Ramona Friends Church was recognized as a monthly meeting, under the Pasadena Quarterly Meeting of the California Yearly Meeting of Friends Church.⁶⁴ All of this was simultaneous with William Abel’s move to Ramona and his educational experience in the public school. There seems to have been little contact between Abel and the church up to 1897.

In September of 1897, Levi Gregory, superintendent of evangelism for California Yearly Meeting, held a three-week series of evangelistic meetings in the Ramona Friends Church. He was accompanied by Tilman Hobson of Pasadena Monthly Meeting. In the subsequent literature, these meetings are referred as the “Ramona Revival.” Fannie Kirkman of Ramona described the experience:

During their stay here [Gregory and Hobson], they visited most of the families and held 48 meetings, besides working in the Sabbath School and Christian Endeavor Meetings.

The attendance was very good at these Meetings. There were about twenty conversions and renewals and fourteen persons gave in their names to become members of the church. There has been such plain and earnest teaching. The gospel was truly preached in its fullness.

The leaven is working and it is our earnest prayer that the good work will go on. We believe the Christian people were awakened to their responsibility, as never before and will unite their efforts to build up Christ’s kingdom in this place.

62. “Through His Grace,” *Friends Minister*, October 14, 1920, 6, UBC archives.

63. William Abel, “Philippine Islands,” *Pacific Friend* 20, no. 7 (1911) 7, EFCS archives.

64. Q. A. R. Holton, “Ramona,” *Christian Workman* 5, nos. 5–6 (1897) 11, EFCS archives.