The Episcopal Church in Costa Rica: Its First Century

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I. Historical Background: Costa Rica in the Nineteenth Century

Central American independence was an urban phenomenon in which a series of proclamations was produced under the control of the *criollo** groups of the cities. These proclamations took place behind the backs of the sectors of society which had been struggling for independence. The political program of the actions controlled by the *criollos* included replacing the representative government of the Spanish dominant classes, the elimination of tribute to Spain which could no longer be justified (an action which inclined the labor force towards the metropolitan areas), the suppression of commercial monopolies, and the conservation of the structure of the colonial social system. The *criollos* found the inspiration for these movements in the ideas of the French Revolution, especially with regard to the concept of freedom and human rights.[1]

The Roman Catholic historian Miguel Picado writes of this period:

> Costa Rica lived in the midst of a generalized poverty, isolated from the worldly noise of the political confrontations that were shaking the rest of Central America. Costa Rica was languishing far from the focal points of the social and political power of that time. This isolation was beneficial in the long run because it kept the country apart from

**criollo* is the term used to describe the descendants of the Spanish conquerors, born in the Americas and for centuries excluded from power by the Spanish-born colonial authorities.

[1]Wilton Nelson, "Protestantismo durante la época colonial (1500–1821)," in CEHILA, *Historia general de la Iglesia en América Latina* (Barcelona: Sígueme, 1985), Vol. VI, 201.

the struggles of the nineteenth century, and this facilitated its prompt connection to the world market through coffee.[2]

Thus we can understand how political isolation and poverty were important factors in the social dynamic of Costa Rica from its days as a colony:

> The independence of Costa Rica was a consequence of that achieved in Guatemala for the entire region. . . . No efforts to achieve it took place in Costa Rica, so that the news of independence provoked vacillations and doubt. The attitude of Costa Ricans should be understood within a context that permitted the colonists to live in a quasi-anarchist regime: tending towards individualism, they never felt a Spanish yoke that it would be necessary to shake off.[3]

Some members of the secular clergy, whose participation seems not to have been questioned, were linked to these independence movements. For some priests, their priestly ministry implied a political dimension which led them to participate in the independence process in the name of the well-being of society.

When the Declaration of Independence was issued in Guatemala on 15 September 1821, the signatures of thirteen priests appeared among the twenty-nine signers of the documents.[4] This does not mean, however, that religious liberty arrived with independence. In 1821, the "Covenant of Concord," a basic interim covenant, declared that "the religion of the Province (of Central America) is and will always be the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman, as unique and true, to the exclusion of any other."[5]

The following year a further note of intolerance was added to the article, stating that

> if foreigners of some other religion enter the Province, the government will indicate the permitted duration of their residence, protect their freedom and other rights, and will expel them whenever they

[2] *Ibid.*, 201.

[3] *Ibid.*, 241.

[4] *Ibid.*, 274.

[5] *Ibid.*, 242.

are discovered to be attempting to disseminate their errors to the subversion of the social order.[6]

These articles indicate how foreigners were to be treated once the Liberals came to power and encouraged and controlled the Costa Rican economy. Clearly, against such obstacles the Protestants who arrived would not be able to exercise their faith freely. The legal measures of the period indicate not only how much other religious currents were feared, but also denote a clear precaution against the exercise of power which non-Catholic foreigners might represent to Roman Catholic domination of the institutions at the time. Hence this religious intolerance meant the exclusion of any kind of ideological pluralism.

The period after independence was characterized by continual controversies between Liberals and Conservatives, not necessarily struggles between political parties but rather ideological conflicts between two different concepts of the world and of different political options.[7] The mobilization of the people which was always present in the civil wars of that period was not the result of their identification with a determined ideology, but rather the response to concrete political measures which affected the sectors in conflict.[8] This would seem to indicate that the uniformity that resulted from the Church's religious monopoly was not reflected in the political sphere.[9]

At the end of the colonial period, the provinces of Central America had progressed very little. In Costa Rica, for example, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the primary schools could be counted on the fingers of one hand. Few people knew how to read and write.[10] But with independence, the new nations

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] *Ibid.*, 244.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] In this period, the Roman Catholic Church presented itself in terms of a juridical model, emphasizing exclusively its institutional dimension. It was presented as a power which should be respected and enjoy privileges. If those privileges were recognized, the society was Christian, and if not, it was condemned as pagan. In this model, the juridical dominated and determined its other aspects. CEHILA, *op. cit.*, 245.

[10] *Ibid.*, 274.

were exposed to all the currents of modern life.[11] They began to have contact with Protestant countries—a fact of much importance, as we shall see.

II. The Establishment of Anglicanism in San Jose, Costa Rica

If independence did not bring religious freedom, it did make possible commercial and cultural contact with Protestant countries. Contact with the rest of the world made the leaders of the new nations aware of their cultural, social and economic backwardness.

Seeing that the Protestant nations (England, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, the United States and the Scandanavian countries) were the most progressive and advanced of the age, they believed that one way to raise the cultural and economic standards would be to encourage the immigration of people from some of these countries.[12] But this posed a problem: How to invite Protestants to live in countries where the law does not permit the free exercise of any religion other than Roman Catholicism? One Costa Rican who reflected upon the question wrote:

> Our first need is for a good number of foreigners . . . , without them we will vegetate in the status quo. . . . But foreigners are afraid to come to our shores. . . .
>
> The first conditions of immigration are: freedom of work, freedom of industry, civil freedom, freedom of worship. . . . But European immigration is not directed towards the Spanish-American republics, because they find in them none of the advantages the North offers them for their moral and material life.
>
> We need immigration at all costs; and if we really want to leave the state of semi-barbarism, if we want to get out of the routine to enter fully on the way of progress, if we want to bury forever worries and ignorance, we should hasten to compete with the North in the guar-

[11]These included, among others, abolition of the Inquisition, tribute from native peoples and slavery; citizenship in place of status as royal subjects; establishment of free trade and import policies; and introduction of the Napoleonic legal system.

[12]CEHILA, *op. cit.*, 274.

antees conceded to the foreigner . . .

Let us assure to foreigners the observance of their beliefs in freedom of worship, the freedom of their heart to be able to choose. . . .[13]

It was not until later that religious freedom was written into the terms of the treaties of friendship and commerce with Protestant countries, and even later that religious freedom appeared in the Constitutions, first in the form of tolerance and finally complete liberty.[14]

Many immigrants saw the opportunity of making a fortune by exploiting the gold mines of Monte Aguacate in Costa Rica, with machinery which was quite modern for the period. It was necessary for this group of immigrants (among them an ancestor of the Dent family, financially prominent in the country) to bring a medical professional to Costa Rica.[15] In 1837 they brought one of the people who would later help found the Protestant Church in San Jose, Dr. Richard L. Brealey, who became a very important farmer and businessman in Heredia and Barva.[16]

More Protestant immigrants arrived, and although they came with secular purposes in mind, some wished to hold public worship. Since there was no organized congregation, they met in Dr. Brealey's home. In the absence of an ordained pastor, Dr. Brealey conducted the Sunday services, fulfilling the functions of a lay reader. He conducted the worship for the Protestant community of San Jose, Costa Rica for many years.[17]

(Up to this point, it can be said that Protestants, not Protestantism, arrived first in Costa Rica. Protestants arrived, not as advocates of their religion, but as immigrants; not as a missionary enterprise, but as the religion of immigrants.)[18]

[13]*Government Gazette*, San José, 4 September 1852, 1–2; quoted in *ibid.*, 275.

[14]*Ibid.* Costa Rica signed treaties with Germany in 1848, England in 1849 and the USA in 1851.

[15]Nelson, "Héroes del movimiento evangélico en Costa Rica," unpublished, p. 3. What first attracted the English was gold.

[16]*Ibid.*

[17]Wall plaques on the Church of the Good Shepherd, San José, Costa Rica.

[18]Nelson, "Protestantismo . . . ," 276.

Brealey was not only a selfless physician[19] but a deeply spiritual person. A year before his death, he wrote to his children Mariquita and Willie, on February 14, 1863:

> And now, dear Mariquita, love your Bible and your Savior. Sit humbly at Jesus' feet and learn from Him who said, 'I am meek and lowly of heart', and you will find that that is the beginning of wisdom. All else will follow. And now may God keep on blessing you both.[20]

Another important figure in this period was Captain William Le Lacheur, a native of Guernsey, one of the Channel Islands, who brought the first cargo of Costa Rican coffee to London in 1844.[21] Thus a commercial relationship was established with England which became very important in the economic development of Costa Rica, which eventually became one of the most advanced nations in Central America.[22]

La Lecheur was not only interested in his business with Costa Rica, but also manifested another concern. He took young Costa Ricans to England and installed them in professional schools, fretting over them like a parent and taking them back to Costa Rica, prepared to fill important roles as professionals. As his fleet of ships grew, money and English products flowed to the new nation, producing an agricultural and industrial revolution and gradually transforming the way of life in Costa Rica.[23]

But La Lecheur never overlooked his chief interest, which was commerce based on buying Costa Rican coffee at the best price and thus increasing his profit. This business did not benefit the peasant or the small coffee producer, but it did affect the incipient coffee bourgeoisie of Costa Rica, who did not figure at the forefront of the enterprise, but subtly manipulated the relations with the Protestant foreigners. This is an extremely important fact, since the presence of a permanent export crop would effect a

[19]Howard Lynn, ed., *History of the Church of the Good Shepherd 1865–1965* (San José, 1965), p. 5. Dr. Brealey was very useful in the eradication of the cholera epidemic of 1858.

[20]Nelson, "Otros precursores," unpublished.

[21]Hector Rojas, *El cafe en Costa Rica* (San José, 1972), 19.

[22]Nelson, in CEHILA, *op. cit.*, p. 274; H. Rojas, *op. cit.*, 12–19.

[23]Nelson, "Héroes . . .", 1–2.

total change in the social structure of the country, helping to consolidate an oligarchy of coffee producers which would control the political and economic power for more than a hundred years.[24]

What role did the church play in the face of the bosses and landlords of the period? We must not ignore this reality and the role played by some people:

> What could La Lecheur's presence mean for Costa Rica? This is the question which Wilton Nelson asks and from his perspective, answers categorically: It means that a Protestant, fervent in his faith, was the principal factor in Costa Rica's overcoming its empoverished and primitive state in the middle of the nineteenth century . . .[25]

But it is worth noting the opinions of others, who might see in La Lecheur's presence the enriching of some and the rise of a new class in Costa Rican society: the peons or agricultural laborers, an exploited sector which did not exist during the colonial period.[26]

Captain La Lecheur took advantage of his frequent journeys to introduce Bibles into the country. When he died in 1863, *The Star* of Guernsey commented:

> He was not simply a fortunate merchant; Mr. La Lecheur earned fame in another way. Wherever he went, he acted as a Christian missionary. As he was a man of God by experience, his most ardent desire was to spread the message of salvation. Thus it was that, although the people of Central America were sunk in the crassest Romanism, he was able to spread among them a great number of Bibles, and even to induce them to read and reverence the Word of God.[27]

With the missionary activity of the captain and the Bibles he had been able to bring on his journeys, the English began to hold services in their homes, and soon a Protestant community was being organized.

[24]See Arturo Piedra, "Orígenes y efectos del protestantismo en Costa Rica," in *Senderos*, 20 (May–Sept. 1984) and Samuel Stone, *La dinastía de los conquistadores* (Costa Rica: EDUCA, 1976).

[25]See Piedra, *op. cit.*, quoting Nelson, *Historia del Protestantismo en Costa Rica* (San José: INDEF, 1983), 39.

[26]A. Piedra, *op. cit.*, 7.

[27]Nelson, "Héroes. . .", 1–2.

It was La Lecheur who obtained permission to hold Protestant meetings and services.[28] The Constitutions of 1825 and 1847 expressly stated that the state would not permit public non-Roman Catholic worship. But this prohibitive clause was removed in 1848, and in that year the first Protestant worship was held in Brealey's home. In 1849, the Treaty of Peace and Commerce between Costa Rica and England was renewed, and full freedom of worship was granted to the English.[29]

These steps are important in view of the accusations which the Catholic clergy were making. Protestantism, we should remember, was presented as a pestilence; the heresy par excellence; the worst enemy of the true church; leading to moral laxity, destructive of the unity of the country; vanguard of Yankee imperialism; and the first step towards Communism.[30] These accusations are evidence of the attitude of the Roman Catholics towards the Protestants of that era.

It is obvious that the foreign merchants were not only interested in a good image, but in the search for wealth; hence they employed the strategy of contributing to the business and agriculture of the country and even to education and medicine. In order to achieve their purposes, they had to gain the friendship and favor of the government, to help the new nation emerge from colonial poverty and the relative social backwardness in which they saw themselves.

In the Protestant community, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians and Anglicans met under one roof. This is surprising, since in their home countries these denominations were of different minds, and confirms the fact that religion played a secondary role for the immigrants. They spoke of the need for services of worship, but at bottom they were interested in the benefit generated by their business and in taking advantage of the new nation's poverty to amass fortunes and power.

Just who were these Protestants who met Sunday by Sunday?[31]

[28]CEHILA, *op. cit.*, 276.

[29]Nelson, "Héroes . . .", 2.

[30]Nelson, *Breve historia del protestantismo en Costa Rica* (San José: SEBILA, 1982), 4.

[31]H. Lynn, *op. cit.*, 4–7; Hector Rojas, *op. cit.*, 20–23.

We find names such as those of Allan Wallis and Edward Allpress, founders, with the Costa Rican Mariano Montealegre, of the Banco Anglo Costarricense (Anglo-Costa Rican Bank) in San Jose; Minor Keith, a Protestant who began the banana industry (Costa Rica's second source of wealth) and later the best-known builder and director of the railroad line between Limon and San Jose; Richard Farrer, builder in 1857 of the famous "burro railroad" in the sandy stretch between Barranca and Puntarenas, for which donkeys functioned as locomotives; James Berry, a Scottish Protestant, whose contributions helped a rich area of cattle and dairy farms to spring up in the Cartago region; Henry Meigs Keith, John Meyers and John Casemente, all active in railroad construction. (The construction of railroads was not only a matter of engineering but of strong arms. White workers could not survive the illnesses of the humid tropical climate of the Atlantic coast. In order to complete the lines, it became necessary to import black workers from Jamaica.)

The list of Protestants active in San Jose also includes two sisters, Ada and Marian LeCappellain. Ada married Mauro Fernandez, a well-known educator who is largely responsible for educational reforms in Costa Rica. Fernandez sought help in Protestant Switzerland, and brought a number of scientists and educators to work in Cost Rica. Louis Schonaw of Geneva became the first director of the Academy of Costa Rica in 1887. Marian Le Capellain was the first director of the Young Women's High School, which for twenty years was at the forefront of the Protestant church's presence and, taking advantage of the fact that the Liberal government had relinquished control of national education, laid the groundwork for the education of women in Costa Rica. Others who appear in the list of contributors to the church were William Steinworth, founder of the Costa Rican Red Cross; well-known figures in the history of the new nation such as John Dent, Frederick Lehman, businessmen like William Nane, Alexander and Charles von Bulow, and engineers such as Louis von Chamier, John Knorr, John Barth, Alex Murray and others still remembered as key in the development of the Costa Rican business community. We might well imagine that some of the

commercial and cultural advances of the young Costa Rican nation were decided at their gatherings for Sunday services.

As foreigners, this group of immigrants were seen as strange folk and faced problems. Dr. Mortiz Wagner and Karl Scherzer, Germans who visited Costa Rica in 1852 and 1853, put it this way:

> Sometimes the people honor the Protestants with the harmful word "machos" (mules), because they are considered animals with regard to their religious beliefs. There is no repugnance on other grounds against Protestants in this society. But a dissident who wants to marry a daughter of the country has to become Roman Catholic, is baptized and christened, to rid himself of all heresy, with a considerable quantity of holy water.[32]

They also had difficulties in burying their dead.

> Until 1884 the cemeteries in Costa Rica belonged to the Roman Catholic Church, which did not permit the burial of heretics in its holy grounds. After several scandalous incidents on the occasion of various Protestant deaths, in 1850 the government gave them a small lot, near the general cemetery, where they could bury their dead. In 1884 all the cemeteries were secularized and the problem disappeared.[33]

It was Brealey who wished to formalize the Protestant presence, build a school and call a pastor; but his attempts failed. In 1858, he wrote to his friend Le Lacheur, who was in London, "Our little church is very reduced, but it is the Lord's cause and He will not permit the smoking wick to be snuffed out. Pray for it and for us."[34] Although he saw little fruit from his labor, the situation changed three months after his death. The group of Protestants met in his home in May 1864, and there resolved to buy a lot to build the church and contract an ordained minister.[35]

John Le Lacheur, son of the late Captain, committed himself to bring the pieces of a pre-fabricated church from England in one

[32]Nelson, in CEHILA, *op. cit.*, 276.

[33]Nelson, "Breve historia . . . ," 2; in CEHILA, *op. cit.*, 276.

[34]Nelson, "Héroes . . . ," 4.

[35]Lynn, *op. cit.*, 6.

of his ships. At that time, the British empire was expanding rapidly and of course Her Majesty's Government supported the fabrication of such chapels as part of its expansionist policy.[36] The pieces arrived and the church was erected in 1865. It was known as the "Iglesia de Hierro" (The Iron Church), the first Protestant chapel in San Jose.[37] At the time, there were 268 Protestants in the country.[38]

We can see that the work of the Protestant churches in Costa Rica began with the efforts of laypeople and not the influence of missionaries. In spite of so many obstacles, there was room for the construction of a chapel. The lack of spiritual interest is not surprising, since we know that the Protestants who came to Costa Rica had the search for material well-being as their ultimate enterprise. Their contributions in the areas of education and medicine can be considered as their way of seeing their Christian mission. But we can note in some of them the spiritual nostalgia which characterizes some pilgrims in foreign lands.

In the beginning, the church was inter-denominational, and its first four clergy were Congregationalists and Methodists.[39]

Internal problems appeared with the arrival of the fourth minister the Rev. Mr. Jenkins, in 1879. Some were happy with him, while others wrote to the Queen, asking her to send a clergyman of the Church of England. The rivalry ended when those willing to contribute to the pastor's salary were counted, and it would appear that the Anglicans won. Jenkins heard the message and left San Jose. The petition never reached the Queen; hence the congregation was without a minister until the arrival of John Wright, an American Methodist, in 1880. The reasons for his arrival are unknown, but he remained with the congregation for nearly five years.[40] He was forced out by the congregation's gossip after he married a missionary who did not approve of the baptism

[36]Nelson, in CEHILA, *op. cit.*, 276–277.

[37]*Ibid.*

[38]*Ibid.*

[39]Lynn, *op. cit.*, 6.

[40]*Ibid.*

of infants and adopted her position.[41]

Up until 1880, the congregation of the Iron Church was made up mostly of German and British worshippers. Thirty-five years after it was founded, it was given the official name, "Church of the Good Shepherd."[42]

Clearly, with such a varied history up to this point, there are no signs that this flock had a hand in the evangelization of Costa Ricans or of the population of native peoples. It was only concerned to minister to English-speaking Protestants. They had no vision of evangelization, but were intent on maintaining the model of a "social club" for the foreign aristocracy which had settled in Costa Rica.

In 1896, the Anglican bishop of British Honduras (Belize) passed through San Jose. The governing board of the church asked him to send a minister of the Church of England and guaranteed half his salary. The bishop sent the Rev. Henry Craig, but the congregation was not very happy with him. They described him as "high-church," and he remained only two years.[43]

For more than fifty years, the Church of the Good Shepherd maintained a unique relationship with the Diocese of British Honduras. The diocese provided clergy, but the church was run in a congregational style. It was the congregation who decided the clergy's fate and the services were conducted on a congregational model, although the Book of Common Prayer was read.[44]

For a long time, the church's independent, even stubborn membership resisted a number of bishops who wished to create a vestry under the priest's leadership. Any innovation proposed by the bishops was ignored completely. The governing board was made up of the same persons year after year. Perhaps the rest of the congregation did not consider that such a style of direction was important or a problem; perhaps they thought it should be left alone. Documents and oral history reveal that no one cast a

[41] *Ibid.*

[42] *Ibid.*, 7.

[43] *Ibid.*, 9.

[44] *Ibid.*, 7.

critical eye on this peculiar situation. After being in existence for seventy years, there were no challenges to change. It is interesting to observe that the congregation maintained completely Protestant structures; but they belonged to *English* Protestants.

It seems that the model which prevailed was centered in the laity (albeit in an anarchistic sense), over against the other extreme, which is centered on the pastor. It is obvious that we cannot speak of a model of church-in-the-world but of church-caring-for-church, which does nothing more than maintain a system or dominating structure within itself.

Some of the possibilities for trouble can be clearly seen. The clergy's vision, good or ill, would not be shared by the congregation. Even a slightly progressive sermon from a priest earned him a return ticket to British Honduras. Another clergyman, who disgraced the congregation by being seen with some natives of the region near a local bar, gained his return passage home. "The Rev. F. S. Crey was seen drinking in one of the bars with his native friends," the report to the bishop commented.[45]

One figure stands out from the group: the Rev. Canon Harry S. R. Thornton. His successful presence in the church was due in part to his ability to meet the committee as they would have met him. He once lent the Church 2,500 colones to pay some bills and help in the repair of the Church. The only complaints heard against him were that he spent a great deal of time visiting the black missions in Limon and his bad habit of smoking.[46] The present church structure is the work of Canon Thornton. Many said that only the clergy's prayers kept the old building standing.

Under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Belize, the Church of the Good Shepherd had its moments of splendor in the history of the bourgeoisie of the period. The congregation responded only to the interests of the incipient bourgeoisie, which seldom attended church, but it did what it could to scheme against whatever proposals of social assistance were made by the clergy who arrived.

Prayers for the queen of England were said without ceasing,

[45] *Ibid.*, 9.

[46] *Ibid.*; *The Messenger* (Lent 1947), 1.

and for the government of the United States as well. Memorial services for the president of the United States appear in the registers of services.[47] The attendance of high government dignitaries of the Costa Rican government doubtless helped along the good relations which have always existed between the Church of the Good Shepherd, the Roman Catholic church and the government of the moment.[48] With regard to relations with the Roman Catholics, in 1937, when the old structure of the Iron Church was being dismantled to permit a new building, one Roman Catholic said, "My Church does not permit me to contribute to the construction, but they wouldn't object if they saw me helping tear down a Protestant church, so I am going to help them. . . ."[49]

III. The Anglican Church in Limon

The second center of work for the Anglican church in Costa Rica began in Port Limon, on the nation's Atlantic coast. Roman Catholic sources indicate the presence of a possible group of Protestants in the area as early as 1881, but this information cannot be confirmed. They may rest on a well-founded suspicion that family meetings or worship took place in the homes of black immigrants before the construction of the building which would serve as the church.[50] It is quite possible that these small gatherings were directed by laypeople who already had such experience in their home congregations in Jamaica or the other islands from which they came.

With the construction of the railroad to Port Limon, two new groups arrived in Costa Rica that would influence the Anglican community: North Americans and Jamaicans. The North Americans represented the influence and power of a Le Lacheur from times past. (The builders of the North Atlantic Railroad appear in the list of contributors for the maintenance of the Iron Church.

[47]Lynn, *op. cit.*, 9.

[48]*Ibid.*

[49]*Ibid.*

[50]In this case, the Church was following the example of house-churches described in the Book of Acts.

Many of them lived in Limon because of their work, but they always maintained their loyalty to the church in San Jose.)[51]

The arrival of Protestant Jamaicans and blacks from the other Caribbean islands in the last years of the nineteenth century was the product of the failure of the French attempt at a canal in Panama.[52] Many were employed by the railroad company and in the banana firms. Since they spoke English, once they were in San Jose they visited the little Protestant congregation, for many were Anglicans. These black visitors were permitted to be in the church, but seated on the left side of the nave (the "pulpit side"); on occasion, their attention was called in public, for having occupied empty pews on the right side of the nave.[53]

It is difficult to comment on this fact without wishing to judge what happened in 1885 by today's standards. It is important to note some of the criteria which were in effect at that time. When the immigrants arrived, the young Costa Rican nation already considered itself poor and illiterate. This fact was reaffirmed by some foreigners. Some historians describe the arrival of blacks in Costa Rica as the solution to the problems of the Atlantic region's climate, where many whites died as the result of the epidemics and scant medical attention of that time. Reading the list of contributors to the Iron Church, we find that these whites are referred to as "engineers," but the blacks are listed as "muscles."[54] It is obvious that many of the oppressive and segregationist practices of the European and North American settings also arrived with the immigrants.

If it is true that the immigration of blacks to Costa Rica was based on the building of the railroad and the development of the banana industry, the classist reality of Jamaican history makes us discover another factor for migration:

> While the upper and middle classes were constructing their often

[51]Lynn, *op. cit.*, 7.

[52]*Ibid.*

[53]*Ibid.*

[54]Enos Robinson, "Antología sobre el negro en Costa Rica," in *Expresión*, 3 (Dec. 1972), 3–5.

> forced imitation of the British, the great Jamaican proletariat was living in another world; a world with its roots in Africa and in slavery. . . . Emancipation had converted 320,000 slaves into citizens. But apart from that, it had left them crippled, without property, with a very limited specialization, without education, and without even the family institution.[55]

Blacks who left behind this situation were seeking new possibilities, in search of better living conditions. Those who arrived in Costa Rica belonged to the least "educated" group, but their dream was obvious: "to make a fortune in legendary lands, and return to their country."[56]

There are indications that after the first group of black immigrants arrived, another group went directly from Jamaica to the Atlantic coast.[57] Among them were some teachers and other professionals, the majority of whom could read and write English. Among them were those who could perform the role of religious leaders in the community, and thus were able to consolidate the presence of the Anglican church in the province of Limon. It should be noted that when they arrived, they were already under the influence of the British Anglicans, which means that the Anglican church in Limon had its roots in home meetings, in the family setting.

This does not mean that the Anglican clergy who traveled between San Jose and Belize did not also make periodic visits.[58] In 1896, the Bishop of Belize visited the area of Limon and held services,[59] and in the same year a priest, the Rev. Mr. Craig, was sent to take charge of the missionary work which was being undertaken. Craig was followed by the Rev. John Grinter, who arrived with his wife and served from 1897 to 1909.

[55]Carlos Meléndez and Quince Duncan, *El negro en Costa Rica* (San José: Ed. Costa Rica, 1985), 100.

[56]*Ibid.*

[57]*Ibid.*, 68–82.

[58]*The Messenger*, 3.

[59]Department of Missions, Episcopal Church in the USA, *Portion of the Study of Central America.*

The church itself was constructed in 1898 and named St. Mark's, Puerto Limon. The congregation was under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of British Honduras until the time when authority passed to the Episcopal church in the USA.[60]

Like the congregation in San Jose, St. Mark's Church in Limon was organized in the beginning with the purpose of responding to the spiritual and pastoral needs of the English, and of the black Jamaicans who emigrated from English territory to Costa Rica. Given the motives and circumstances of their presence, we can understand the reason for their attitude towards their Costa Rican setting. It was very much a sense of "provisionalism:" there was no reason to put themselves out very much, because they were only passing through. Furthermore, why learn the language and customs of the "panas" (Spanish-speakers, or "Latins") when the plan was to return to Jamaica? But history took its course and unfortunately the Jamaican immigrants took a great deal of time to own this story and to understand that they would put down roots in Costa Rica which would forge many future generations.[61]

Towards the end of the construction of the railroad, Minor Keith, a North American, realized that it was impossible to keep such an expensive railroad running solely on the basis of the coffee which Costa Rica had recently begun to export. Keith began obtaining land concessions from the government and founded the fruit company which would later form the nucleus of a similar North American firm, the United Fruit Company.[62] Keith had passed himself off as English and gained the friendship of the blacks, so that he held their loyalty and confidence. The crops flourished over several years, coming to occupy a significant place among Costa Rican exports.

The Second World War, the government's restrictive mea-

[60] *Ibid.*

[61] Melendez and Duncan, *op. cit.*, 101–103.

[62] *Ibid.*, 104.

sures,[63] pestilence on the banana plantations[64] and other factors impelled nany blacks to emigrate to other countries such as Panama, threatening the cultural identity of the people of Limon and producing a vacuum from which Limon would recover only much later.[65]

This very brief historical summary can help us understand the kind of work which the Anglican church carried out in the area when it shepherded English and Jamaican immigrants.

A number of preaching stations were opened all along the railroad line; these would later become missions. They ministered to both the English and North American Episcopalians who worked for the railroad company and the black Anglicans who lived in the region.[66]

The job of organizing the missions was in the hands of laypeople, and a very different work than that undertaken by the Protestants in San Jose. It says something about black culture and piety, a faith confessed but also very practical. These were small techniques for survival born out of the black culture and its sense of the religious life. Cut off from their land and their customs, they found a common bond: their faith. The work carried out under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of British Honduras was genuinely missionary in this area where a majority were black immigrants;

[63]*Ibid.*, 87–93. There is a complete description of the restrictive measures which *prohibited blacks from passing* beyond Torrialba in the direction of San Jose in the 1940's and an excuse/interpretation of the events. It presents the measures, not as an ethnic barrier but as a means of preventing contamination of other banana plantations with the sigatoka disease which was affecting plantations in Panama. In any case, blacks were not permitted to pass, whether or not they were driving the trains. (Emphasis added)

[64]The pestilences affected the plantations so much that they were forced to change or alternate plantings (cacao, aboca and rubber); the latter brought about an improvement in the economy. Sale of rubber was promoted by the Goodyear Company, which was a source of jobs and economic sustenance. Department of Missions, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

[65]See, *e.g.*, Meléndez and Duncan, *op. cit.*, 107.

[66]*Ibid.*, 75–78. Aside from oral tradition, we have the information that these lands were owned by black farmers, given them by the Costa Rican government as a form of payment when it had no gold to pay for work carried out during the construction of the railroad. This is why there are so many black land owners in this region. Personal interview, the Rt. Rev. Cornelius J. Wilson, Puerto Limón, CR, 18 June 1988.

as we shall see, under another jurisdiction, the Church's mission met new challenges.

IV. The Costa Rican Church and the Episcopal Church in the USA

The transfer of the Anglican church in Costa Rica to the jurisdiction of the Episcopal church in the United States was a step which had been contemplated since 1909.[67] The bishop of British Honduras suggested that since North Americans were working in Panama, it would be more convenient for San Jose to be related to Panama. Nothing was done at that time, but in 1930 Bishop Beal, of the Missionary Diocese of Panama and the Canal Zone, which formed part of the American Episcopal church, initiated the steps which culminated in the transfer in 1947, when Bishop Robert H. Gooden officially received jurisdiction of all of Costa Rica as part of the Diocese of Panama.[68]

There were many issues to be resolved. The Diocese of Panama did not permit the congregational organization which had existed in the Church of the Good Shepherd to continue as it had been. A Vestry, to be chaired by the priest, must be organized. This was a blow to the members who had been used to directing the church by directing the priest.[69] Furthermore, title to the properties must reside in the Board of Missions of the Episcopal Church in the USA. The parish committee had been responsible for the church and rectory and the cemetery. The latter did not pass under the responsibility of the new diocese; the committee received the sum of $5000. to maintain the cemetery totally apart from the church. All the other properties were bought from the committee for the sum of one colon.[70]

The Rev. Peter Paulson headed the congregation during the period of transition. Although he had little experience, he stayed

[67]Lynn, *op. cit.*, 10.

[68]*Ibid.; The Messenger, op. cit.*

[69]Lynn, *op. cit.*, 10.

[70]*Ibid.*

on the job for one year of the process by which jurisdiction was changed.[71] He was followed briefly as rector by the Rev. David Richards, who years later would become the Episcopal bishop of Central America.

During the period from the change of jurisdiction to the arrival of a missionary bishop, the Church of the Good Shepherd had a series of clergy, many of whom later had distinguished careers in the United States and then were elected bishops.

1948–51	The Rev. Charles Fish
1951	The Rev. David Reed
1951–57	The Rev. James Schaffler
1954	The Rev. Nolan Akers (interim)
1957–61	The Rev. John Kelly
1959–62	The Rev. Charles Shulhafer
1961	The Rev. Jose Carlo
1962–64	The Rev. William Frey
1964	The Rev. William Wipfler[72]

The Venerable William L. Ziadie, the Rev. William A. Glenn and the Rev. Alfred Wade worked in the church in Limon during the same period.[73]

The ten years under the jurisdiction of Bishop Gooden of Panama were years of planning and readjustment for the whole Church.[74]

What we have observed to this point has been a hundred years of the Episcopal church, first at the Church of the Good Shepherd and afterwards at St. Mark's Church in Limon as well. A church which began as a chaplaincy underwent a total renewal, within and beyond its walls, at the end of the decade of the six-

[71] *Ibid.*

[72] *Ibid.*

[73] *The Messenger* (Missionary District of Panama and the Canal Zone), 3 (July 1950), 6, 7, 27.

[74] Lynn, *op. cit.*, 11.

ties. This hundredth anniversary marks the beginning of a new church, with a new vision of mission, progressive in its time.

In 1960, in response to a new missionary effort, the Episcopal church made the work underway in Central America independent of Panama, and established a new "Diocese of Central America." The Rt. Rev. David Richards was named its first bishop, an event with great repercussions in the life of the Episcopal church in Costa Rica.[75]

Some of the old members attempted to place obstacles in the way of a new vision of church life and mission. Many left when Bishop Richards arrived, but others felt themselves attracted by his clear and forward-looking perspective. Those who left made room for a congregation of Costa Ricans and the descendants of the Jamaicans who were living in San Jose. They joined the project of a greater church of which they wished to be a part. Work in Limon was strengthened and many young people guided towards the ordained ministry. There was already a strong lay leadership and this ministry provided a setting for their development and missionary activity. A new chapter in the history of Costa Rican Anglicanism was beginning, which would eventually blossom in a national, independent and mission-minded church.

Bishop Richards had perceived the attitude of the first immigrants, the type of church they had left and the ministry they bestowed. His vision was new and totally different. New breezes blew through his statements, which were not only written down but also acted out.

In his speeches and letters to the House of Bishops, Richards expressed desire for a change in the role of a missionary bishop, who would be immersed in the reality of Central America; the Episcopal church would be an integral part of this rebirth, through the missionary aid sent from the United States.[76]

Bishop Richards' objectives were to "analyze the existing model of the Episcopal Church's ministry, identifying its weaknesses and

[75] *Ibid.*

[76] David Richards, "The Ministry of the Episcopal Church in Contemporary Latin America," unpublished, 1959, 23.

limitations; establish what would be the goals for the episcopate in Latin America which would be appropriate to the situation and the form of Christian example required for its era."[77]

In a critical but objective way, the bishop laid out the functions of the bishop's ministry as he saw them at that time.

1. Periodic visits to the Anglican congregations for confirmations or reception of new members
2. A call to service within the walls of an Episcopal Church
3. Founding of new congregations and institutions as the product of a fruitful ministry
4. Oversight of the finances of the Diocese at the administrative level
5. Maintain relations with the Mother Church.[78]

Bishop Richards set out the following suggestions for the bishop's work in "missionary" areas:

1. Previous preparation of not less than one year for the work of a missionary bishop in Latin America;
2. For the sake of better pastoral work, the area of missionary work should be reconsidered with regard to territorial extension;
3. Upon entering a new area of mission, there should be a working group representative of the members of the congregations and the clergy of the diocese (Standing Committee);
4. Economic administration should rest upon a competent layperson who should be commissioned as a missionary;
5. More active participation in the ecumenical movements in the country where ministry is being undertaken;
6. There should be preparation with regard to how to respond effectively to institutionalized social injustice, and in a timely manner;
7. Participation in the Mother Church's House of Bishops should be limited to annual meetings, in order to use funds which would otherwise be used for travel in the development of work at the local level;
8. Information sent home from the missionary should be taken seriously and not as 'propaganda.'[79]

[77] *Ibid.*, 3.

[78] *Ibid.*, 4–8.

[79] *Ibid.*, 9–20.

The author of these documents was making strong, even daring observations with regard to the image of the Episcopal church's missionary bishops. But it may be that his primary objective was to call attention to the fact that, if work was to be carried out in Latin America, it could not be done with the same paternalistic concepts of former Anglicans. It required a vision which could carry out the training of national leaders who, during the process itself or further down the road, would assume responsibility as Christians committed to their neighbors and their setting.

In the first convention of the Episcopal church in Costa Rica, held in 1959, Richards invited his hearers to participate with him in making plans for the future of the Costa Rican church, in its growth and their own involvement as missionaries of God's Word. After 63 years of institutional life, the church which was challenging them had a total of fourteen missions, with 2226 members; a bishop, five priests, ten lay readers and eleven lay workers currently employed.[80]

For Richards, Christian education represented the form through which the church's members would meet the living God, within the context in which the church celebrates in the community of faith. Christian education provides the means through which the meeting with God could be experienced in their lives, and they could understand God's action in the past and God's continued revelation in the present, expecting and seeking our response.[81]

By 1961, the foundation of the Center of Christian Publications in San Jose was being discussed. This meant that the time had come when publications would no longer come from sources in the United States; now materials for the Episcopal church and other denominations could be published in Spanish, in Central America. Richards was certain that all necessary Christian education materials could be produced locally. Another significant fo-

[80]David Richards, "Primera Convención de la Iglesia Episcopal, Puerto Limón, CR, 18–20 de septiembre de 1959," unpublished, 2–3.

[81]Carmen Wolf, "Address to the Primary Convocation of Central America," San José, CR, March 11, 1961, unpublished.

cal point for education was the Center for Theological Studies, established in Siquirres; here a large part of the national clergy could be trained.)

Studies of the immediate situation of the church in Costa Rica revealed that only two congregations bore the brunt of the work. In San Jose, all efforts were to be directed towards the creation and strengthening of work in Spanish, responding to the needs of the Costa Rican-born descendants of the West Indians. Nevertheless, the English work was not to be abandoned; rather, both congregations should grow side by side.

Plans for establishing a congregation in Spanish ante-dated Bishop Richards' arrival. In July, 1959, the Spanish congregation was separated from the English, so that each could have an independent life. But a form of evangelization was needed which would help this new ministry. In July, 1960, "The Voice of the Episcopal Church," a radio program sponsored by the Episcopal Missionary Society, began broadcasting. Its seriousness and depth attracted the attention of many people to the Church of the Good Shepherd, some of whom became communicants.[82] On 1 August 1961, the Rev. Jose Carlo del Valle arrived in Costa Rica and became priest-in-charge of Spanish work. The congregation began to grow and reach out into the community.

Several Bible-study centers directed by laypeople became Episcopal missions, among them St. Paul's, Guadalupe and the Church of St. Philip and St. James in Barrio Cuba, a working-class neighborhood of San Jose. In 1963, the first steps towards construction of its building were undertaken with support from the English-speaking congregation of Good Shepherd. Later the building was opened to provide a day-care center, responding to an urgent need in the community.[83]

Work with San Jose's English-speaking congregation also grew during the decade between 1960 and 1970. Its leadership was aware of the need to reach beyond the church's walls—very important because they could continue to contribute to the develop-

[82]Lynn, *op. cit.*; "Reseña historica de la congregacion de habla hispana," 18.

[83]*Ibid.*, 19.

ment of the country as in years past, but now with a vision of the church's mission and not self-interest.

The last years of the sixties were a milestone in the life of the Episcopal church in Costa Rica. Bishop Richards resigned his see in Central America in order to return to the United States. This created the opportunity for passing on responsibilities. In a number of meetings with Richards, the new direction for the church in Costa Rica was plotted. In one of those meetings, the bishop observed:

> What is the wish of the majority of the members of our congregation? That the Church achieve a moral and legal identity, recognized by the government and society. . . . We are aware of the fact that as under-developed countries go on developing, nationalist feeling becomes more accentuated, so it is necessary to place the Church in the hands of nationals or the government and society can confuse our cause with a foreign agency for the introduction of foreign ideas to the national opinion, disguised as religion. . . .[84]

With this understanding, aided by the clergy and Costa Rican laypeople, Richards created the basis for the formation of what seems most obvious: the formation of a national diocese.

The search for nationalization and moving beyond underdevelopment did not mean that the church gave up all control to Costa Ricans, but that they were now permitted to administer some areas. Other important features, such as the election of the bishop, would remain under the control of the mother-church. The establishment of a separate diocese of Costa Rica was approved by the Sixty-Second General Convention of the Episcopal church in the USA in 1967; but full autonomy was not achieved by the "Costa Rican Episcopal Church" until 1978.

[84]J. Antonio Ramos, "Iglesia Episcopal Costarricense: Historia, composición y proyecciones" (San José, CR, unpublished), 6.

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