

THE AFTERMATH

Early on the morning of 18 July 1915, following the executions, Zapatista guards released the Monroy daughters from detention. Tearfully, they approached the execution site where numerous townspeople had already gathered to gawk at Vicente's and Rafael's prostrate bodies. As the women struggled to retrieve the cadavers to take them to the Monroy compound, none of the onlookers offered to help.

Upon arriving at their home, the women found a number of their humble sisters from the San Marcos Branch weeping and commiserating with the hysterical Jesusita.

Amidst panic-stricken anguish, Rafael's mother and the women she harbored and loved confronted the finality of the previous evening's events. It was a frightening time. Most of the men in the faith had gone into hiding, leaving the women and children nearly alone in their grief and fear.

JESUSITA REBUKES THE ZAPATISTAS

Someone suggested the women kneel in prayer to seek solace in and guidance from the Lord and to petition him for help. What to do? Where to turn? Should they flee to the United States (a thought Jesusita had entertained for some time)? How could they deal with their grief and shock? Who could or would help them? How could they protect themselves from enemies who seemed not only to be everywhere but who also had the support of a factional wing of a rebel army?

One anti-Mormon gossipmonger who had goaded the Zapatistas to violence toward the Mormons over the fictive arms cache made it seem like the community's reaction to the new religion was part of the members' ordeal—the shunning, the persecution, the sacking of Jesusita's store and Rafael's ranch, the violation of the Monroy compound, the executions, and then the new threats. Having fervently adopted a new faith, the Mormon Saints had lost the local social connections that might have moderated the Zapatistas. In addition, circumstances dictated that neither the illusory arms cache nor the Saints' faith could fade from center stage. The arms cache had become an existential commitment for the Zapatistas. Their commander presumably did not want to be wrong about the matter.

Just as the women ended their prayer for God's guidance, they heard the butt of a rifle stock beating on the thick wooden door to the Monroy compound. The women, jolted once again by an unrestrained assault on their privacy if not their safety, shrieked in alarm, rightly suspecting that the racket was not heralding a messenger from the Lord in answer to their just-uttered supplication.

A new contingent of Zapatista soldiers presented an order to search the house again—for the third and not the last time. Marching to rumormongering extremes, more locals had added to the story that the Monroys had a munitions dump in their house by accusing them of storing Carrancista uniforms and currency. (They may have been right on the currency because Jesusita's store was obligated to conduct transactions in that currency when the Carrancistas held the plaza.) Had they been denied permission to enter, the soldiers, according to their orders, said they would be obligated to imprison the occupants and enter by force.

Jesusita and her sister members appeared to believe that the soldiers had come to dishonor and perhaps kill them. However, the combatants seemed almost apologetic, courteously taking off their sombreros when entering the salon where the cadavers were laid out.¹ Jesusita reproved them. “We have nothing to give you! You have unjustly killed my son and you have refused to believe that we are not Carrancistas! The hate among the people [that you are listening to] is because we are not Catholics. We believe in the true doctrine of our Savior Jesus Christ and this is the principal cause of this libelous slander.”²

Jesusita was on dangerous ground. Criticizing Zapatistas who held the plaza might not be forgivable. Nevertheless, her resolve was absolute as she declared that she cherished her religion more than life itself. Her fury was unrestrained.

The soldiers respectfully listened, then explored the compound—once more, they found nothing that matched the rumors giving foundation to their general’s article of faith about the cache. They were beyond frustrated, perhaps fearing a dressing down from their *comandante*. The women went back to preparing the bodies and dealing with how to get them buried.

CASIMIRO GUTIÉRREZ ASSUMES LEADERSHIP

Around three in the afternoon, Casimiro Gutiérrez, one of the few brothers who had not gone into hiding (although he was keeping a low profile), appeared at the Monroy home. No doubt he was attempting to fill the leadership vacuum occasioned by the execution of the two members of the San Marcos Branch presidency. Months before, Rafael had ordained him an elder, and he may have been serving as Monroy’s second counselor. He arranged for funeral services. First, however, someone had to make the caskets quickly because in those days cadavers were not embalmed. Who would make the caskets?

Regular carpenters throughout the municipality of Tula were either among those inclined to cast aspersions on the Mormon Monroys and their friends or were fearful of pitting themselves against the area’s pro-Zapatista power brokers. Would the Zapatistas kill the carpenters, too? They declined all entreaties to make the coffins.³

Why not purchase a coffin at the mortuary? There were neither mortuaries nor ready-made, off-the-shelf coffins in the area. People took care of their

own dead, which made it even more difficult to bid goodbye to loved ones without any way to bury them properly. But there was respite for the Monroys. Margarito Sánchez Villalobos, a Mormon from San Marcos who elected to stand with the women during their ordeal, and a young Mormon lad, Bernardo Villalobos, possibly Margarito's nephew, came to the rescue. They did their best to make suitable coffins for Rafael and Vicente.⁴

Despite threats circulating that people would kill any Mormon man on sight, more help soon came. Gabriel Rosales, formerly of Ixtacalco prior to the Monroys' having received his family and him in San Marcos as war refugees, came out of hiding, perhaps for the express purpose of attending the funeral. The Monroys had welcomed his family to San Marcos as war refugees when they fled from Ixtacalco. He and Casimiro Gutiérrez did the "heavy lifting" to move the bodies to the burial site over a mile away in Tula.⁵ On the way to the cemetery, a few townsfolk taunted, "You knew the people hated you. Why didn't you just leave?"⁶

Despite all, Isauro Monroy went to the Tula recorder's office to register the deaths,⁷ and Gabriel Rosales dedicated the grave without any interference. Except for Casimiro Gutiérrez, Gabriel Rosales, a youthful Daniel Montoya Gutiérrez, Isauro Monroy, and the coffin makers Margarito Sánchez Villalobos and Bernardo Villalobos, it appears that other male members in San Marcos stayed in hiding for the duration of the Zapatista occupation. Even then, Daniel Montoya was the only member who stayed on hand twenty-four hours a day to help the Monroy and Morales women.⁸

Threats against the men's lives were credible. Indeed, during one of the subsequent "many times" that the Zapatistas came to search the Monroy home, the women hid Montoya in their chicken coop, where, out of fright, he thereafter took up a fitful temporary "residence." "Our hearts were racing and legs quaking as we tried to prevent Daniel from being killed. By divine intervention those soldiers left and Daniel's life was spared."⁹

ZAPATISTAS ON THE DEFENSIVE

By late July 1915 (certainly before the twenty-fifth, when seventeen members, including at least five men who had come out of hiding, met once again in a sacrament meeting¹⁰), the Carrancistas returned in force from their stronghold in Pachuca and routed the Zapatistas. Now the tables were turned. The

Mormon antagonists were on the run, obsequiously reversing their affiliations or reconsidering whom they should fear. They had good reason. The Carrancista captain, Pedro González, thought of Rafael as a friend. Military intelligence had informed the Carrancistas of the slaughter in San Marcos. González told the Monroy women that his forces would now take revenge on the gossip-monger ultimately culpable for the executions. “We know who he is.”¹¹

Expecting the women to cheer him on, González was surprised to hear Rafael’s widow, Guadalupe Hernández, say, “Sir! No! I do not want another unfortunate woman to have to cry in her loneliness as do I. Let it go. God will bring justice in his own time.”¹² The record does not disclose whether González proceeded on his stated task, the widow’s protest notwithstanding.

Bernabé Parra Gutiérrez, who had left San Marcos more than a year earlier to find work near Santiago Tezontlale in his hometown of Guerrero, Hidalgo,¹³ returned to San Marcos shortly after the Carrancista reoccupation. People informed him of all that had happened. He listened in astonishment. The military had fast-spreading intelligence, but the larger population frequently was left in the dark—no newspapers, no radio, only a plethora of rumors on the human gossip chain. News or even gossip of the executions had not reached Bernabé in Guerrero.

Parra immediately went to the Monroy home to see his friend Jovita, Jesusita’s daughter. Learning about his cousin Daniel Montoya Gutiérrez, Parra pulled him from his hiding place in the chicken coop where he had taken up a semipermanent abode. He no longer needed to be afraid for his life because “now the Carrancistas are retaking the plazas [in the municipality of Tula].”¹⁴

PEACE, TRANQUILITY, TURMOIL

With the Carrancistas back in town, a welcome modicum of tranquility returned to San Marcos members’ homes. Safety and security—for these they were grateful and perhaps for some they were enough. However, members of the Monroy household had the economic and experiential wherewithal to think of their sadness expansively, in part because they did not see a continuing place for themselves in San Marcos whether or not it was safe and secure. “The ignorance and fanaticism of our Mexican people continued to pursue us.”¹⁵ Where to turn, where to go?

Jesusita was now desperate to leave San Marcos and go anywhere—if not the United States, then somewhere else in Mexico. As her daughter Guadalupe expressed, “To live under oppression among this people [in San Marcos] would not be possible. To leave the Gospel to be able to live in peace with our people would be more impossible. No, no, we would prefer to die, as did my brother, rather than deny the testimony we had received.”¹⁶

Five weeks after the executions, Jesusita wrote to the Mexicans’ beloved friend, President Rey L. Pratt, still in administrative exile in the United States, to ask his opinion.¹⁷ In addition, she expressed her anger at her son-in-law Roy Van McVey, advising Pratt that neither she nor her daughter, McVey’s wife Natalia, could bear to write to him because they held him responsible for Rafael’s execution (he was a friend of the Carrancistas and had business dealings with them). In their torment, they seemed to wish that it had been McVey rather than Rafael who had faced the firing squad. Jesusita nevertheless asked Pratt to inform McVey, who was biding his time in Texas, about the executions.

Amidst the odious sentiments burning in their hearts, Jesusita offered an opening. “I know full well that we have a second commandment and it is to pardon our enemies. We will do this, my good brother, and we are working to blot out every kind of hate, and when this sentiment leaves us, we will write [to McVey].”¹⁸ It would take some time for this family rift to heal.

As if reasserting her defiance to the whole community, Jesusita closed her letter to Pratt saying, “Our sorrows have been grievous, but our faith is strong, and we will never forsake this religion.”¹⁹ The Monroys’ enemies in Tula would not win in this contest of wills.

In the meantime, McVey, who had been writing letters to his wife that she had not received, had asked Pratt, whose correspondence was getting through, please to inform Natalia of an opportunity. McVey had contacted one of his friends who, with the reappearance of the Carrancistas, had returned to the Toltteca cement factory to assess the damages from the Zapatista occupation. McVey’s friend told Jesusita that he would take them all to McVey in Texas. He spoke of San Antonio, where many Mexicans lived and Spanish was widely spoken.²⁰ A boiling cauldron of unrequited disappointment and lost hope fired Jesusita’s evanescent decision to flee the flames of hatred. Fortunately, her mind did not stay fixed on it long enough to make it happen. The Monroys stayed in San Marcos and became bedrock for the expansion of the Church there.

The community's objection to the Mormon Monroys and their friends remained, although with the Carrancistas now holding the plaza in Tula and environs, people judiciously attenuated their persecution. The Carrancistas were quite secularized and perhaps still held to the pluralistic promise of Benito Juárez's *La Reforma*,²¹ which national and international politics had wiped out more than a quarter century before. For this or alternative reasons, Carrancista officers had high esteem for the Mormons they knew. Reflecting on this, more and more Saints in San Marcos came to believe that their religion was at the root of all they had suffered. They had become Mormons, which was a negation of Catholicism, which started the gossiping about consorting with foreigners, which led to allied accusations such as the Monroy's having an arms cache, which led to Rafael's and Vicente's executions, which legitimized the continuing persecution.²² All this notwithstanding, numerous members stoutly joined Jesucita's sentiments: "We will never forsake this religion."

Less than a week following the execution squad's performance, and now under the protection of the Carrancistas, these faithful Saints held Church services on Wednesday, 25 July 1915, unable even to wait until Sunday. Casimiro Gutiérrez, the newly self-appointed leader of the Mormons in San Marcos, conducted the services. He had stepped forward at great personal risk to organize the funeral and help to bury the deceased. President Rey Pratt could not have been involved in Casimiro's self-selection; he had yet to hear of the executions.²³ Casimiro was simply assuring a modicum of leadership continuity. Who else could?

Many of the men in hiding came forth, and following Sunday school services, some spoke in the subsequent sacrament meeting: Gabriel Rosales, a teacher; Isauro Monroy, a deacon; Casimiro himself, an elder; and Bernabé Parra and Maclovio Sánchez Villalobos, whose priesthood offices the record did not disclose.²⁴ The Saints met to commiserate their losses, to reinforce one another's gospel sentiments, to thank the Lord for their lives, to reflect affectionately and graciously on the departed, and to petition God to bless every member to be able to carry on and resolutely face whatever was yet to come.

It was in each other that most of the San Marcos Mormons found their strength. However, for the Monroys, who had been accustomed to a more expansive lifestyle than had the others, the downfall was onerous. Devoid of associations from their accustomed social class, old friends, or even their

extended family to reassure and succor them in their grief, it was a wretched time. Although some people may have felt sorry for them, many who continued their shunning no doubt remained terrified of the social condemnation waiting to resurface with vigor as soon as the Carrancistas either vacated or surrendered the plazas of the municipality of Tula. Non-Mormons did not want to accept this vulnerability.²⁵

There were additional stresses, perhaps presaging the interplay of the Mormons' personal failings with additional cataclysmic times that were yet to descend upon them. For example, within weeks of the Wednesday sacrament meeting of 25 July, a few of the Saints who considered their losses greater than even the Monroys' began to admonish Rafael's sisters to share more of their remaining goods with them. Occasionally, they used church meetings to call attention to the economic discrepancies they felt were not in accordance with the gospel.²⁶

Jesusita judged that these feelings and the executions put Rafael's sister Jovita Monroy into a downward health spiral that left her crippled for years and, despite months of medical treatment in Mexico City, nearly took her life.²⁷ Nevertheless, trying to rise above these tensions, the Monroy daughters and Rafael's widow, Guadalupe Hernández, articulated their testimonies on the first Sunday in August 1915, affirming that despite the executions, the calamities of the war, and the divisions lurking beneath the community of the Saints, the gospel was true and their faith was unwavering.²⁸ They and others were working firmly to find a new way forward from the morass of their misery. It would be hard slogging for all the Saints. Dislocations of mind and spirit when the body is under extreme stress are quite common. Some people rise to the occasion and face life with a renewed resoluteness. Others lose all hope and simply expire either in mind, spirit, or body—or sometimes, all three.

NOTES

1. Monroy Mera, "Como llegó el evangelio," 28–29.
2. Monroy Mera, "Como llegó el evangelio," 29–30.
3. Monroy Mera, "Como llegó el evangelio," 29.
4. Bradley Lunt Hill to LaMond Tullis, email, 21 February 2014, sent from Mexico City. Leopoldo Portillo of the village of Vicente Guerrero in Hidalgo stated that a former landlord in Mexico City from the mid-1980s, Bernardo Villalobos, told him

he was the one who made the two coffins for the martyrs since the other carpenters were afraid of the consequences for helping the Monroys in any way. Guadalupe Monroy claims that an unidentified neighbor in San Marcos made one and the other was made by a member of the Church, Margarito Sánchez Villalobos, with the help of one of his sons, most likely a nephew. See Monroy Mera, “Como llegó el evangelio,” 29.

5. See Monroy Mera, “Como llegó el evangelio,” 29–30.
6. See Monroy Mera, “Como llegó el evangelio,” 29.
7. The records are *Acta 233* and *Acta 234*, which register the deaths of Rafael Monroy and Vicente Morales with the municipal, or county, recorder. Facsimiles provided by Minerva Montoya Monroy were attached to her email of 21 September 2016.
8. Guadalupe claims that Daniel Montoya was the only one who stood by them, which clearly is not correct. I interpret that she meant he stood by them for the entire time of the Zapatista occupation rather than darting in and out, as one does when coming in and out of hiding. See Monroy Mera, “Como llegó el evangelio,” 29–30.
9. Monroy Mera, “Como llegó el evangelio,” 30.
10. Monroy Mera, “Como llegó el evangelio,” 32.
11. Monroy Mera, “Como llegó el evangelio,” 31.
12. Monroy Mera, “Como llegó el evangelio,” 31.
13. Bernabé Parra left for Guerrero in the state of Hidalgo around April of 1914. Monroy Mera, “Como llegó el evangelio,” 9.
14. Monroy Mera, “Como llegó el evangelio,” 31.
15. Monroy Mera, “Como llegó el evangelio,” 32.
16. Monroy Mera, “Como llegó el evangelio,” 32.
17. “Carta de Jesús M. Vda. de Monroy,” 9. Guadalupe Monroy also discusses this. See Monroy Mera, “Como llegó el evangelio,” 28.
18. “Carta de Jesús M. Vda. de Monroy,” 9.
19. Young, *Diary*, 121. Elsewhere, the phrase is rendered, “Aunque grandes han sido las tribulaciones pero también es grande nuestra fe y no desmayamos.” See “Carta de Jesús M. Vda. de Monroy,” 8–9. See also Grover, “Execution in Mexico,” 20.
20. Monroy Mera, “Como llegó el evangelio,” 32.
21. La Reforma ripped political control from the Catholic clergy and its conservative allies and instituted a period of social, political, and economic reform in Mexico, 1856–75. Jan Bazant, *Alienation of Church Wealth in Mexico: Social and Economic Aspects of the Liberal Revolution 1856–1875* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

22. Monroy Mera, "Como llegó el evangelio," 30.
23. Unusual leadership arrangements persist even in present-day Mexico. In 2012, a bishop was suddenly released from service in the Lomas de Chapúltepec Ward, yet his counselors continued to run affairs for more than six months before the stake president called a new bishop. This author was a member of the ward.
24. Monroy Mera, "Como llegó el evangelio," 32.
25. Monroy Mera, "Como llegó el evangelio," 33.
26. Monroy Mera, "Como llegó el evangelio," 33. Inequality and its practical or simply emotive consequences have always been a problem for utopian religious communities. Among Mormons in the United States attempting to live the united order, the struggle came front and center in Orderville, Utah. See Mark A. Pendleton, "The Orderville United Order of Zion," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 7, no. 4 (October 1939), 141–59.
27. "Reseña de la vida de Jovita Monroy Mera" (typescript, 4 pages, n.d.), copy provided by Hugo Montoya Monroy, 1 March 2014, 1. One wonders about posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and associated autoimmune reactions associated with hyperstress. A sample objective affirmation is Ljudmila Stojanovich and Dragomir Marisavljevich, "Stress as a Trigger of Autoimmune Disease," *Autoimmunity Reviews* 7, no. 3 (January 2008), 209–13, doi:10.1016.
28. "Reseña de la vida de Jovita Monroy Mera," 2.