LATIN AMERICA SOCIO-RELIGIOUS STUDIES PROGRAM (PROLADES)

A MINISTRY OF IN-DEPTH EVANGELISM ASSOCIATES (IDEA)

EXPANDED STATUS OF CHRISTIANITY

COUNTRY PROFILE: HONDURAS

By

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I. COUNTRY SUMMARY

The Republic of Honduras was formerly known as **Spanish Honduras** to differentiate it from **British Honduras (now Belize).** The country is bordered on the west by Guatemala, on the southwest by El Salvador, on the southeast by Nicaragua, on the south by the Pacific Ocean at the Gulf of Fonseca, and on the north by the Gulf of Honduras, which is a large inlet of the Caribbean Sea.

Spanish Admiral Christopher Columbus explored the northern coast of the territory and landed on the mainland, near modern Trujillo, in 1502 and named the country Honduras ("Depths") for the deep waters off its coast. In 1532, the Province of Honduras consisted of a single settlement of Spaniards in the town of Trujillo on the Caribbean coast. During the period leading up to the conquest of Honduras by Pedro de Alvarado y Contreras in 1536, many indigenous people along the north coast of Honduras were captured and taken as slaves to work on Spain's Caribbean island plantations. After Pedro de Alvarado defeated the indigenous resistance headed by chief Çiçumba near Ticamaya in the lower Ulua river valley in 1536, the Spaniards began to dominate the entire country. Alvarado, in behalf of the Governor of the Province of Honduras, divided up the native towns and gave their labor force to his soldiers and some of the colonists in *Repartimiento.* The “Repartimiento de Labor” was a colonial labor system imposed upon the Amerindian population of Spanish America whereby the natives were forced into low-paid or unpaid labor for a portion of each year on Spanish-owned farms, in mines and workshops, and on public projects.

Further Amerindian uprisings near Gracias a Dios, Comayagua and Olancho occurred in 1537-1538. The uprising near Gracias a Dios was lead by chief Lempira, who is remembered today because the Honduran currency is named in his honor.

During the colonial period (1525-1821), Honduras came under the control of the **Captaincy General of Guatemala** and the towns of Comayagua and Tegucigalpa arose as mining centers in the Central Mountain Region. However, Honduras remained a backwater during most of the colonial period.

Beginning in the mid-1600s, **the British claimed a Protectorate over the Mosquito Coast,** which today forms part of the Republics of Honduras and Nicaragua. Trading settlements were established by the British in the 1730s at several key locations along the coast. The Miskito Indians were armed by the British to protect the Mosquito Shore from Spanish penetration, while the British engaged in illegal trade with the Spanish and with Indians in the interior. The Miskito Kingdom successfully resisted Spanish conquests and allied themselves with the British for self-protection and trade benefits.

The Bay Islands (Guanaja, Roatán and Utila) of Honduras were first discovered by Christopher Columbus on his fourth voyage to America in 1502. They were later claimed and successively held by Great Britain, Spain and the Dutch United Provinces. Britain finally took control of the Bay Islands in 1643 and administered them as a Crown colony, dependent on

Jamaica, until the mid-1800s. Guanaja was a hideout for 17th-century buccaneers who preyed on Spanish galleons. It was not until 1860 that Great Britain recognized Honduran sovereignty over the Bay Islands and ceded possession of them. The Department of Islas de la Bahía was officially incorporated into the nation of Honduras on March 14, 1872.

Honduras gained independence from Spain in 1821 but was briefly annexed to the Mexican Empire. In 1823, Honduras joined the newly formed **United Provinces of Central America.** Before long, social and economic differences between Honduras and its regional neighbors exacerbated harsh partisan strife among its leaders, bringing about the federation's collapse in 1838-1839. **General Francisco Morazán**, a Honduran national hero, led unsuccessful efforts to maintain the federation. Restoring Central American unity remained the officially stated chief aim of Honduran foreign policy until after World War I.

Marco Aurelio Soto became the nation's first Liberal president and governed between 1876 and 1883; he established the National Library with 40,000 volumes in 1880 with the help of Dr. Ramón Rosa.

In 1888, the builders of a projected railroad line from the Caribbean coast to Teguicgalpa in the central highlands ran out of money when it reached the coastal city of San Pedro Sula, which benefited that city's growth to become the nation's main industrial center and its second largest city today.

Since the early 1900s, the nation's economy has been primarily dependent on the export of the "green gold," while its political history has been shaped by the profiteering and corrupt practices of the banana companies. Traditionally lacking both an economic infrastructure and social and political integration, Honduras' agriculturally-based economy came to be dominated by US multinational companies, notably **United Fruit Company** and **Standard Fruit Company**, which established vast banana plantations along the northern coast, beginning in 1899. The economic dominance and political influence of these companies was so great from the late 19th until the mid-20th century that Honduras became known as a "banana republic."

During the relatively stable years of the Great Depression in the 1930s, authoritarian **Gen. Tiburcio Carías Andino** controlled Honduras. His ties to dictators in neighboring countries and to US banana companies helped him maintain power until 1948. By then, provincial military leaders had begun to gain control of the two major political parties, the **Honduran Liberal Party** (PLN, founded in 1891) and the **Honduran National Party** (PNH, conservative, founded in 1918).

All democratic elections in Honduras have been dominated by these two major political parties. The PNH dominated the country between 1933 and 1957. In 1963, a military junta overthrew the democratically-elected government of **President Ramón Villeda Morales (1957-1963)** and established an authoritarian regime that held power until 1981, when **Roberto Suazo Córdova (PLH)** was elected president.

In 1975, the US Securities and Exchange Commission exposed a scheme by US-based United Brands to bribe Honduran **President Oswaldo López Arellano** (1963-1971, 1972-1975) with $1.25 million, with the promise of another $1.25 million upon the reduction of certain banana export taxes. Trading in United Brands stock was halted, and in April 1975 López was ousted in a military coup led by **General Juan Alberto Melgar** (ruled from 1975-1978). This scandal is known in Honduras as "Bananagate."

General Policarpo Paz García was president of Honduras from 1978 to 1981. His regime was noted for its corruption and military repression, including the activities attributed to infamous Battalion 3-16, a secret right-wing paramilitary death squad trained by the CIA that kidnapped, tortured and assassinated many political dissidents of the military dictatorship.

Trained as a physician, **Villeda Morales** was a liberal who supported the democratization of Honduras after a long period of strong military rule under the Conservatives. Following the military junta of the1955, he was chosen by the country's Constituent Assembly to serve as president and oversee the country's transition to democracy. Villeda Morales immediately embarked on a campaign to help the poorer elements of society, introducing welfare benefits and enacting a new labor code that favored the country's large working class population. While these steps were popular with the masses, they enraged the traditional sources of power in Honduras: the military and the upper classes. When it seemed likely that he would win the 1963 election with an even stronger mandate to enact his social reforms, the military responded with a coup ten days before the election was scheduled to take place. Villeda Morales helped to modernize Honduras and to create its public health, public education and social security systems. He was a key supporter of **US President John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress**, launched in 1961 to establish economic cooperation between the US Government and Latin American nations for the development of the region and to counteract the perceived Communist threat (symbolized by the 1959 Cuban Revolution led by Fidel Castro) to US hegemony in the region.

II. OVERVIEW OF STATUS OF CHRISTIANITY: 1980

The Roman Catholic Church is the predominant religious group in Honduras. Although 90% of the inhabitants are nominal Catholics, few regularly attend Mass. The Roman Catholic Church is poor financially and weak administratively, with few religious workers (priests, nuns and lay-workers) to care for a widely scattered population.

By the late 1970s, there were only 232 priests in the whole country, which is barely one for every 9,950 Catholics nationally, and only 55 of these were born in Honduras. Lacking in priests, the Roman Catholic Church defaulted its authority over to the laity. The Delegates of the Word movement began in Honduras in 1966, and later spread to other Central American countries. By the early 1980s, there were 10,000 local delegates in Honduras. Delegates of the Word understood the local conditions and were able to work successfully at the grass-roots level, and just as importantly to an impoverished Church, they received no salary.

The Catholic Church complemented its lay ministry with a program of rural education through cooperatives and a network of 100 or more community radio stations that reached an estimated 15,000 students by 1972. Out of this educational program evolved the Social Christian Peasant Association (ACASCH), which organized land invasions by landless peasants (*campesinos*) during the 1970s. It became dangerous for the Catholic clergy to involve themselves in this *campesino* movement, even as mere witnesses, because of escalating violence and repression by Honduran military forces. Father Luis Henas witnessed the murder of eight *campesinos* by the military on January 18, 1972, at Talanquera.

Normally conservative, since the early 1970s the Catholic Church has experienced growing tensions due to two internal movements: social reform and the Charismatic Renewal.***

Although Protestant churches initially worked among the English-speaking West Indian heritage population on the northern coast and in the Bay Islands prior to 1900, since then numerous Protestant mission agencies have arrived to work among the Spanish-speaking population. The Protestant Community has grown from less than 1% of the total population in 1935 to 2.2% in 1965, and now (1980) represents 8% of all Hondurans, or nearly 300,000 Protestants. Between 1965 and 1980, the average annual growth rate (AAGR) of Protestant membership was 13.4%, while the general population growth was only 3.5% annually. The largest Protestant denominations in 1980 were the Seventh-Day Adventists, the Moravian Church, the Plymouth Brethren (known as “Hermanos Libres”) and the Assemblies of God.

Other religious groups are also found in Honduras. In addition to Marginal Christian groups like the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) and the Jehovah's Witnesses, Spiritist groups appear to be growing among the Honduran population, especially in the San Pedro Sula area. On the other hand, Afro-Caribbean animistic practices (Myalism, Obeah, Pocomania, Voudun, etc.) have persisted among the West Indian (Creole) population. Cristo-paganism is characteristic of many Hondurans of Amerindian descent, especially among the least acculturated to Ladino culture and the Catholic Faith. Animism remains strong in some of the isolated Amerindian communities, especially among the Paya, Sumo and Jicaque tribes. Both the Black Caribs (Garífuna) and the Miskitos show evidence of animistic beliefs and practices of African as well as Amerindian origin. Immigrants from India and the Eastern Mediterranean (mainly Lebanese and Palestinians), who arrived in Honduras during the early 1900s, may have retained elements of their traditional religious beliefs as well.

FIGURE 2: RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION IN HONDURAS, 1980

III. UNREACHED PEOPLES

3.1 Amerindians

There are several Amerindian tribal peoples in Honduras, including the **Miskito, Sumo, Paya, and Jicaque** (one group in Montaña de Flor) who have maintained their unique culture and language -- about 1% of the national population. Other Indian groups have been largely assimilated into the Ladino Spanish-speaking culture, although a few older people are still bilingual in their Indian dialect and Spanish. Statistics on the size of the Amerindian population of Honduras are not officially available, but older estimates indicate that approximately 7% of the total population could be considered Amerindian. Since only 1% has resisted hispanization, this leaves about 6% who are Amerindians in the process of being assimilated to Ladino culture -- including the **Lenca** (Departments of Intibuca, La Paz and Lempira), **Chorti** (Copán), **Pipil** (Ocotepeque) and **Jicaque** (Olancho, Yoro and Morazán).

There is still one isolated, unacculturated group of **Jicaque** in Montaña de la Flor in central Honduras, out of a total population of about 3,000 Jicaque that are largely assimilated to Ladino culture. In 1972, Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) workers were living among the group in La Flor, where translation work has been difficult and progress slow. No Evangelical church had yet been formed there as of 1980.

The largest group of unacculturated Amerindians is the **Miskito** population that inhabits the Mosquito Coast in northeastern Honduras, mainly in the Department of Gracias a Dios. Prior to 1859, when the British ceded the Mosquito Shore to the respective governments of Honduras and Nicaragua, the Miskito Kingdom had long been protected by the British who established trading posts there in the 1730s. The Miskito served as middlemen in illegal trade between the British on the Caribbean coast and the Spanish settlers who inhabited the interior. After being armed by the British, the Miskito became dominant over the Sumo and Paya who lived in small settlements among the coastal foothills to the southwest.

However, the smaller tribes have sought to maintain their separate language and culture and have been resistant to outside influences. The **Sumo** number only about 500 in Honduras, although a larger group of about 2,000 -- who speak a different dialect -- lives across the Río Coco in Nicaragua. Although no Bible translation has been carried out among them, many Sumos are bilingual in Miskito and some are trilingual in Miskito and Spanish. The Moravians have formed Sumo congregations using the Miskito Scriptures and hymnal.

The **Paya** now live in the higher mountains of Olancho, where they inhabit the river towns of Dulce Nombre de Culmí, Santa María del Carbón and Malancones. But, the total Paya population is only about 300 persons. They still use their own language, although many Paya men are bilingual in Spanish. However, the number of Spanish-speakers is growing among all age groups. In 1972, SIL reported an independent Protestant congregation of about 100 believers in Malancones, where most of the 30 Paya families had been converted. They held their own worship services and read the Scriptures in Spanish. World Gospel Mission had a preaching point in Culmí, but there was no Gospel witness yet in El Carbón, located about two-days hike from Culmí.

The **Miskito** live in the Caribbean coastal lowlands in communities of between 100 and 500 people, using canoes and rafts on the rivers and larger canoes or boats on the ocean. They make their livelihood from fishing, hunting and slash-and-burn agriculture. The men usually

clear the land, while the women do the planting, cultivating and harvesting. Although culturally Indian, the Miskito manifest some Negro traits as well, due to intermarriage with Afro-Americans during the early period when African slaves were imported to Central America by the Spanish and British, and in subsequent contacts with West Indian immigrants to the Mosquito Coast during later years.

Although the Miskito have remained decidedly Indian in their language and culture, significant changes have occurred in their religious beliefs. The Moravians have won many converts among them since the 1930s, and the Baptists since the 1960s. Early efforts by English Methodists had no lasting result, whereas Anglican missionary activities produced a number of congregations in the coastal settlements, both among the Miskitos and among the West Indian residents in the larger towns on the Mosquito Shore.

Today, most of the 28,900 inhabitants of the Department of Gracias a Dios are Miskitos, although an unknown number are of West Indian descent. The Moravian Church claims about 6,200 baptized members and perhaps 12,000 adherents among the Miskitos. The Baptist Association reports 1,300 members and about twice that many adherents. Therefore, about half the Miskito population is at least nominally Protestant, but the Catholic Church also has a number of missions there. Although a viable Church exists among the Miskito, it is doubtful that 20% are committed Christians.

3.2 Black Caribs (about 2.5% of all Hondurans)

The Black Caribs (also called Garífunas) constitute the largest group of “unreached people” in Honduras. An estimated 77,000 Black Caribs live in scattered settlements along the northern coast, between Río Sico in the east and the Guatemalan border in the west. The Black Caribs are often considered an Afro-American population and Roman Catholic. However, they have retained strong elements of their original Red Carib Amerindian religion and culture, which were mixed with African animism through intermarriage with runaway African slaves on the Caribbean island of St. Vincent. The vast majority of the Black Caribs were deported to the Bay Islands of Honduras by the British in 1797. From the Bay Islands, the Black Caribs migrated to the mainland of Central America, where small settlements were formed along the Caribbean coast from Belize to Nicaragua. However, the largest population of Black Caribs is found in Honduras.

Few Black Caribs are Evangelicals, although the Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, Plymouth Brethren, Mennonites and other Protestant groups have attempted to establish churches among them without much success. Today, no Protestant missionaries are known to work with the Black Caribs in Honduras on a regular basis. The New Testament in Carib is being translated by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) in Guatemala. Scripture portions are available in Carib, but many Black Caribs are also conversant in English or Spanish. Many Black Carib rituals are related to the spirits of the dead and cures for sickness, often involving all-night dances and spirit possession. Polygamy is practiced to some extent. Special community festivals are held in honor of the village patron saint.

3.3 Afro-Americans (about 5.5%)

The Afro-American population of Honduras has resulted from the intermarriage of Negroes with other racial groups, mainly Whites and Amerindians, both in the islands of the Caribbean (the Greater and Lesser Antilles) and along the Caribbean coast of Central America. Most speak English or Creole as their first language, but bilingualism in Spanish is increasing. Many of the

early Afro-Americans in Honduras were residents of the Bay Islands, which were under British control until 1859, when this territory was ceded to the Republic of Honduras. Most Bay Islanders originally came from the British Cayman Islands in the 1830s, but many eventually migrated to the mainland in search of employment, along with later Afro-American immigrants from the West Indies. Most West Indian Creoles were nominal Protestants, having been baptized in Anglican, Methodist or Baptist churches that were formed in the West Indies by British missionaries during the 1700s. However, after arriving on the mainland of Honduras, most West Indian Protestants were largely neglected or abandoned by their respective denominations, and only a few congregations were organized among them prior to 1900.

Most Afro-Americans are nominal Protestants in the same way that most Ladinos or mestizos are nominal Catholics in Honduras. Relatively few have a vital, life-changing relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, which means they have yet to be reached by the Gospel. Although there are Protestant congregations among them -- mainly Adventist, Episcopal, Church of God (Cleveland, TN), Methodist and Baptist -- less than 10% of the Afro-Americans are Protestant adherents today; and few of them have become Roman Catholics.

3.4 Ladinos (about 85%)

The majority of the Ladino population of Honduras can be described as Catholic, although "Popular Catholicism" and "Christo-paganism" are terms that are often used to indicate the nominal character of their Roman Catholic Faith. Although most Ladinos or mestizos are baptized Catholics, few take an active part in church activities other than religious festivals, pilgrimages to shrines, funerals, weddings and baptisms. But Mass attendance, confirmation and church marriages are seldom practiced. Civil marriages and free unions are the rule, while only the few practicing Catholics have church weddings. Among the lesser acculturated Amerindians and mestizos, animistic practices remain strong, with wide reliance upon *brujos* (witches) and *curanderos* (herb specialists) to achieve good fortune or physical and emotional healing.

It is among the Spanish-speaking Ladino population where Protestant churches have shown most of their growth since 1900. But less than 10% of all Ladinos are Protestant adherents. Assuming that the number of active or practicing Catholics totals no more than 20% of the Ladino population, there remains an estimated 70% who are considered Christo-pagans, or about 2,082,500.

However, the total number of Hondurans to be reached for Christ is much greater, since many of the 300,000 Protestant adherents have yet to experience the new birth in Christ, as well as many practicing Catholics. Probably no more than 5% of all Hondurans are seriously seeking to follow the risen Lord as His disciples.

3.5 Jews

A majority of the Jewish families that emigrated from Europe to Honduras arrive between 1920 and 1940, and most were German, Polish or Rumanian. It is estimated that there are only about 100 Jewish families in Honduras today. Although there are a few very rich Jewish families in the country, most are of the middle or lower socioeconomic classes. Most of the Jewish population resides in the major cities of Tegucigalpa in the central highlands and in San Pedro Sula on the Caribbean coast. It was not until 1951 that a Jewish cemetery was established in San Pedro Sula, and the first Jewish synagogue was built there in 1954.

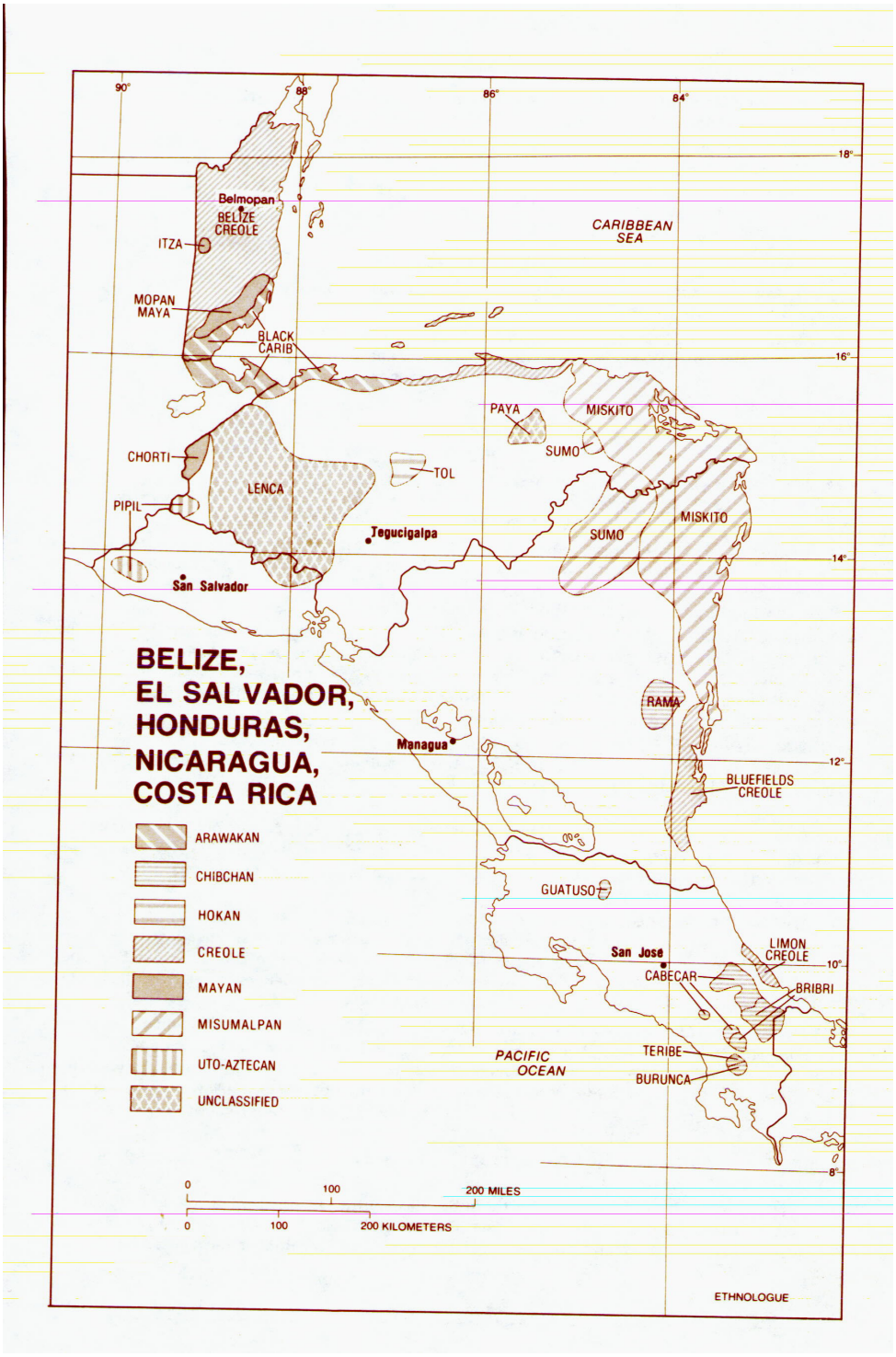
3.6 Other Race-Ethnic Groups

Other small people groups in Honduras are East Indians, Syrians, Arabs and Chinese who mainly dwell along the Caribbean coast and in the Bay Islands. Most of these race-ethnic groups live in the port cities of La Ceiba and Puerto Cortés, or in the large inland city of San Pedro Sula.

There are about 1,000 Palestinians and Lebanese in Honduras, with the largest concentrations in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula. Most of these Middle Eastern peoples are Eastern Orthodox Christians, but 15-20% are reported to be Muslims. Most of these families arrived in Honduras between 1922 and 1931. Honduras has the largest concentration of Arabs in Central America, mainly Palestinians.

FIGURE 3: ETHNIC-RACIAL GROUPS IN HONDURAS, 1980

FIGURE 4: MAP OF MAJOR ETHNOLINGUISTICAL GROUPS IN HONDURAS



About 25,000 refugees from El Salvador are presently living in six or more camps along the border inside Honduras. Among the refugees are few males between the ages of 14 and 40; most are women and children. The missing males have either taken sides in the current civil war in El Salvador, are victims of the bloodshed, or have fled into the interior of Honduras. About 75,000 to 80,000 refugees are living in camps inside El Salvador, near the Honduran border, and may seek refuge in Honduras at any time. Most of the refugees are *campesinos* (rural peasants) who have fled from the repression of the Salvadoran security forces.

Caring for the growing refugee population are officials of the UN High Commissioner for Refuges, the International Red Cross, World Vision International and similar organizations. Some local Protestant churches are ministering to the spiritual and physical needs of the refugees, and have even made their church buildings available to provide temporary shelter. Most of the refugees are nominal Catholics. Scores of conversions have been reported in the camp at Colomoncagua, where World Vision-Honduras is aiding relief efforts. Soon, there may be as many as 100,000 Salvadoran refugees in Honduras.

IV. OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL CHURCHES

4.1 ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Although the power and influence of the Catholic clergy was significant during the Spanish Colonial era, a series of liberal reforms during the Independence period sought to restrict the activities of the Roman Catholic Church. In 1829, monastic orders were dissolved and only parish priests were allowed to function. With the collapse of the **Central American Federation** in 1838 and the formation of the Republic of Honduras, most of the anticlerical laws were either revoked or ignored in practice. For the next forty years, governments were friendly to the Church, and Roman Catholicism was established as the State religion to the exclusion of all other religions. In 1861, a concordat was concluded with the Vatican, which remained in force until 1880.

In 1859, a serious conflict arose between the Church and State over granting religious toleration to the Protestant inhabitants of the Bay Islands, which Great Britain ceded to Honduras by treaty in that year. The acting vicar of Honduras opposed the terms of the treaty, by which the islanders were allowed to practice their historical Protestant Faith. The vicar, already angry with **President Santos Guardiola** for refusing to approve the appointment of the vicar as bishop, used this incident to excommunicate the President. The Pope later revoked the excommunication order and removed the vicar from office, thus ending the affair.

Between 1880 and 1965, a series of constitutional changes alternately restricted or removed restrictions on the Roman Catholic Church in Honduras. Under the 1965 Constitution, the Catholic Church remains independent of the State, which has generally not interfered with the operations of the Church as long as the hierarchy and the priests have remained out of politics. However, the government has a diplomatic representative at the Vatican, and the Holy See maintains its representative in Honduras. Church property and income tax are free, but the Church is restricted by law from holding any income producing property.

The Catholic Church in Honduras derives its only income from fees and contributions, and is therefore very poor. The government gives no funds to the Church except for subsidies to some Catholic schools. Besides being poor, the Church as an organization is small in

Honduras. Outside the large towns and cities, few people see a priest more than once or twice a year since they are widely scattered over a large geographical area. Honduras is the least densely populated country in Central America, with few priests to serve her people.

The hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church in Honduras, notably quite conservative, has been challenged to keep in touch with the changing needs and desires of the population. Consequently, a gap between the hierarchy and the masses is emerging. Some of the younger priests, because of their concern about the economic and social conditions of their parishes, have come into conflict with their superiors.

However, in spite of the Catholic Church's lack of responsiveness to the pressing needs of the masses, the roots of the Church are deep and permeate many aspects of Honduran national life. Although most Hondurans profess the Catholic Faith, regular mass attendance is rare except for women. In 1970, about 89% of the population was Roman Catholic.

The Catholic Church in Honduras is administratively divided into one archdiocese, headed by the archbishop, and into three dioceses and two prelatures, each headed by a bishop. In 1970, there were 233 priests (60 secular and 173 belonging to religious orders), 17 lay brothers and 421 nuns. Only 11 (5%) of the priests and 49 (18%) of the nuns were Hondurans. Non-Honduran priests represented 95% of the total, and were mainly from non-Latin American countries. Honduras, therefore, had the highest proportion of foreign priests of any nation in Central America. By 1975, the number of religious workers in Honduras had actually decreased to 220 priests (84 secular and 136 religious), 16 lay brothers and 339 nuns. In 1977, the number of Catholic religious workers had decreased even more. The ratio of inhabitants per priest (priests per inhabitant) increased from 1 for every 10,940 to 1 for every 12,500 in 1975, giving Honduras fewer priests per inhabitant than any other Central American country.

4.2 PROTESTANT CHURCHES

Before 1900, the majority of Protestants in Honduras were English-speaking Negroes (Creoles) who inhabited the Bay Islands and the adjacent coastline. They were principally Anglicans, Methodists and Baptists who migrated to this region from the British West Indies and brought their Protestant Faith with them. Since 1900, however, Protestant church growth has primarily occurred among the Spanish-speaking population. In 1935, the Protestant Community in Honduras totaled only 9,500 or less than 1% of the national population. But by 1965, Protestants had increased to 2.2% and by 1980 to 8% of all Hondurans. Total Protestant membership in Honduras increased at the annual rate of 1.6% between 1936-1950, 7.4% between 1950-1960, 10.0% between 1960-1965 and 12.4% between 1965-1978. At the present rate of increase (Average Annual Growth Rate = AAGR), we can expect to find 177,800 Protestant members by 1985 and a Protestant Community of 553,500 or 12.2% of the national population.

The distribution of Protestants among various families of denominations in Honduras is revealed in the following statistics on communicant membership for 1978: the **Liturgical Family of Churches** (Episcopal and Lutheran), 1,724 or 2.2% of the total Protestant communicant membership in Honduras; the **Evangelical Non-Pentecostal Family of Churches**, 35,218 (45.7%); and the **Adventist Family of Churches**, 9,976 (13%); and the **Pentecostal Family of Churches**, 30,136 (39%). The total Protestant communicant membership in 1980 was estimated at 77,000, whereas the Protestant Community was nearly 300,000.

Between 1965 and 1980, Protestant membership in Honduras grew at an average annual rate of 13.4%. Since 1965, a number of larger denominations have increased more than 10% annually: Plymouth Brethren (more than 20%), Assemblies of God (16%), Moravian Church (13%), Evangelical and Reformed Church (12%), Seventh-Day Adventists (12%) and the Full Gospel Church of God (Cleveland, TN - 10%).

Although the **Pentecostal Family of Churches** has grown significantly during the past 30 years, only a few member denominations have more than 1,000 baptized members, including the following: Church of God of Cleveland, TN (4,550); the Prince of Peace Church (4,000); Free Pentecostal Church (3,500); Foursquare Church (1,870); Philadelphia Church (1,200); and the Church of God of Prophecy (1,065). Compared to other countries of Central America, the Pentecostal Family of Churches in Honduras is, proportionately, the smallest (39%), with the exception of Belize where only 16% were Pentecostals.

On the other hand, Honduras has the largest proportion of the **Non-Pentecostal Family of Churches** (46%), compared to the next largest country -- Nicaragua (44%). Other large denominations of this family type that were not mentioned previously are: Association of Central American Evangelical Churches, related to CAM International (3,325); Association of Holiness Churches, related to the World Gospel Mission (2,300); and the Southern Baptist Convention (2,270). The remaining denominations of this family each have less than 2,000 members.

In general, this demonstrates the fact that the Pentecostal Family of Churches is not the only one growing in Central America. Of course, **Seventh-day Adventist** growth in Honduras is further testimony of this reality: between 1965 and 1980 Adventists grew from 3,000 to more than 10,000 baptized members (12% AAGR), which makes this group the largest Protestant denomination in the Republic of Honduras.

Geographically, 55% of all Protestant congregations in Honduras were located in the Central Mountain Region, which had 57% of the population; 7% of the congregations were in the Pacific Coastal Region (10.4% of the population) and 38% were in the Caribbean Coastal Region (32.6% of the population). The departments of Valle and Intibuca had fewer congregations proportionately than any other departments in the country.

FIGURE 5: CHART OF PROTESTANT FAMILY TREE [DIAGRAM]

FIGURE 6: CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF PROTESTANT ORIGINS: HONDURAS

FIGURE 7
STATISTICAL TABLE ON
THE PROTESTANT MOVEMENT IN HONDURAS: 1978
(change stats to Honduras-model is Nicaragua)

TRADITION/FAMILY/DENOMINATION	NUMBER OF CONG.	TOTAL MEMBERSHIP	PERCENT OF TOTAL
LITURGICAL TRADITION	**19**	**1,841**	**2.4%**
Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches	3	41	
Anglican/Episcopal Church	16	1,800	
SEPARATIST TRADITION	**682**	**34,681**	**44.2%**
Baptist Convention (Am. Bapt.)	174	4,659	
Baptist International Mission	21	3,040	
Church of Christ Association	61	1,877	
Good Samaritan Baptist Mission	15	765	
Other Baptist groups (7)	40	1,218	
Churches of Christ	11	1,500	
Church of the Nazarene (2)	72	2,382	
Convention of Central Am. Chrs.	13	647	
Federation of Central Am. Chrs.	66	1,437	
Mennonite Churches (4 groups)	46	1,720	
Moravian Church	123	12,950	
Nat'l Evang. Missionary Assoc.	27	2,000	
Other groups	13	486	
ADVENTIST TRADITION	**84**	**6,073**	**7.7%**
PENTECOSTAL TRADITION	**740**	**35,273**	**45.0%**
Assemblies of God	186	8,500	
Assembly of Christian Churches	43	1,027	
Christian Pent. Mission Chrs.	31	1,815	
United Pent. Evang. Mission	49	3,004	
Foursquare Churches (2 groups)	19	900	
Pentecostal Church of God	10	650	
Church of God (Cleveland, TN)	116	5,250	
Church of God of Prophecy	32	1,100	
Christian Mission	14	895	
Frat. of Evang. Pent. Churches	6	600	
Pent. Free Will Baptist Churches	13	520	
Apostolic Church of Faith in JC	60	3,600	
Free Apostolic Church	43	2,995	
Other "Jesus Only" Groups (8)	43	1,105	
Other Pentecostal Groups (16)	75	3,312	
OTHER PROTESTANT/UNCLASSIFIED	**6**	**519**	**.7%**
GRAND TOTALS (72 groups)	**1,531**	**78,387**	**100%**

SOURCES:

1. National Survey of Protestant Denominations in Honduras, conducted by CEDEN in 1978-1979, with technical assistance provided by PROLADES.
2. CEPAD-PROCADES, Directorio de Iglesias, Organizaciones y Ministerios del Movimiento Protestante: Honduras. San José, Costa Rica: PROCADES, 1980.

FIGURE 8: ESTIMATED PROTESTANT MEMBERSHIP
BY ETHNIC GROUPS: 1935-1978

FIGURE 9: HONDURAS: PROPORTION OF PROTESTANT MEMBERSHIP BY FAMILIES OF DENOMINATIONS, 1935-1978

FIGURE 10: HONDURAS: PROTESTANT MEMBERSHIP BY MAJOR TRADITIONS, 1978

FIGURE 11A: PROTESTANT SEPARATIST TRADITION BY FAMILY TYPES, 1978

FIGURE 11B: PROTESTANT PENTECOTAL TRADITION BY FAMILY TYPES, 1978

FIGURE 12: GROWTH OF TOTAL POPULATION COMPARED TO PROTESTANT MEMBERSHIP GROWTH IN HONDURAS: 1935-1980
(WITH PROJECTIONS TO A.D. 2,000)

FIGURE 13: PROTESTANT MEMBERSHIP GROWTH IN HONDURAS
BY DENOMINATIONS: 1900-1980

FIGURE 14: GROWTH OF 10 LARGEST
PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS IN HONDURAS: 1967-1978

FIGURE 15: ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PROTESTANT CONGREGATIONS IN HONDURAS: 1935-1980

FIGURE 16: ESTIMATED PROTESTANT POPULATION IN HONDURAS, 1935-2000

FIGURE 17: DISTRIBUTION OF TOTAL POPULATION
BY REGIONS AND DEPARTMENTS, 1980

FIGURE 18: DISTRIBUTION OF PROTESTANT CONGREGATIONS BY REGIONS AND DEPARTMENTS, 1978

FIGURE 19: NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF PROTESTANT CONGREGATIONS IN HONDURAS BY REGIONS AND DEPARTMENTS: 1978

V. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIANITY

5.1 ROMAN CATHOLIC MISSIONS

Roman Catholicism first came to Honduras in 1521, when two Franciscan priests accompanied the first colonists and begun converting the Indians to Christianity. The territory of Honduras, originally included in the Bishopric of Mexico, became independent in 1527. Its seat was established at Trujillo on the north coast in 1531 and was moved to Comayagua in the Central Mountain Region in 1561. The systematic conversion of the Indians began in 1548 with the arrival of the Mercite Missionary Order. The Franciscans, who came to Honduras in 1574, are credited with firmly implanting Catholicism throughout the country during the next two centuries.

The power and influence achieved by the Roman Catholic Church during the Spanish Colonial era was restricted by the liberal reforms of the Independence period (1821-1838). Severe restrictions were placed on the monastic orders, leaving only the parish priest to care for the spiritual needs of the populace. Although the anti-clerical movement was strong throughout Central America at this time, its effects were less extreme in Honduras. Nevertheless, the exodus of the clergy and the emptying of the seminaries left the masses with few clergy to further instruct them in the Catholic Faith. However, after 1838, most of the anti-clerical laws were revoked or ignored, and Roman Catholicism became the religion of the State, to the exclusion of all others.

In 1880, Honduras again came under the control of liberal anti-clerical elements, and the Constitution of that year granted complete religious freedom. Subsequent constitutions extended the scope of the attack on the privileges of the Church, culminating in the 1936 Constitution which provided for separation of Church and State, free exercise of all religions, prohibition of monastic orders, no government subsidiaries to religious orders, and no religious instruction in public schools. However, the 1957 Constitution removed the prohibitions on monastic orders, on government subsidies to religious educational activities, and on religious instruction in schools; but it retained the separation of Church and State and complete religious freedom, while prohibiting political activity on the part of the clergy.

5.2 PROTESTANT MISSIONS

5.2.1 Anglican-Episcopal Church. As early as 1739, when the Mosquito Shore was administered by Great Britain, the Miskito chiefs on the Caribbean Coast of Honduras and Nicaragua requested religious instruction for their children in the Anglican Faith, and even sent several of their young men to Jamaica to be educated during the 1740s.

The first known Anglican missionary to arrive on the mainland of Honduras was **Christian Frederick Post** (1768-1785), who volunteered to represent the **Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts**, a mission agency of the Anglican Church, as a catechist. Post arrived at the Black River (Río Sico) settlement in 1768, where services were conducted in the Superintendent's Hall. Post's replacement was the Rev. Nathan Prince, the Society's first appointed missionary, who died on the pirate island of Roatán in 1748 while still on his way to the Mosquito Shore.

Other Anglican chaplains were sent to preach the Gospel among the British settlers, Amerindians and Negro slaves that inhabited the Mosquito Coast during the mid-1700s. Among those sent were the **Rev. T. Warren** (1769-1771), the **Rev. R. Shaw** (1774-1776), and the **Rev.**

Stanford (1776-1777), all of whom were unable to bear the heat and primitive conditions that often led to serious illness. Nevertheless, Anglican schools and chapels were established among the Amerindians and Negroes, but few converts were made among the whites who were given over to vices.

The **Rev. M. Newport**, formerly a chaplain in Belize, became the first pioneer missionary in the Bay Islands, where a small British settlement came into existence during the 1730s. The Island of Roatán, which achieved fame as a pirate refuge during the 1600s and 1700s, had been settled more recently by migrants from the British Cayman Islands who arrived in 1835. Newport visited Roatán in 1839 where he established a school and organized the parish, but it was not until 1847 that the first Anglican Church building was constructed.

In the early 1870s when Anglican parishioners emigrated from the British West Indies, Belize and the Bay Islands to the northern coast of Honduras, where workers were needed to help build a railroad from Puerto Cortés to San Pedro Sula, the Anglican bishop in Belize extended his pastoral care to this region of Honduras. The growing mission region was often served by only one Anglican priest, although large Anglican churches were established at Tela, Puerto Cortés and La Ceiba, with a number of missions along the railroad lines amidst the banana plantations. In 1935, the Anglican Church in Honduras reported eight churches, 250 communicants and about 1,250 adherents. The Great Depression of the 1930s, aided by a banana disease that seriously damaged this region, resulted in a decline in Anglican membership, as well as in other Protestant groups.

Although Anglican work in the Republic of Honduras was transferred to American jurisdiction in 1947, becoming a missionary district of the Protestant Episcopal Church with headquarters in the Panama Canal Zone, by 1978 the Episcopal Church in Honduras could only report a total of six churches, eight missions and 1,615 communicants in the entire Republic, which included the Bay Islands.

5.2.2 Methodist Churches. The **Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society** of Great Britain, building on its new work in Belize that begun in 1825, decided to take the Gospel to the Amerindians on the Mosquito Shore. The **Rev. and Mrs. James Pilley** were sent from England in 1829 and landed at Cape Gracias a Dios, near the mouth of Río Coco that forms the present border between Honduras and Nicaragua. The British had established a settlement there in the 1730s, but the living conditions were deplorable. Consequently, the Pilley's relocated to the port town of Bluefields in present-day Nicaragua, at the southern-most boundary of the Miskito Kingdom. After three years they were forced by sickness and discouragement to return to England, with no reliable convert having been made among the Miskitos. It was not until 1849 that the Moravians arrived in Bluefields to carry on Protestant work among the Miskitos and had great success.

Following their early misfortune on the Mosquito Coast, the Methodists concentrated their efforts in Belize and the Bay Islands. **James Edney**, representing the Methodist work in Belize, visited Roatán in 1844-1845 where he formed a Methodist society of 36 members and made plans for building a chapel. This small beginning proved successful, and Methodism soon spread throughout the Bay Islands. By 1860, the Methodist Church in Honduras numbered close to 1,000 members and Roatán appears as a separate station with its own resident missionary. Several British missionaries worked among the Bay Islanders during the next 20 years.

Between 1887 and 1892, the Belize District of the Wesleyan Methodist Church entered the mainland of Spanish Honduras, where congregations were formed among Belizean and West Indian Methodist migrants who had settled along the railroad lines. Missionaries **Owen Jones** (1887-1891) and **Henry Bunting** (ca. 1890-1892) laid the foundations for the San Pedro Circuit. However, after Bunting's death of yellow fever in 1892, the work remained unattended by missionaries for the next eight years.

The circuit was reactivated by the new district chairman, **James Lord**, during visits to northern Honduras in 1900-1901. However, by 1913, only 41 Methodist members could be counted on the circuit. In 1930, the **Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society** formally withdrew from the mainland of Spanish Honduras due to economic hardships that affected their work on that field, as well as in Belize, Jamaica and England during the ravages of the Great Depression. Only a few struggling Methodist congregations were able to survive this difficult period, notably the churches in La Ceiba and Puerto Cortés, which soon became affiliated with another Methodist group from the USA, the **African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church**.

In 1949, the **Wilbur Ackermans** of the **United Brethren in Christ Mission** went to Honduras to take over the work abandoned by the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in the 1930s. For a time they worked with the English-speaking people in La Ceiba, Tela and Cortés, and they established a new church and elementary school in La Ceiba. In 1952, work was begun among the Spanish-speaking people under the supervision of **Archie Cameron**. However, by 1970 there were only 300 members in 13 congregations. In 1978, 25 churches and six missions with a membership of 1,382 were reported.

Still another Methodist missionary society entered Honduras, in 1957, and reopened the discontinued stations at Tela, Puerto Cortés, La Ceiba and Puerto Castilla. This group, the **Wesleyan Church (Marion, Indiana),** reported four churches and two mission stations in 1960, with 129 church members, three missionaries and one national worker. In 1978, six churches reported about 260 members; the La Ceiba Church was the base for their work on the north coast.

Although the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society withdrew from the Honduran mainland in 1930, the Roatán Circuit was retained, but suffered from limited economic resources and few leaders. By 1935, only three Methodist churches were reported with a membership of 500 and approximately 1,500 adherents, under the care of one national worker.

In 1960, the Roatán Circuit reported 464 members among 14 small congregations, with a total Methodist Community of 800. However, more attention was paid to the circuit during the 1960s: a small secondary school, Utila College, was established on Utila Island, along with medical work. But, by 1967, further difficulties were caused by the devaluation of the English pound, which seriously affected the economic stability of the Islanders. However, another noteworthy event also took place in 1967, namely the integration of the Roatán Circuit with the newly formed **Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas,** with headquarters in Antigua, West Indies.

In 1978, the Bay Island Circuit reported 12 churches with 419 members, of which 354 were women and 65 were men. This situation reflects the present economic condition of the Islanders, which has resulted in the emigration of the male population to the mainland in search of employment.

5.2.3 English-Speaking Baptist Churches. The Baptists in British Honduras, in response to invitations from fellow West Indian Baptists (English-speaking) in the Bay Islands, sent their first representative in 1846, **Francis Curran**. He had been a school teacher in Belize City and a local preacher with the **Belize Baptist Mission**, related to the London-based **Baptist Missionary Society** in Great Britain.

However, the real founder of the Baptist Mission in the Bay Islands was the **Rev. John Warner** from Belize, who arrived in Roatán in 1849. Since the population of the Bay Islands was small (between 5,000 and 10,000), the potential for Baptist growth was somewhat limited. Then, too, Anglican and Methodist Churches had already been organized there. Nevertheless, Warner established the Baptist Mission at Flowers Bay, assisted in his missionary labors by financial support from Baptist churches in Belize and England. By 1850, the first Baptist church had been organized, and native workers were being trained.

Historical note: Bible colporteur Frederick Crowe left Belize for England in April 1847 with Baptist missionary Alexander Henderson who returned later that same year after defending himself before the board of directors of the Baptist Missionary Society and visiting his supporters, but Crowe remained in England to do deputation work for the now independent Belize Baptist Mission. Crowe's previous experiences were recorded in ***The Gospel in Central America***, written by Crowe and published in London in 1850. Sometime thereafter, Crowe returned to Belize and continued to work as a colporteur with the British and Foreign Bible Society, but he had a falling out with Henderson and was working independently of him in April 1855. Assisted by the BFBS, Crowe managed to accumulate a large supply of Bibles and New Testaments in English and Spanish, as well as a modest variety of Christian literature in many European languages, which he distributed among the multiethnic population of Belize, the Bay Islands, and the northern coast of the Republic of Honduras during 1855-1856. In early 1856 Crowe began a difficult journey from the Caribbean coast to the Pacific coast of Honduras that lasted about 15 months due to opposition he encountered from Roman Catholic authorities who demanded his expulsion from Honduras. However, thanks to the personal intervention of President Santos Guardiola, no formal charges were made against Crowe who then was able to continue his journey from Comayagua to El Salvador. In July 1857, Crowe wrote a letter to the American Bible Society while in the port of La Unión, El Salvador, and asked for ABS support for establishing a distribution center on the Pacific coast of Central America. He also requested that the ABS send him immediately a supply of the Scriptures in Spanish, which he desired to sell at the international fair held annually in November in San Miguel, El Salvador. However, we have not found any further mention of Crowe in the historical records available to us. (Source: Escobar 2000:247-281)

After Warner's death, other Baptist missionaries were sent to the Bay Islands aided by the **Jamaican Baptist Missionary Society**: the **Rev. Charles Hobson** (ca. 1883-1889), followed by the **Rev. Joseph Kelly** (1889-1893) and the **Rev. Robert Cleghorn** (1893-1900). Under Cleghorn's leadership, existing churches at Oak Ridge, Coxen's Hole, Flowers Bay and Half Moon Bay were regularly visited, and new churches were established on the adjoining small islands of Belene and Bonacco. During the 1890s, the Bay Islands were visited by other religious groups, resulting in divisions and the loss of some Baptist members who became connected with the newer denominations, namely the Adventists and independent Pentecostals.

In 1902, the Jamaican Baptist Missionary Society, which had formerly assisted Baptist Missions in Belize and the Bay Islands (since 1888), withdrew their support due to economic problems in Jamaica. Consequently, the work in Belize and the Bay Islands became independent under the **British Honduras Trust Association** in 1904, aided thereafter by friends and churches in Great Britain. The years 1905-1914 were a time of spiritual awakening and renewal, both in Belize and in the Bay Islands. Hundreds of new converts were added to the churches, and older members were revived during this period of worldwide awakening.

However, renewal and blessing were soon followed by the turmoil of the World War I (1914-1918), which caused economic hardships to Baptist work in Belize and the Bay Islands of Honduras. Lack of employment and failing export markets resulted in the emigration of thousands of Islanders to the United States or to the surrounding Republics of Central America, in search of a better livelihood. Further difficulties descended on the Bay Islanders in 1931, when one of the worse hurricanes on record swept through the Caribbean, causing widespread destruction and further economic depression in the Bay Islands. Baptist work there was at a very low ebb during the 1930s and 1940s.

5.2.4 The Conservative Baptist Home Mission Society formally entered Honduras in 1951. Their first missionaries were the **Rev. and Mrs. Lee Irons**, who had begun work in La Ceiba and the Bay Islands as independent missionaries in 1946. Although La Ceiba is the center of English-speaking work, the Conservative Baptists also began visiting and caring for the remaining West Indian congregations in the Bay Islands. In 1960, there were five churches with 128 members and 630 adherents, and in 1978 the **Bay Islands Baptist Association** reported seven churches and only 110 members.

The Conservative Baptists also began work among the Spanish-speaking population, particularly in the Aguan River Valley near the northern coast. **Lee Irons** initiated ministry there in 1952, followed by **David Jones** in 1956. A Bible institute was started in Olanchito in 1959, which led to the expansion of Baptist work in the valley during the early 1960s. It became more practical, however, to close the Bible institute in Olanchito and develop a program of theological education by extension out of their more established center in La Ceiba. In spite of conflicts among missionaries and national workers, the Conservative Baptist field has grown from 700 members in 1970 to a membership of 1,470 in 1978 among 66 churches and 39 preaching points, mainly in the Aguan River Valley. However, some of their former workers are now pastoring independent Baptist churches in this region.

In 1960, the Conservative Baptists established **Radio Station HRVC** in the capital, initially broadcasting the Gospel on short-wave, but adding medium-wave in 1965. Since this is the only Evangelical radio station in Honduras, it is well listened to throughout the country.

5.2.5 The Seventh-Day Adventist Church. In 1887 a Seventh-Day Adventist minister from New Orleans, **T.H. Gibbs**, made an exploratory visit to the Bay Islands, where he distributed tracts and books. During a later visit by **L.C. Chadwick**, twenty people were found ready for baptism. That same year, the first resident minister arrived, the **Rev. Frank Hutchins**, and established the Adventist Mission on Roatán Island. However, it wasn't until 1893 that the first Adventist church was formally organized with 25 members and a Sabbath school of 60. Shortly thereafter, two new workers arrived and founded an Adventist school. By the end of 1893, three congregations and 100 members were reported.

Initially, Adventist mission work in Honduras and Belize was administered as a single field, known as the **Central American Mission of the Adventist Church**. By 1905, the combined membership in this field, most of which was located in the Bay Islands, totaled 160 in five churches and five out-stations. Later, the name was changed to the Honduran Mission, which reported 267 members in 1918. By 1937, the Adventist Mission had assumed its present territorial boundaries and reported 15 churches, with 624 members. Solid growth continued, so that by 1970 the Adventist membership had climbed to 3,700 among 26 churches, and by 1978 to 9,933 members in 38 churches and 70 mission stations, making this new group the largest

Protestant church in Honduras. Adventist work has grown among the Spanish-speaking population and is more (more than what) evenly distributed throughout the country, although about half of all Adventist congregations are located on the north coast (35) and in the Bay Islands (15) and are predominantly English-speaking.

5.2.6 The Central American Mission (CAM) arrived in Honduras in 1896 motivated by the express desire to evangelize among the Spanish-speaking population in the interior rather than among the English-speaking people on the Caribbean coast. The first four CAM missionaries landed at Puerto Cortés in May and traveled by railroad to San Pedro Sula, where they made preparations for launching missionary work in the interior. Their first efforts were in the mountain villages of Santa Rosa de Coplán, Dulce Nomre and El Paraíso. A remarkable spiritual harvest was realized in El Paraíso, where a growing church sent out a number of national evangelists into many parts of the country. By 1935, CAM work was centered in Comayaguela and Siguatepeque, with out-stations in Amapala, Danlí, Dulce Nombre and Santa Rosa.

Since the emphasis of early CAM missionaries and national workers was largely evangelistic, church planting was slow in getting started. After forty years (1936), there were only 21 churches and 1,175 members; it took another 35 years to double in size: 77 churches and 2,375 members in 1975. More recently, however, church growth has increased significantly: 4,304 members in 80 churches and 101 "congregations" (read “mission stations”) by 1979.

After 50 years of service in Honduras, the churches planted by the CAM became the autonomous **Association of Central American Churches** in 1948, although CAM continues to provide needed assistance. In 1970, about half of all CAM missionaries in Honduras were concentrated in two institutions in Siguatepeque: the American Academy and the Evangelical Hospital. Other primary and secondary schools were also operated, along with a Bible institute, bookstores and campgrounds.

5.2.7 The Plymouth Brethren (called “Hermanos Libres”). One of the most distinguished missionary careers in Central America was that of **Alfred Hockings** with the **Plymouth Brethren** in Honduras. Hockings, initially a colporteur with the **British and Foreign Bible Society**, began his ministry along the Caribbean coast of Honduras between 1911 and 1918. Then he returned to England to promote missionary work in Honduras and married Evelina Webber. Alfred later returned to Honduras with his new wife as missionaries with the support of **Christian Missions in Many Lands**, a ministry that lasted until Alfred's death in 1978.

Early Plymouth Brethren work was centered in San Pedro Sula and was developed by **Mr. and Mrs. Christopher Knapp**, beginning in 1898, and later by other missionaries and national workers, including the Hockings. By 1936, twelve small congregations had been established in the San Pedro Sula area and near Trujillo. The work in Trujillo was begun by **Mr. Rudouck**, who had been a missionary in Guatemala from 1926-1931. Rudouck relocated in the port city of Trujillo in Honduras from 1931-1938, then he began a new work in Tela. In 1938, James Scollon came to La Ceiba and launched **Editorial Verdades Bíblicas** (Bible Truth Publishers) with the publication of the bimonthly magazine *Lo que la Biblia Enseña* (What the Bible Teaches). Plymouth Brethren work was strengthened during the late 1940s with the arrival of Hockings' daughter, Alfreda, and Eva Johnston from England and Ireland, respectively.

Prior to 1950, the Plymouth Brethren grew slowly and were concentrated on the Caribbean coast around San Pedro Sula, Puerto Cortés, Tela, La Ceiba and Trujillo where 25 small congregations (called “Salas Evangélicas”) had been organized. However, during the 1950s,

greater progress was achieved due to the arrival of four new missionary couples, together with the road improvements by the government, and a decline in opposition from the Roman Catholic Church. The **Robert Sheddens** came to La Ceiba in 1950, then relocated in Tegucigalpa in about 1953 to launch Brethren work in the capital city. The **James Puckmeires** from Holland arrived in San Pedro Sula in 1951, later moving to Tegucigalpa and initiating a successful radio ministry with the program "En Esto Pensar" (Think about This). The **William Tidsburys** worked in El Progreso and later in Siguatepeque, and the **Samuel Handlons** served in Puerto Cortés and Olanchito.

By 1960, 45 Plymouth Brethren congregations had been established with a total membership of about 900. In 1970, there were 65 congregations and 1,950 members. But since 1970, Brethren work has shown notable growth with 120 congregations reported for 1980 with 7,200 members.

Plymouth Brethren leaders attribute this growth to several key factors: (1) During and immediately after Hurricane Fifi in 1974, many people received the Lord and were added to Brethren assemblies. (2) Many believers were forced to migrate to other areas because of flood damage and, once relocated, won many others to faith in Christ. (3) After the hurricane, much help arrived from overseas for rebuilding and for agricultural development. (4) About this time, annual "special assemblies" were begun which lasted for three or four days, with an attendance of about 1,000 with representation from most of the Brethren assemblies, resulting in greater unity and spiritual growth. (5) Regional Bible studies were begun for men, which helped develop new leaders among the growing number of new congregations. And (6), Brethren missionaries began visiting more regularly the local assemblies to teach, inspire and motivate believers in their spiritual growth and evangelistic outreach.

5.2.8 The Quakers / Friends Mission. For 30 years, the **California Yearly Meeting of Friends** supported two separate fields in Honduras. The work began in Chiquimula, Guatemala, in 1902 and gradually spread across the border into northwestern Honduras. However, this field was always administered from Chiquimula (called the **Chiquimula Friends Mission**), as well as the Friends work in El Salvador, which forms a contiguous geographical region although politically part of three neighboring countries. As early as 1912, there was a Friends congregation in Honduras, near the Mayan ruins at Copán. The first Friends missionaries to be stationed in western Honduras were **Cora Wildman and Maude Burns**, who arrived in Ocotepeque in 1915.

After establishing San Marcos de Ocotepeque as their base, missionaries and national workers of the Friends Mission evangelized throughout the departments of Copán, Gracias a Dios and Ocotepeque. By 1935, two dozen churches and nearly 50 preaching points had been established in this region, with 1,500 members and 2,280 adherents. In 1960, twenty-two churches were reported with 1,068 members and 3,000 adherents.

However, the war with El Salvador in 1969 severely damaged the Friends work in western Honduras, because many of their members were Salvadorans who resided on the Honduran-side of the border. Since the center of the conflict was Ocotepeque, believers fled into Guatemala and the interior of Honduras. Many Salvadorans were forced to return to their own country after the hostilities, including many people who were members of Friends churches. Ten years later (1979), 63 congregations reported only 700 members; obviously, the Friends work in western Honduras was struggling to survive.

On the other hand, the Friends work in south-central Honduras was established at Tegucigalpa in 1914 by **Ervin Cammack**, after five years of service with the Friends Mission in Guatemala. Since communication was extremely difficult between the two fields, the new work in Tegucigalpa was administered separately. Cammack, interestingly enough, met the President of Honduras soon after arriving in the capital, explained the reason for coming to Honduras as a missionary, and presented the President with a Bible. Cammack apparently was well received and became well known in the Honduran Legislature, where they reportedly interrupted the proceedings occasionally to permit him to pass out Gospel literature to the congressmen.

The **Tegucigalpa Friends Mission** established stations in La Esperanza, Marcal, La Paz and Juticalpa. In 1934, the Friends Bible Training Institute was opened in Tegucigalpa. At the beginning of World War II, however, the **Board of Missions of the California Yearly Meeting of Friends** faced serious shortages, both in finances and personnel, which restricted ministry in their three mission fields: the Chiquimula Friends Mission, the Tegucigalpa Friends Mission and the Alaska Friends Mission. After months of consultation with the **National Holiness Missionary Society**, now the **World Gospel Mission (WGM)**, the Friends Board of Missions turned over their Tegucigalpa field to the WGM in 1944, consisting of five churches and about 500 members. Most Friends missionaries continued to work under the WGM for a period of time after the transfer.

5.2.9 The Honduran Holiness Church, supported by WGM, became autonomous in 1956, but not much growth was recorded during those early years. In 1951 only five churches with 564 members were reported. Although 16 churches existed in 1965, there were still less than 600 members. By 1968, however, 32 churches reported 1,781 members, including catechists and new believers. The Holiness Church lost many members during the war with El Salvador in 1969, because Salvadorans, including members of the Holiness Church, were either sent home or detained by the government during this tense period. From a low of 700 members in 1969, membership grew to 2,324 in 1975. However, in 1979 there were only 2,309 members in 76 Holiness congregations in Honduras. Several schools were operated in Tegucigalpa, and Bible institutes were located in Hatillo and Juticalpa.

5.2.10 The Evangelical and Reformed Church (a merger of the Reformed Church in the USA and the Evangelical Synod of North America in 1934) was a well-established mission in northern Honduras by 1935. The **Foreign Mission Board of the Evangelical Synod of North America** (a child of the United Church of Germany, itself a union of Lutheran and Reformed Churches) began work in Honduras in 1921, responding to a request by **Ramón Guzmán**, a Honduran businessman in San Pedro Sula. The **Rev. and Mrs. Harold Auler** and **Miss Anna Bechtold** were the first missionaries to arrive on the field. Schools, clinics, house visitation and evangelistic ministries were established in San Pedro Sula, and similar activities were extended to the surrounding region, from Puerto Cortés on the north coast to Santa Bárbara in the southern interior and east into Yoro Department.

In contrast to most work in northern Honduras, the Evangelical Reformed Church concentrated on the Spanish-speaking population, following the example of the Central America Mission working in the interior of Honduras. However, the strategy of the Synod was much broader than that of the CAM, for the Synod purposed to achieve "personal regeneration by means of the proclamation of the Gospel and social regeneration through the formation of a middle class by means of education." In keeping with the latter goal, the Evangelical Theological Seminary was established in Pinalejo, Santa Bárbara, by the **Rev. Walter Herrscher** in 1934. In addition, a school for training lay evangelists was added a short time later. Medical work was begun in

Concepción in 1947. Then, in 1962, the theological institute was transferred to San Pedro Sula, a growing regional center of 21,000 inhabitants.

In addition to strong urban congregations in San Pedro Sula in 1960, other Evangelical and Reformed churches were located in the coastal city of Puerto Cortés, the banana company town of La Lima, the mountain villages of Yoro and Santa Barbara departments, and the growing commercial center of El Progreso. Several smaller congregations and numerous preaching points were scattered throughout northwestern Honduras.

Although church growth has not been spectacular, notable progress has been made. From three churches and five stations, with only 75 communicants and 250 adherents in 1935, the work increased to 17 churches and 106 preaching points in 1960, with 718 communicants and 3,628 adherents. Also functioning were 25 Sunday schools, four primary schools, a secondary school, a bookstore, two clinics and the theological institute, assisted by 18 foreign workers, five ordained national pastors and 12 lay workers. By 1967, there were 20 organized churches and about 1,000 members. Ten years later (1978), 23 churches were reported with 3,500 members.

Extensive ministries are conducted in education, medicine, agriculture, literature and communications under the Board of Honduras Christian Institutions in cooperation with the **United Church Board for World Ministries**, the mission arm of the **United Church of Christ** (formed by the merger of the Congregational Christian Church and the Evangelical and Reformed Church in 1957). The **Synod of the Evangelical and Reformed Church in Honduras** was formed in 1951 as an autonomous national church.

5.2.11 The Moravian (Brethren) Church worked unofficially on the Mosquito Coast of Honduras for many years prior to 1930, when **George Heath** began the first permanent work at Kaurkira. German Moravians began mission work at Bluefields, Nicaragua, in 1849 and evangelized among the Miskitos and lesser tribes that inhabited the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua, working north from Bluefields. By 1870, the Moravians claimed more than 1,000 members among the Miskitos, and the translation of the New Testament had begun in their language. In 1918, the German Moravians transferred this field to the **Society for Propagating the Gospel**, sponsored by the American Moravian Church. By 1905, the entire New Testament was available in Miskito, and a revised edition was published in 1925.

Prior to 1930, numerous Moravian congregations had been established along the banks of the Coco River (or Río Segovia), that now forms the border between Nicaragua and Honduras, in an area that has long been disputed by the two countries. But not until Heath began his ministry at Kaurkira had the first Moravian converts been baptized in Honduras, although there were Moravian believers then living north of the Río Coco.

By 1935, the Moravians had established three churches and three mission stations among the Miskitos, with 75 communicants and about 250 adherents in the sparsely populated coastal lowlands. This region is drained by numerous rivers and streams making small boat travel the only viable means of transportation, until landing fields could be made for small airplanes, thus reducing travel time over a wide geographical area. Living in this remote region were tens of thousands of Miskito and a few hundred Paya Indians, largely unevangelized since the first frustrated attempts by Anglican and Methodist missionaries during previous centuries.

However, the Moravians persisted in their efforts and were successful in winning many Miskitos to faith in Jesus Christ. By 1960, the Moravian Church reported 989 communicants and 1,850

adherents among 41 churches, cared for by 12 foreign workers and a number of national pastors, in the newly formed Department of Gracias a Dios (1957). Medical, educational and agricultural work was conducted, in addition to evangelistic and church planting activities. In 1970, about 1,600 communicants were reported. More recently, the Honduran Synod of the Moravian Church claimed 2,829 communicants in 37 organized congregations, with a Moravian Community of 6,300 adherents in 1978. The Miskito population now numbers about 28,000.

5.2.12 The Southern Baptists (Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board) started their work in Honduras in the 1940s. Beginning in 1946, Baptist churches were organized in Tegucigalpa from congregations that had been using Southern Baptist literature. **William Webb**, a Southern Baptist missionary in Mexico, was transferred to Guatemala in 1947 and supervised the Honduran field until **Harold E. Hurst** and **John Ratcliff** arrived in Tegucigalpa in 1954. Separate Baptist conventions were formed in Guatemala and Honduras in 1958 (**Association of Honduran Baptist Churches**).

Soon after the first missionaries arrived in the 1950s, a Baptist bookstore was established in Tegucigalpa that continues to provide a vital source of Christian literature for all of Honduras. A theological training institute, which evolved into the Baptist Bible Institute in 1958 and the Baptist Theological Seminary in 1974, was soon established Colonia Reforma in the capital as well. Harold Hurst pioneered in television with the program "La Iglesia en el Hogar" (The Church in the Home), which is well known throughout the country. In the field of medicine, a mobile unit operates out of El Porvenir, and a physician and family nurse practitioner were appointed for Honduras in 1972. Student work began in 1970. A Baptist campground has been established on the shores of Lake Uojoa in central Honduras.

By 1960, the Southern Baptists had established churches in the departments of Francisco Morazán, Choluteca, Comayagua and Cortés with the center of the work in the capital, Tegucigalpa-Comayagüela (Central District). Six churches and 20 preaching points were reported in 1960, with 161 baptized members and 531 adherents. In 1970, eleven churches had been formed with about 700 members, but by 1979 there were 32 churches, 55 mission/preaching points, 2,374 members and a total Sunday school enrollment of 3,140. Twenty-six students were attending the **Baptist Theological Seminary** in Comayagüela, and a program of theological education by extension had begun with five students enrolled. In 1974, the Southern Baptists became known as the **National Convention of Baptist Churches of Honduras (CONIBAH).**

5.2.13 Other Baptist Groups:

Caribbean Baptist Outreach (based in Popular, Florida) began its ministry in 1967 under the leadership of the **Rev. Landon Wilkerson**, an independent Southern Baptist missionary. Since that time, about 30 churches have been formed among the Miskitos in the Department of Gracias a Dios, including a Bible institute in Puerto Lempira for training Miskito pastors. Only one church is Spanish-speaking, while the majority use Miskito. These churches have been formed into the **Baptist Association of the Mosquitia,** but nine of them (including the Spanish-speaking one in Puerto Lempira) are also members of CONIBAH and are included in their statistical reports. However, the 30 Baptist churches in the Mosquitia were estimated to have about 1,300 members in 1980.

Baptist Mid-Missions entered Honduras about 1955 and had formed four small churches in the San Pedro Sula area by 1970, under the supervision of six missionaries. In 1979, there were 19

organized churches with about 500 baptized members, known as the **Independent Evangelical Baptist Churches of Honduras.**

5.2.14 The first missionaries of the **Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities** arrived in Honduras in 1950. Evangelistic and medical work was established in Trujillo, Tocoa and Gualaco on the northern coast. But church growth during the first decade was slow. In the face of local Roman Catholic opposition, the Mennonites turned to education and development, establishing a primary school and bringing in the Voluntary Service Program. Young Mennonites from the USA worked in organizing cooperatives, planting gardens, selling veterinary medicines and similar projects aimed at serving local community needs while winning a hearing for the Gospel.

During the 1960s, the infant church began to organize itself, and the **Honduras Evangelical Mennonite Church** emerged. National leaders trained in brief, periodic institutes dedicated to theological and pastoral concerns, but then a formal Bible institute program was established in Trujillo. Slowly, the young Mennonite Church began taking a more active part in the growing Evangelical family in Honduras.

During the 1970s, the Mennonites witnessed the growth of urban churches. Church members from the northern coast and the Aguan and Sula valleys, where rural Mennonite churches had been established, began moving to La Ceiba, San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa-Comayagüela (the nation's capital, known as the Central District). During the 1950s and 1960s, the emphasis was on establishing rural churches, but during the 1970s urban church planting and development has received priority. The clinics, schools and Voluntary Service Program were discontinued, and a new Extension Bible Institute was developed at La Ceiba that includes vocational training for pastors and lay workers.

Spiritual and organizational renewal has become an important part of Mennonite church life in Honduras during the 1970s. Some congregations are depending less on the usual model of the pastor as the only minister, and are turning to multiple ministry models of pastoral teams. Group decision-making is becoming the pattern rather than following the lead of an authoritarian pastor. Although previous social ministries were discontinued on the north coast, Mennonites in Honduras consider social concern and action to be integral parts of the church's lifestyle. Youth teams work in teaching health, sewing and literacy classes, in addition to leading small group Bible studies and building discipleship into the lives of new converts and older believers as well.

Edward King and his team of workers in Tegucigalpa have demonstrated how Charismatic Renewal can be combined with social concern and action in a rehabilitation program for delinquent youth, known as the "Living Love Program" (Grupos de Amor Viviente). Over a dozen of these Charismatic discipleship groups have been established in the capital, where they are having far-reaching effects among Honduran young people and their families. As more and more young people are transformed by the power of Christ, they in turn share this experience with their families and friends, leading them to faith in Christ also. Now, a special lay program of Bible instruction and discipleship has been developed by King to train young people in an informal Bible institute setting. More leaders are needed to teach new converts how to follow Christ as obedient disciples.

Looking at the overall growth picture, the Mennonites grew well between 1962 and 1967, then slowed down and consolidated the work between 1968 and 1972. They experienced a 20%

AAGR in the period 1973-1976. From a base of 20 churches and 300 members in 1970, the Mennonites increased to 35 churches and 805 members in 1978.

5.2.15 The first known **Pentecostal missionaries in Honduras** visited the Bay Islands in the early 1900s, although not much is known about them. However, in 1931, an independent Pentecostal missionary from Canada, **Frederick E. Mebius**, crossed the border from El Salvador and helped establish a number of churches in northwestern Honduras. The first Pentecostal believers were apparently former members of the Friends Church but were forced to leave it due to a dispute over the "baptism of the Holy Spirit." A separate congregation was formed in a private home in El Rosario, Department of Ocotepeque, where reports began to circulate about divine healings, a reported “resurrection from the dead,” and other experiences related to speaking-in-tongues, prophecy, etc.

5.2.16 One of the first believers in El Rosario, **Manuel Hernández Quesada**, traveled to Santa Ana in El Salvador to ask the **Assemblies of God** to send a pastor to care for the growing flock of Pentecostal believers in northwestern Honduras. The supervisor, **Ramírez Arbizú**, sent Carlos Flores, and then Arbizú, himself, went to Honduras to help establish congregations in San Agustín de Copán following an earthquake, when a group of villagers were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to boldly testify about the Pentecostal experience. Arbizú also went to Santa Ana to appeal to the Assemblies of God who sent **Santos Beltrán** to develop the work in Copán.

The first Assemblies of God missionaries to Honduras from the USA were the **Rev. and Mrs. Percy Dymond**, who arrived in 1940. The Honduran Bible Institute was opened in 1946, and has moved locations several times, but since 1965 has been operated in San Pedro Sula. From the very beginning, the work in Honduras has been indigenous and self-supporting, although the Assemblies of God Board of Missions has aided the work by sending missionaries and funds for special projects. However, the construction of church buildings, operating expenses and pastoral salaries have uniformly come from Honduran believers themselves with little outside assistance.

In 1960, most Assembly of God work was located in Copán, Choluteca, Santa Bárbara, Ocotepeque and Cortés. In that year, there were 30 churches and 44 preaching points with 680 baptized members, aided by six foreign workers, and served by 34 national pastors. By 1965, the total membership had increased to about 1,200 among 40 churches and numerous preaching points, and by 1978 to 5,900 members in 196 churches and 243 preaching points. The resulting AAGR of 15.6% means that the Assemblies of God was the second fastest growing denomination in Honduras between 1965 and 1978.

5.2.17 The Prince of Peace Evangelical Church. José María (“Chema”) Muñoz was pastor of the large Central Assembly of God Church in Guatemala City in 1956, when a serious problem in the church forced him to resign and leave the city. When he returned after a few months, Muñoz became pastor of a large group of believers that had left the Central Assembly. This new congregation formed the nucleus of a new movement founded by Muñoz that became known as the **Evangelical Association of the Prince of Peace** (Iglesia Evangélica del Príncipe de Paz).

A chief factor in the growth and development of the Prince of Peace movement was a daily radio program by Muñoz, heard on at least 14 radio stations throughout Central America and Mexico in 1974. The Central Church in Guatemala City was the "mecca" of the Prince of Peace

movement and was pastored by Muñoz until his death in November 1979. He was followed as pastor by his son, Josué Muñoz.

At first, many of the Prince of Peace members came from the Assemblies of God and other Pentecostal denominations in Guatemala, but soon the new movement began to win many new converts from among the nominal Catholic populations of Guatemala, Mexico, El Salvador and Honduras through Muñoz' radio listening audience.

Prince of Peace churches are completely indigenous and receive no help from foreign mission agencies, although some assistance has been received from some Pentecostal churches in North America. Pastoral training is accomplished through an extension Bible institute program, brief seminars conducted in each geographical area where the movement exists, and a permanent Bible institute in Guatemala City that gives basic pastoral courses of five months duration.

By 1974, about 50 churches had been established in Honduras, mainly in the western and central regions of the country. In 1978, there were 125 churches and over 60 preaching points in Honduras, with an estimated 4,000 members.

5.2.18 The Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee) arrived in the Bay Islands in 1944, when **Fred and Lucille Litton** went to Roatán and Utila for revival meetings. On the Island of Roatán, special services were held at French Harbor, Jonesville and Coxen Hole. But the greatest success occurred on the Island of Utila, where revival meetings lasted for three months and led to over 500 reported conversions, or approximately one-third of the island's population. In April of 1945, the first Church of God was established on Utila with 40 members, pastored by **James Cooper**. The building purchased for the new church had been the island's only movie theatre and gambling hall, which shows that the revival had considerable impact on the Islanders. However, it wasn't until 1950 that the first believers received the promised "baptism of the Holy Spirit" in the Bay Islands. A school was opened in 1948 under the direction of **O'Neil and Ineze McCullough**, named Lee Elementary School, which met an important need for education on the island.

The **Full Gospel Church of God** movement spread to the mainland under **William McCall's** ministry (1951-1953), when an English-speaking congregation was organized at La Ceiba. However, McCall was transferred to Guatemala in 1953 and was followed by **Norva Skaggs**. During the next few years, several new churches were established in the Bay Islands and on the northern coast of Honduras. By 1960, there were five churches and four missions in the Bay Islands with 169 baptized members and 408 adherents, while on the mainland two churches and two missions had been established with 63 members.

The Church of God also was established in the interior of Honduras by **Josué Rubio** beginning in 1950. Rubio, a native of northwestern Mexico, arrived in Tegucigalpa and began door-to-door visitation. In 1951, a small congregation was formed in his home that soon became the first Church of God in the capital, with 53 members. By 1960, there were 24 churches and 10 missions under the supervision of the Church of God in the Central Mountain Region of Honduras, with 1,054 members and about 2,150 adherents.

The most significant church growth occurred in the departments of Copán and Santa Bárbara, located in the rugged mountain country along the border with Guatemala. In 1952, Rubio and a companion, **Lemuel Benítez** of Guatemala, entered this region and began to evangelize among

remote villages, where a Pentecostal revival soon spread along this border area. Repeated visits to this region resulted in the formation of many new congregations, with the revival spilling over into Guatemala during the period 1956-1958. Because of this growth, a new district of the Church of God was formed along the border in 1958. In 1960, 15 churches had been organized in Copán Department with 734 members and 1,505 adherents, while in the neighboring Department of Santa Bárbara, four churches reported 156 members and about 300 adherents.

For all Honduras in 1960, the Church of God (Cleveland, TN) reported 32 churches and 10 missions, which increased to 59 churches and 29 missions by 1970. Membership during the same period grew from 1,279 to 2,100 under the leadership of lay pastors with little formal pastoral or theological training. In 1978, there were 144 churches and 74 missions with a combined membership of 4,548. Between 1965 and 1978, the Full Gospel Church of God had a 9.9% AAGR.

5.2.19 The International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, arrived in Honduras in 1952 and began evangelistic ministry in the capital. By 1960, the work had spread to the departments of Cortés, La Paz, Santa Bárbara and Valle in addition to Francisco Morazán, where Tegucigalpa is located. At this time, seven churches and 18 preaching points had been established, with 310 baptized members and about 1,000 adherents. By 1970, the total membership had increased to 1,109 and by 1977 to 1,870. Part of this growth can be attributed to a strong Central Church in Comayagüela, where a Bible institute program has provided training for lay pastors under the supervision of the Rev. Dean Truett.

5.2.20 The Charismatic Renewal Movement. During the 1970s, when the **Catholic Charismatic Movement** began to grow among the upper classes in Tegucigalpa, several new "ecumenical" groups were formed (fellowship groups of Catholics and Protestants) and some evangelical groups began to take on a Charismatic flavor. These groups have experienced significant growth, especially among young people and members of the business community, including the following: the **Christian Love Brigade Association**, led by Mario Fumero, with four churches, four missions and about 500 members; the **Christian Center of Charismatic Renewal** (El Cenáculo -- Centro Cristiano de Renovación Carismática), affiliated with the Assemblies of God and pastored by Fernando Nieto, has two centers and about 500 members; and **Grupos de Amor Viviente** ("Living Love" groups), led by Edward King who is affiliated with the Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, has 15 Bible study and fellowship groups ministering to about 700 people. Some Mennonite groups in San Pedro Sula and La Ceiba also have a Charismatic emphasis.

5.2.21 Other Pentecostal Groups. The **Church of God of Prophecy**, with 41 congregations (churches and missions) and 1,063 members; the **Philadelphia Evangelical Mission**, founded by Pentecostal missionaries from Sweden (Philadelphia Church in Stockholm), with 14 churches, 49 preaching points and 1,200 members; the **Pentecostal Church of God** (Iglesia de Dios Pentecostal) from Puerto Rico, with 44 congregations and 1,800 members; and the **Pentecostal Free Church of God**, which is reported to have 80 churches and about 3,500 members. Smaller Pentecostal denominations included: the **Bethesda Evangelical Pentecostal Assembly** (34 congregations and 950 members), **Apostolic Assembly of Faith in Jesus Christ** (eight congregations and 300 members), **Assembly of Christian Churches** (nine congregations and 197 members), **World Missionary Movement of Puerto Rico** (17 congregations and 350 members), **International Evangelical Church "Soldiers of the Cross of Christ"** from Cuba (seven congregations with about 290 members), **Elim Christian Mission** from Guatemala (two churches with 200 members), **Mission of the Brazilian**

Assemblies of God (two churches and 30 members), and **Gospel Crusade Inc.** from Bradenton, Florida (since 1964, it has planted nine churches and established medical clinics, vocational schools and feeding programs in the Bay Islands and northern coast of Honduras, thanks to the pioneering efforts of missionary **Jean Isbell**).

VI. MAJOR PROTESTANT ACTIVITIES

6.1 ECUMENICAL ORGANIZATIONS

The Evangelical Alliance of Honduras has existed since 1958, but was strongest in the early 1960s during the years of Evangelism-in-Depth. The Alliance has always been a fairly weak organization, mainly dedicated to representing the evangelical community before the Honduran government in matters relating to religious education, taxes, customs duties, etc. Prior to 1958, an inter-mission committee served a similar function. The general effectiveness of the Alliance has declined in recent years due to the withdrawal of several member groups and the difficulties of developing an effective united program. Notably absent among the 17 member organizations is the Association of Evangelical Central American Churches (CAM), one of the larger denominations in Honduras. The most recent activities of the Alliance have been a series of inspirational pastor's conferences during the mid-1970s.

The birth of **CEDEN (The Evangelical Committee for Relief and National Emergency)** in 1974, following the disaster caused by Hurricane Fife, has apparently distracted attention from the Alliance. Many denominations and service agencies (at least 29) prefer to work with and through CEDEN to accomplish the same or similar goals that formerly were handled by the Alliance. The activities of CEDEN will be considered in the section on General Service Agencies.

6.2 BASIC EDUCATION

The organization of primary and secondary schools in Honduras by early missionaries was no doubt motivated by the widespread illiteracy, especially in rural areas. Even today, at least half the population cannot read or write. By 1935, Anglicans, Methodists, Adventists and the Evangelical and Reformed Church (ERC) all had established primary schools, and the latter body also had a secondary school in San Pedro Sula. Soon, the Friends Mission, Central American Mission (CAM) and other groups were working in education -- the Friends Mission in San Marcos de Ocotepeque and the CAM in Siguatepeque.

By 1960, Protestants had organized at least 12 primary and two secondary schools in Honduras, with the CAM and the ERC being the dominant groups in education. Today there are at least 12 kindergartens, 27 primary schools, 9 secondary schools and 3 vocational schools in Honduras operated by various denominations.

6.3 BIBLE TRANSLATION AND DISTRIBUTION

The distribution of Scriptures in Honduras has increased over the years, especially since the formation of the Area Office of the **American Bible Society** in this country in 1969. This office, under the management of the Rev. Saul Gómez Díaz who had been a promoter for the Bible Society since 1958, was responsible for distribution in Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua. In

1974, the **Honduran Bible Society** was formed as a legal corporation, which became an associate member of the US Societies in 1979.

Bibles, New Testaments, portions and selections are available in Spanish and English; and the New Testament, in Miskito. Portions are also available in Miskito and Carib. However, no translations have yet been completed in Jicaque, Paya and Sumo for the smaller tribes of Honduras. The larger tribes, except for the Miskitos, have been acculturated to the extent that Spanish is their first language. The following statistics give an overview of recent distribution:

Bibles	32,218
New Testaments	16,659
Portions	174,030
Selections	2,295,748
New Reader Selections	128,000
Totals (1979)	2,646,655
(1978)	2,423,114
(1975)	1,523,161

This increase in distribution is due in part to special denominational efforts and to the popularity or new versions that were enthusiastically received by both Protestants and Catholics. The Good News Bible in Spanish has the official seal of approval of the Roman Catholic Church. Free distribution programs were carried out among students, prisoners, refugees from neighboring countries (Salvadorans and Nicaraguans) and new readers. Bible Society promoters visited local churches, annual assemblies, conventions, retreats, etc., to tell about the work of the Society and to stimulate the distribution of the Scriptures.

Special Penzotti training courses were offered in 1980, with the participation of 450 people from 15 denominations, to teach them how to develop an effective program. The Women's Auxiliary, called "Women in Action," actively supports the work of the Bible Society, helping with fund raising as well as distribution of materials. Interest in Scripture distribution is obviously growing among churches and their leaders.

6.4 BROADCASTING

In 1960, the Conservative Baptists established the first and only evangelical radio station in the country, HRVC, "The Voice of Honduras." Broadcasting began on short-wave, but medium-wave was added in 1965. Many denominations use the station to broadcast their own programs, which can be heard in many parts of the country.

Evangelical groups also broadcast their programs on at least a dozen commercial stations all over Honduras. There are also several evangelical T.V. programs on stations in Tegucigalpa that are produced locally by Christian Love Brigades and the Center for Charismatic Renewal (El Cenáculo), while other programs are produced in the USA in Spanish: "700 Club," "PTL Club," and "Elmer Bueno Presents."

6.5 CRUSADE EVANGELISM

Mass evangelism in Honduras, as elsewhere in Central America, got off to a slow start in terms of large, broad-based interdenominational crusades. No known campaigns of this kind took place in Honduras prior to the 1950s, perhaps due to the strong anti-Protestant climate among

the nation's Roman Catholic clergy supported by the Catholic masses. But in 1952, many evangelical churches in Tegucigalpa supported evangelist Ernesto León of Laredo, Texas, in a crusade sponsored by the **Latin America Mission (LAM) of Costa Rica.**

However, the most notable campaign in Honduran history took place in 1963-1964 during the **Evangelism-in-Depth program sponsored by the Latin America Mission.** Fourteen denominations and a total of 296 local congregations participated in this united evangelistic effort. The results of this year-long School of Evangelism speak for themselves. Nearly 15,000 Honduran believers met regularly in 2,500 prayer cells, asking God to bring revival to His Church and salvation to the unconverted. During month-long institutes, over 6,000 laymen were trained to equip and mobilize the Honduran Church as witnesses of the power of God to transform lives through the simple preaching of the Gospel. Over 75,000 homes were visited during several weeks of door-to-door visitation by trained workers. The results of these visits, together with the fruit of city-wide evangelistic crusades in outlying areas and larger crusades in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, were over 5,000 professions of faith. Evangelist Fernando Vangioni of Argentina preached to audiences of 1,000 or more during two weeks of final campaigns. Churches in San Pedro Sula reported their membership had doubled as a result of the crusades, while later reports indicated that at least 100 new congregations were formed during the Evangelism-in-Depth program in Honduras.

In the early 1970s, several large crusades were held by the **Luis Palau Evangelistic Team,** which gave favorable public exposure to the growing evangelical movement via radio and television programs of the crusades. This helped to improve the evangelical image in much the same way that Evangelism-in-Depth did almost 10 years previously. Palau held crusade in San Pedro Sula in 1970, followed by another in Tegucigalpa in 1971. However, the Palau meetings did not have broad-backing among evangelicals, particularly the Pentecostals, since Palau's local sponsor was the Central American Mission in honor of their 75 anniversary of ministry in Honduras. But even so, the accumulative attendance in these crusades was 80,000. About this same time, a crusade was held by "Hermano Pablo" (Paul Finkenbinder) under the sponsorship of the Assemblies of God, although other denominations were invited also.

In March 1980, the **Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship** sponsored a banquet for upper-class business and professional people in Tegucigalpa, with Astronaut Charles Duke as the guest speaker. This and similar meetings of the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship have resulted in many conversions among wealthy and influential Hondurans, attracted by this low-key style in the **Charismatic Renewal movement.** Consequently, dozens of small Bible study groups have been formed among those who attend Charismatic meetings of this nature, resulting in the conversion of hundreds of middle and upper-class Hondurans. These new converts do not usually feel comfortable in most conservative evangelical congregations, especially of the non-Pentecostal variety. Many attend neither Protestant nor Catholic churches, preferring rather to participate in home Bible studies led by either evangelical or Catholic leaders. Apparently, however, the Charismatic Renewal Movement in Honduras was not as strong as similar movements in Guatemala or Costa Rica in 1980.

6.6 LITERATURE, LITERACY AND FILMS

Since the literacy rate in Honduras is less than 50%, the potential for distribution of Christian literature is limited, unless literature workers begin with literacy materials and promotion to encourage people to read and write. This has been done by at least 10 different evangelical organizations in Honduras, including literacy classes via radio on HRVC. **Alfalit of Honduras** is

an agency that specializes in literacy and provides excellent materials and training to other organizations.

There are at least 13 Christian bookstores in Honduras, including five in the capital, four in La Ceiba, two in San Pedro Sula and one each in San Marcos, Ocotal; Seguatepeque; and Brus Laguna, Gracias a Dios.

Christian films are available from at least four evangelical groups, and the Pocket Testament League operates a sound track that is used for open-air evangelism and film showings.

6.7 SOCIAL CONCERN

At least a dozen denominations and service agencies are currently operating programs of this nature (Community / Rural Development). While some denominations have developed their own programs -- the Moravians, CAM, ERC, Adventists, Lutherans, Friends, Mennonites and Episcopals – while others work with **CEDEN (The Evangelical Committee for Relief and National Emergency)** and, more recently, with **World Vision International** to promote agricultural and community development for the benefit of fellow Hondurans.

Medicine and Public Health. The Evangelical hospital in Siguatepeque, operated by the CAM, is well known in Honduras. It was the only hospital run by Protestants in 1935, although at least six clinics had been established by the CAM, ERC, Methodists, Adventists and Southern Baptists. Today there are a dozen clinics, three public health programs and two hospitals (CAM and Adventist) under Protestant administration in Honduras.

Other Social Ministries. Christian camping has witnessed significant development in recent years. Fifteen or more campgrounds or camping programs have been established by Protestant groups, especially for children and youth. In addition to providing needed recreational programs and facilities, Christian camping provides many opportunities for personal and social development, counseling those with special problems, and spiritual growth.

Several specialized youth ministries are working with high school and university students. In Tegucigalpa, the Christian Love Brigades and Living Love Groups are operating drug rehabilitation programs. Campus Crusade (Alfa y Omega), InterVarsity, MINAMUNDO (the international student ministry sponsored by the Latin America Mission) and the Southern Baptists all have a special interest in university students. MINAMUNDO workers are assisting local churches in northern Honduras in a variety of youth programs from their center in El Progreso.

Some evangelical denominations operate nutrition centers, child-care centers and orphanages to help meet the special needs of children in Honduras. World Vision-Honduras is now developing special child-care programs among poor families. However, few centers have been established for the elderly by evangelical groups in Honduras.

6.8 GENERAL SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

CEDEN (The Evangelical Committee for Relief and National Emergency) is a broad-based organization that draws support from about 30 denominations and evangelical agencies in Honduras. Temporary relief committees had been formed by Evangelicals to aid refugees during the war with El Salvador in 1969, to assist in earthquake relief in Managua in 1972, and

to care for survivors of Hurricane Fife on the northern coast of Honduras in 1974. In response to these emergencies, as well as to growing social concerns among evangelicals, CEDEN was organized on a permanent basis. Its present programs include: agriculture and community development, well-digging, public health, leadership training, communications and audio-visuals. The organization of regional committees and offices has given CEDEN a strong grass-roots support among Evangelicals in San Pedro Sula, La Ceiba, Choluteca and San Marcos de Ocotepeque in addition to the Tegucigalpa-Comayagüela area.

Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF) entered in Honduras in 1958 to provide air services and support to existing Evangelical organizations. MAF operates bases in Siguatepeque, Ahuas and Tegucigalpa. Service is provided to about 70 small airfields in remote areas of Honduras, where low fares assist evangelicals in the work of the ministry. However, about half the total flying time is devoted to ambulance service. Presently, MAF operates four small planes and a helicopter in Honduras.

Although **World Vision International (WVI)**, based in Monrovia, California, is new to Honduras (1978-1979), this organization is now sponsoring about 25 projects throughout the country. Their child-care programs benefit about 3,000 children. The number of relief and development projects is growing. Cooperative efforts have been established with CEDEN, ALFALIT, and the Evangelical Alliance. Special attention is now being given to the growing problem of Salvadoran refugees that are fleeing across the border into Honduras to escape the violence and destruction of civil war in El Salvador. Refugee camps have been established close to the border to provide food, clothing, shelter and spiritual care for about 25,000 refugees during early 1981.

6.9 THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Apparently, formal theological education got off to a slow start in Honduras. In 1935, only two groups -- the Friends Mission in Tegucigalpa and the Evangelical and Reformed Church (ERC) in Santa Bárbara -- had established programs for training ministerial candidates. By 1960, Bible institutes had been established by the CAM, ERC, Assemblies of God, International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, World Gospel Mission and Southern Baptists. In 1978, there were eight programs of Theological Education by Extension (TEE), 15 Bible institutes, and at least one seminary-level program (operated by the Southern Baptists).

6.10 THE PROCADES STUDY OF HONDURAS

This national study was conducted by PROCADES between 1978 and 1982 with the support of the Honduran Bible Society and CEDEN. The author made the initial contacts with the Rev. Saul Gómez, director of the Honduran Bible Society, and Daniel Medina of CEDEN, who both agreed to provide logistical support for the national church growth survey. Later, the Rev. John Durkovic, who served on-loan from the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in Guatemala, coordinated this effort for PROCADES in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. Durkovic brought a team of interviewers from Guatemala to complete the interviews with denominational officials in 1979. Most of the interviewers trained and supervised by Durkovic were students at SETECA in Guatemala City; they included Carlos García Vásquez, David Suazo, José Luis Caballero and Elsa Ayala. See the Introduction to the Directory for more information about this important study.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I