

950606 Costa Rican Brethren HLH Pas

My being here was not a last-minute request or exactly a last hour, but by the nature of it being away Monday, I had twice as many phone calls, which meant that it was essentially equivalent to a small period of time to consider what might be most useful, and Mr. Ames did suggest that, at this time in the history of the work, it might be of some value to you to discuss some areas of the world, in this particular case Costa Rica, where the Church Administration International area, with the general information being given to me, Mr. Randall Dick suggested on behalf of the department that I should go to Costa Rica for this weekend, the festive occasion, be there for the Sabbath as well as for the day of Pentecost.

So I thought I would tell you a little bit about how one might judge the way things can go in a world such as ours, where different people behave differently, and the different nations as well as subgroups have different characteristics.

We're all human, but we're sometimes human in different ways, and these different ways lead to some unusual repetitions of good or bad behavior or weaknesses or strengths that other groups don't equally share in.

The same thing can be said with respect to individual human beings, or why some marriages are predictably more successful than others.

Some people are predictably more successful parents than others.

I was asked to go partly because Mr. Randall Dick was, in his mind, more concerned about being here for this extended weekend than going with me, and he thought someone else in addition to myself would be useful.

But as it turned out, he decided that perhaps I could go there alone.

And I think at the beginning he did not know that I had already been.

In 1983, to Costa Rica for the first half of the A Festival of Tabernacles, and then I went to Guatemala after that.

So I wanted to tell you a little bit about what is happening from even this 11 and years and let's say two-thirds time really goes by.

I've already found one person.

I'd like to know how many of you have ever been to Costa Rica in Central America.

There's only, all right, just the one.

Thank you.

Mr. and Mrs. Yabins, you will have to go there.

See me before the feet of tabernacles.

That's the real experience.

The reason I should pick on you is that it was unusual that in going there Randall Dick discovered that we have a daughter-in-law who's from Costa Rica.

And after having agreed that I should go and my wife, the tickets were already available for Mr. and Mrs. Randall Dick.

So in a sense, church administration had made available for both.

I decided to ask our daughter-in-law and son if they would allow us to have their grandchildren accompany us because our daughter-in-law is from Costa Rica.

Now as it turned out Randall Dick thought it was a great idea.

This is our expense.

It was the second time the expense.

It's not on church administration.

And it's about the same distance as to the east coast just slightly longer.

But he thought it was a very good idea and the fact remains it was even better than that.

I'd like to tell you a bit about what an experience like that might mean in terms of people you meet.

There are some surprising things.

If I had just been there or in any other part of Central America or South America for that matter, just my wife and I, even if we had been there before, it is not the same as bringing your grandchildren, two of them, who are half Costa Rican, half American and bilingual.

That makes a great deal of difference in terms of rapport.

We were originally two strangers in 1983.

My wife, not speaking Spanish, happily, a number of them, excuse me, did speak sufficient English that she was not wholly a field.

But let's say that in 1983, the country was defined as a developed third world agricultural nation.

Costa Rica is in this sense a third world country, but it is a developed, not a developing third world country, but it was agriculturally developed.

Now that didn't mean that it was not also gifted with an elite in commerce and trade and education, but it meant that its fundamental base was agriculture.

I would like to tell you a bit about the experience of the brethren over time as well as the state of affairs now, 1995, such a long time afterward, that's nearly 12 years.

When a country is agriculturally developed, as in this case it meant that foreigners actually owned much of the cattle lands, and in a sense much of the earnings of the country by export were also exported.

But on the other hand, that's the basis of a free market society.

In 1995, I saw an entirely different Costa Rica.

In nearly 12 years, the country has changed for me significantly.

They may have had, when you were there some 10 years before, a McDonald's, but it's much different from that now, as it was even different then in 1983 when we were there.

The country has moved ahead significantly.

And I think we have to recognize what that means for the economic standards of the brethren.

They are not afflicted with what we would call significant unemployment.

They are in many cases professional people.

They are middle class people.

They are educated people.

The Costa Rica has a high level of education.

Our son went to high school in the Sunland to Hunger area.

Thank you very much, Mr. Wells and staff, with a bit of water.

He became acquainted in high school with some brothers who were Spanish and English speaking.

They were from Costa Rica.

He also learned later that they had some sisters, one in particular, but we won't go into that further.

They were bilingual, Spanish and English speaking.

But they were more than that.

They had a goal of to be educated and some have become doctors or with master's degrees.

These are not the typical picture one has of Mexico, the Sombrero, the sleeping peasant under a large cactus, which of course is a fiction anyway.

There were goals in their minds.

If they took another language, it was French, so they were trilingual.

As it turned out, I think four of them now are quadrilingual.

That is, they already know German.

One sister lives in Germany.

One married a person from Austria-Hungary area, the doctor, who was a brother.

I'm telling you this because it's a mistake to think that everybody south of the border somehow lacks, merely because many people coming from Central America or Mexico don't seem to have the same, I didn't say all, but many don't have the same educational skills based on what you see on the street corner, where people are looking for work and waving to draw your attention to them.

You must admit they're looking for work, their goal oriented, however.

Costa Rica is more than that.

It is made up of people who are significantly, professionally trained.

And I would like to tell you a bit about what it means to live in a country and to be a part of a country which has standards that may be different from one's neighbor.

Sometimes there are strengths in these standards, sometimes weaknesses, and I'm quite prepared to tell it's both because the pastor there is a citizen of Mexico as well as his wife, and he senses certain attitudes that one will when you have a large and a populace and a comparatively strong Mexico.

And a small Costa Rica with a population probably just under three million versus Mexico's comparatively huge population in the world.

Costa Rica is the first country to recognize Israel's right to have Jerusalem as a capital.

That is a thought.

As the United States was the first to recognize the state of Israel, as Thailand, the land of the free, was one of the first countries to recognize the United States of America in 1782.

Thailand is the land of the free.

There is no country in Central America, in fact, I would say no country in Latin America with the same sense of democratic freedom as in Costa Rica.

Though it may strike you as strange, a country called the rich coast would not be made up of a lot of rich landlords, it nevertheless, despite its historic limitations not being a land of gold, turned out to be one of the richest lands by the nature of its own soil.

We could go back, and I'd like to just trace a little bit here, not to be historic in this sense, but to show that what people settle in an area does make a significant difference.

Costa Rica was settled by people of Spanish descent.

There are some blacks who have come into the country, mostly from neighboring areas where they were first brought to displace the Indians who couldn't stand the extreme work imposed upon them in mining for gold and silver in the New World.

Many of the Indians didn't have the same stamina as the black slaves that were brought by the Spanish, Portuguese, English, Dutch, and so forth, French.

While all these nations transformed the New World, Costa Rica was unusual in the sense that the number of Indian tribes was comparatively small.

It did not have the civilization of Mexico, Ecuador, or Peru.

It certainly didn't have that all the Indian population that Guatemala has, or the region of modern Paraguay.

Therefore, it was more European in orientation.

Now, there are some things that might surprise you.

Mexico, in times past, had a large black population to displace the Indians who were not able to handle the kind of work imposed on them.

But the black population in Mexico has essentially disappeared.

It has become a part of what it means to be a Mexican-American or a Mexican, depending on which side of our border one lives.

So Mexico has people who are fundamentally Indian, people who are fundamentally Spanish, or other Europeans, mixed population, Jews, of course, and modern groups, but has no significant black population in contrast to the number of black people who were brought to Mexico.

They simply have been absorbed into the population.

That is unique about Mexico in a way that you cannot say about Brazil, and you cannot say about Costa Rica.

Many of the blacks, however, that came to Costa Rica, came there and stayed in the area on the Caribbean side of the country, and essentially do not play the same significant role in society that other population groups do.

What it did mean, however, is that the number of blacks who came to the country were not as large in percentage as some areas, because there weren't that many Indians being displaced and there weren't that many minds, and many of the people who came from Spain were themselves quite capable of working the land.

Another unique thing that didn't occur there is that you did not have such a situation as happened in the Spanish Philippines, as does exist in Brazil and major parts of other areas of Latin America, huge landowners, a great landed gentry, on which the peasant worked.

Costa Rica, in fact, had far fewer, this is not a big country, El Salvador is even smaller, but the history of El Salvador is not like Costa Rica.

It's a history of unfortunate, conservative drifts that have led to the military crisis of the last 20 or more years.

The Costa Rica had, what we might say, a conservative group, but it simply had a larger group of liberal-minded people.

Conservatives tended to say the institutions should dominate the country, the state, the military, the judicial system, the church, should all be in the hands of responsible conservative people, and the country run essentially by institutions like that.

The liberals tended to represent a spirit of thinking similar to the cities of Europe as the Middle Ages drew on, and cities came to have rights and not merely landed gentry and lords.

So Costa Rica had a unique situation in which the scales were balanced in rather short order in the favor of people who were more liberal-minded, and it was simply a population percentage.

It didn't attract the gold seekers, people who could buy huge tracts of land.

It didn't attract the people who were there for sudden wealth.

Like California first attracted people who were looking for quick money.

If you want to know what I mean, people came to California to mine.

The Swiss and the Portuguese followed them and planted fruit trees and brought chickens and sold to the people who have gold, the apples and the eggs.

And so the Swiss and the Portuguese and the Italians and others came into the possession of the land, and the miners ate and spent their gold.

You get the picture of what can happen? Well, Costa Rica was not quite like that, but it was made up of the same kind of people who developed the land and developed the concept of trade.

And it is this spirit of working individually and recognizing the value of trading with other people that gradually developed, through political means, a situation where we now see it as one of the enlightened countries of the New World.

And out of all of Latin America, probably the most remarkably enlightened in terms of how they are able to handle their internal affairs.

Overall, there are people who do seek education.

They have had significant respect for the United States, as many other Latin American countries have had.

The idea that we're necessarily that divided is not true.

George Washington is a hero south of the border in many such countries.

There would be a mistake to think he wasn't.

Costa Rica got its independence as a result of having been told it was being granted it.

It didn't even know it until some time after it happened as a result of the events after the Napoleonic War.

Therefore they have no day to celebrate independence as we do due to some military adventure.

They did not have to war with Spain to become independent, as the American colonies did with Britain, and sometimes as some Spanish-speaking colonies had to do in breaking up the great areas of Latin America to become separate and independent states.

Mexico did try to include the whole of Central America, but failed to do so, the President of Mexico had already been removed from office at the time a battle was fought between Mexican Army units and the Costa Ricans in San Jose, the capital now, and the Costa Ricans won.

The battle didn't have to be fought because it had already been decided that the Mexican government would not hold the area.

There was first the development of the tobacco trade, and then coffee, and then gradually the development of agriculture in this century and significant contact with foreign countries as a result of that.

In 1982, we were already aware of events in Costa Rica because our son had married in the end of 1980, and regularly we had visitors in our home who were friends of the family who came up here.

In 1982, a number of our daughter's family and we participated, we sent them food because their country was a food-exporting country.

Does that make sense to you? Why did we send food to a food-exporting country? Because Costa Rica was the land of the free, and the people in Costa Rica didn't earn enough to be able to pay for the food they were producing but they could sell the food abroad for more money than they could make selling it at home.

And so the bulk of the food was sold abroad, and the people who were in short supply of money were actually going hungry in 1982.

Because in a free society, if you don't earn enough to buy your own food, it is exported because nobody is going to pay good money to produce the food and simply give it to you when they have to pay their workers when you can't afford to pay them.

So the owners were free to sell their food abroad.

And we had to have quantities of food to take care of the known relatives and friends, to take food back to the country.

They had in fact to go into the forest to pick berries and leaves and make tea and find fruits.

Now they didn't starve to death, but it was a time of hunger in a free society.

That's an unusual experience.

But a people that sought a solution in their own land, they didn't start to create riots in the streets and overthrow the government.

This was not a Cuba, it was not a Nicaragua or an El Salvador.

Now I was asked by church administration to go there because this was one of the major areas where we have a church, and we want to be sure that we don't have problems that have replicated themselves in some other countries of Latin America.

Where the history of the nation has not been a history of free-minded people.

You have had military dictatorships, and in many areas where military dictatorships have been the state of mind of the country, it almost seems to reflect even what can happen in the state of mind of some people that have been called to participate as church members in this work.

So having got there, I shared the Sabbath primarily with the pastor who gave the sermon on the Sabbath I did on Pentecost the next day.

But the Costa Ricans told me something that I didn't have to inquire about.

They said we do not think like some of the other countries where unfortunately the church has been so sundered that most of the brethren have been taken away.

Chile, certainly significant part of Guatemala, Peru, San Salvador, these are all countries of historic military dictatorships.

Costa Rica hasn't had it.

The brethren said something, not just one person, several commented and supported it.

You should know that we don't think like other people in Latin America or in Central America.

Well I heard that once before in another interesting country called Hungary, where there were Russians and officers uniforms, and while there in 1966 they told us plainly in English or German whichever we chose to speak to the Hungarians in, they told us we are a part of the communist system and we don't think like they do.

Now whether the Russians understood it, the Russians knew right well when the Hungarians were talking with us they had reason to.

And they were not a bash to talk to us with the Russian military right around them.

The Czechs would not have done that.

Anyway not everybody does think like another person and there are societies that don't and I think that I want to take this evening because I have been there to let you also realize why in the New Testament there are some congregations some of which didn't think like others.

The whole region called Galatia had a different response to Paul's message.

Others were much more stable.

There were congregations that Paul said were more noble.

They proved things to themselves that they could stand in the judgment and give a reason.

And there are others that simply followed a charismatic leader.

Paul seemed to make sense so we'll go with Paul.

When he was gone they went with somebody else.

I'm of Cephas, I'm of Barnabas, I'm of Apollos or I'm of Christ.

And not everybody does that.

But it was interesting that the brethren should tell me that one of the reasons they're with us is that they think for themselves.

Now maybe two or three have decided for personal reasons and I don't need to go further than to say there were personal reasons that they may or may not choose to continue.

Financial personal marital reasons.

So we leave it at that, that category that afflicts any area of the world.

And in terms of looking into this book we call the Bible.

And thinking of what life means, these people think for themselves.

And they don't just wander a field, they talk to each other, they are a church not divided let's say into two groups one of which hardly speaks to the other.

We have that problem in some of our congregations in this country.

Not many that I can name one that's sad but it can happen and it usually doesn't happen over doctrine, it's personalities, people who are offended with someone else.

We had a daughter in one case who came to a congregation.

She and her husband talked with a man who was friendly and before they really got to the other side of the hall they were already seen as having joined that side.

And they never heard that there were two groups at all there.

But just because you talk to somebody whom the others took as not one of them you can see what can happen locally.

Well it can happen on a national basis this kind of thing.

That's what went wrong with Japan and Germany and Italy and some other countries of Europe and what had been wrong with Russia during this period of lengthy crisis.

Anyway, when we look at the Bible accounts we can begin to see why Paul says some things about some people that he does and he doesn't say the same things about other people so you want to ask why it happens that he writes to the Galatians what he does, why does he write to the Corinthians what he does, why does he write something different to another group like the Philippians.

There are some people who were affected by how much money they wanted to give and others who were extra generous were not even asked.

In 1982, so I am back in 1995 and I must say I hardly recognized what I would call the external character of the capital and the nearby communities.

It is a prosperous country far beyond what I would have expected in these last nearly twelve years.

They say they don't see the difference.

I told them you have seen it but you haven't realized it because you see it every day, every week, every month, every year.

I see the accumulated effect.

I can say the same thing for Thailand is completely unrecognizable whereas San Jose de Costa Rica is not.

But it is significantly different.

Many different signs that reflect the impact of foreign investments.

No I didn't see Armenian signs but I saw them in Chinese, the Chinese script.

And then there was the other most common language had such words as Kentucky Fried Chicken.

You know what I mean.

You had a situation where it was astonishing the number of English words of American origin.

Thank you Mr. Wells.

The impact of English is now significant in the country.

But it is not the only country that is penetrated.

With the Chinese community without a question the Indian community from India is there.

The script of any of the languages of India you would see in the restaurant business.

English is there in general.

Certainly you would have the impact also of significant imports from Mexico.

But the country is sensitive to its neighbors.

Our minister who has an Italian surname Nairi but he is a Mexican citizen as is his wife they sensed that there are certain sensitivities for good or bad.

It's a country that has left the blacks as not full first class citizens Costa Rica hasn't.

It also is sensitive not to have too many from Nicaragua or Mexico come into the country.

Your near neighbors just like we are sensitive as a nation to what's happening in our southern borders or Mexico is sensitive to how many Americans invest in Baja California.

I mean these things occur across borders these are realities.

But the Costa Ricans go out of their way to encourage Anglo Americans to invest and to trade and to visit.

And they have gone out of the way to have interestingly relations with the state of Israel.

These are unusual situations that I think you should recognize just as Thailand has had unusual relations in all the countries of Southeast Asia.

And these tend to reflect what one might see a truly democratic society with limitations as all humans have limitations sense that in the Arab world the state of Israel is unique.

It is a part of the greater Arab world but it's not an Arab country in one sense but it's still part of that region.

And they have very clearly identified with what that country has experienced just as Costa Rica has to have an awareness of its neighbors interest since Costa Rica has no army.

No country quite like it.

They have a police force.

They could never win a major war by any modern standards so it is a waste of time to think that you need to have something to protect you which can never do it in the long run.

They might as well do it by being unaggressive to their neighbors and keeping some at further arms length than others.

It does place a certain strain on the neary's to realize that being Mexican speaking Spanish they're not Costa Ricans speaking Spanish.

Those are some things you learn and they're handling it very well.

I think our brethren understand it and are very pleased but they have to realize it's not quite like being a person from Costa Rica.

There are little sensitivities you notice and the foreigner would notice it in a way that perhaps the locals would not know because they take certain cultural things for granted.

A person, any member who is a professional person is simply not one who can participate if he is not a Costa Rican citizen.

He may come from Honduras, he may come from Nicaragua, he cannot participate in the equivalent of our social security system.

It simply isn't based on that for foreigners.

So I want to tell you there are strengths and weaknesses in a country.

Our brethren who are from Colombia, we have refugees from Colombia in Costa Rica.

We have people who freely came from Colombia to Costa Rica.

We have people who were refugees from Nicaragua, people who freely come from Honduras and those who have been refugees and forced to come are not necessarily beyond the level of what we would call the lower class economically even though they may be professionally trained people because there is not a full equality.

But there isn't any in this country, let's not kid ourselves.

We have difficulties there dealing with the problem too.

Anyway, the brethren were very pleased to see that my wife and I not only had a daughter in law but two grandchildren and the younger one, a girl who was interested in piano, made quite a hit.

He asked either the minister or somebody if she could pull up a chair in front of, you know, the piano was up here and the people were there if she could pull up a chair and watch him play the piano.

And they said yes, so she sat up there with him, quite unembarrassed, which was nice.

It would not have been me at that age but, you know, she was comfortable in both languages, could understand what was being said and actually then when the services were over she went to the piano and played on it.

Though she did look at the English hymnal whereas her little older brother read and sang out of the Spanish hymnal.

But to brethren identify quickly if you identify with them, I would never have had the same impact if I had been sent to any other Latin American country and it is important that either you identify linguistically or you identify in some way with those people.

Your impact is much greater than if you simply come as a tourist.

This is why some of us, Mr. Halford, Mr. Randall Dick and others who have been in other areas, certainly Mr. Locke, if you can identify with what other countries stand for it makes a great deal of difference.

We're going to encourage them to be more responsible for making the kind of decisions in terms of spreading the word of God and doing it effectively on the basis of their economic resources.

We can no longer as a work or as the United States export our level of standard of living and expect those people to support our offices abroad at the level that we operate our offices here.

In fact, we haven't been able to, neither has the federal government, things are changing.

There was a man who did say, be prepared to greatly reduce your standard of living, which can be achieved two ways, increasing your income or decreasing your expenses.

And maybe sometimes both if you were under some economic stress.

But that time is here.

It's here for the work, it's here for the government of the United States.

And it is there as well as it is elsewhere.

And Mr. Halford is doing his part to assist on his assignments from church administration international to help the brethren in these areas to be effective to take the best ideas from the West, from America, but to know when those ideas are not economically feasible.

Now Paul, whether we like it or not, did the same thing.

He didn't say, I go as a Jew to a Jew and I go to the Greek as a Jew.

What he meant is that he set up the church in the Greek world in a way that it could survive in Greece, not as some alien transplant in a way it would always be thought of as being done in the Jewish way.

In terms of our literature, we don't have to print things in the same way we do here.

And we've learned this for a long time in Zimbabwe.

We produce something that is fit for Zimbabwe and it is like other things printed in that country.

And if they can't afford the plain truth as we've printed here, they simply should print something else.

And finally you go to black and white.

For us to try to seek out inexpensive paper would cost more than the cheap, more expensive paper because that's what everybody else is using.

We're using better quality and the quantity of the better quality cuts the cost.

So it would be foolish for us to try to save money by using cheap paper whose cost goes up and up because it couldn't operate on our presses.

So you understand that sometimes we have to live at a certain level because that's the most effective.

That's where this country now is.

And the same way we need to have the brethren and I discuss this at some length with them.

We are at that place where they're going to become more and more responsible for knowing how to save money and do the work and make it effective without having to depend needlessly on foreign subsidies because that can't go on.

That's like an addiction.

The Seventh-day Adventists have learned this.

All businesses finally learn it.

And the brethren do show that they have a level that is quite commensurate with the standards of Christ.

The country is at a level that we shouldn't and no one needs to be ashamed of as distinct from misery and poverty.

You want to think a little bit about the New Testament.

I'd like to suggest in this connection that we recognize that when Paul spoke to Titus he was speaking to a Greek.

When he wrote to Timothy he was speaking to a half Greek whose father was a Jew.

And therefore, since he worked with the Jewish community in a way that Titus would not, Timothy had to be circumcised because that was the standard for the Jewish community.

It had nothing to do with salvation.

It had to do with the fact that you were Abraham, Abrahamic and heirs of Abraham and that marked you out physically.

Didn't make you saved.

But what is important when Paul talks to Timothy? He also talks to Titus, the same subjects, you know, deacons, deaconesses, the men and the women, the bishops, elders.

What he is saying is you choose out responsible people and have them ordained to take care of the needs of the local churches.

That is, you need to have leadership.

And so we are seeking to have that kind of leadership both here, since we're dealing with a corporate entity now, not a local church or the nation, we're dealing with the need of a corporate entity to do business there and Costa Rica does not require it, that everybody has to be a Costa Rican.

But it is important that they now know that they become to an extent responsible for approving the recommendations from here and making recommendations to church administration and therefore to Mr.

Tkach for any locals.

And I think the church is growing.

They even asked the question, well, what if we would say no to someone, that this is not the person we think for the job? Well, I said, look, if that's your job to say yes or no, don't say yes if you don't think yourself.

Because we have an annual meeting that takes place there, as in many others, we have the college or the university meeting, we have to make decisions.

Husbands and wives make decisions, business people make decisions, when this becomes politics and this is not what we want, but when it comes to making good judgment.

And if they make good judgment, fine.

And if we have overlooked something, we want them to let us know.

And as I said, well, if there is somebody we would recommend it and you think this would be a serious mistake, we want to know why.

And if we have to, we'll make another recommendation.

I'm speaking on behalf of church administration, not that I'm a part of it, but that's the way it should be done.

And we want all the areas around the world to be sure that things have been done legally and in order and acceptable.

And in that sense, Mr. Tkach is giving new responsibilities to see that the work gets done locally, as he wishes the local churches in this country now to take on more responsibility.

Where the ministry should improve the training and guidance of people so we can have open houses, and by the way, the concept of an open house is very significant in Latin America or public lectures far more than it has been in this country.

It's a form of learning and if I may stoop to say so, it's also a form of entertainment.

You know, we used to listen to people, people listen to Herbert Armstrong.

They didn't have television and radio was yet unique in their general experience.

And so many people listened to religious speakers.

And sometimes they took it quite seriously.

It was let's say an opportunity, it was a social experience.

It wasn't just careless entertainment, but it filled out and rounded out one's life when you heard people who came through the community in the 1930s.

And then of course, the war changed all that.

So I think it's good for you to know that as we're asking the churches locally here, we're expecting the brethren worldwide to participate more in these responsibilities.

May I say that if any of you at any time are interested in Central America, right now we simply have no way that we could recommend in certain Central American countries that you should go to, at this point I would say Costa Rica would be well worth your consideration.

You would not feel that different.

You would be made to feel comfortable.

You would know you're a guest.

But you would be treated.

I was even surprised how I was treated when I left the country.

The man in the sense who gave the final check to the passport thanked us for having come.

I can tell you of another country where I was there just overnight and my local host got me to the airport late.

And when I made the steps for the ticket finalization and the passport and agricultural inspection, I was told I was late.

You should have been here in time.

It was too late.

You'll have to wait till the next plane.

And I went back and asked the minister and he talked things over and it was quite clear the plane I was to go on hadn't even arrived yet.

Do I want to go back to a country like that? Well if God sends me that's up to him.

But that is not the way to welcome strangers.

That is not the way one is welcomed in Fiji.

But that the way that it should be is the way I felt.

I mean it was really something.

You've never been into a country like Costa Rica where after you get off the plane, you know in America one of the first things you do is line up for the passport inspection soon as you land.

Well we landed in Costa Rica and we wandered and wandered from area one dining area to another before we even got to where the passports were.

I was wondering if I was lost.

But I did remember the general layout.

But one was so free that you could in fact function before you even got to the place where you were officially entering.

That is to speak of a truly free society.

To some extent here when you leave but this was upon entry which was really surprising and the courtesies paid upon leaving was something to be remembered.

I wanted to draw your attention to a book that may or may not be in a public library but I did look for something that might be of help for any of you in terms of your own spiritual education in terms of going to a festival.

This one is called Costa Rica.

It has an unusual title, The Last Country the Gods Made.

Because geologically it is a relatively recent region of the world.

It is photography by Kimberly Parsons.

No country as small as Costa Rica shares its breadth of landscape.

A string of volcanic mountain ranges divides the country north to south.

Dry winds sweep the Pacific plains, bakes infertile soil.

Just over the mountains and the Caribbean side rain falls so constantly that marshy waterways provide only means of travel.

High within the mountains lie two cool fertile valleys surrounded by active volcanoes and drained by wild, unnavigable rivers.

Costa Rica has its capital in one of the valleys, San Jose.

Costa Rica boasts a human variety, five tribes of indigenous Indians, Spanish colonists, Jamaican blacks, Chinese, Italians, and one of the largest populations of expatriate Americans outside Europe.

And there were early Jewish colonies that are not mentioned here, colonists.

This diversity makes Costa Rica a model society in Central America.

Surrounded by militant neighbors, Costa Rica has no army in a region famous for dogmatic tyrants.

It runs a genuine participatory democracy.

Now that isn't the only form that God permits.

They're all permitted.

And it has its weaknesses, as Winston Churchill said, it's the worst form of government except for any other.

Yet its population supports a state dedicated to social welfare, education, and ecological conservation.

It has a national forest larger than any other of red, sorry, of rare woods.

No country has anything equal to it.

We have huge regions, but none with the same diversity, the different quantities of rare and remarkable trees and rare woods that really need to be introduced in other areas of the world.

I have not been in the most primary forest.

I have been in the dry forest, Guanacosta in the northwest.

It is a remarkable area.

If you've ever been in a, this was the dry, subtropical or subtropical rainforest where we were in 1983.

It's a real experience.

But the other is something that has captured the attention of the whole world's interest in ecology.

Kimberly Parsons first came to the country in 1992 and has produced a remarkable work in connection with two others who are award-winning journalists.

The woman who wrote this, who provided the photographs for this book and much of the details gave a lecture at the shop from which I took this.

And it kept the guests who were invited, I guess who were on their mailing list, spellbound.

And I thought that I should bring it to your attention in case it's not an inexpensive work.

That's why I'm suggesting the library might have it.

I don't know where it is or you might inquire if a library would.

I'd like to recommend, as we always have, that there are certain areas of the world that are worth considering in terms of your own education and in terms of supporting brethren.

You'd be surprised to what extent brethren in these other parts of the world welcome someone from the U.S. which gives them a sense of recognition.

That is that they haven't been forgotten because when you're way off in Vanuatu, when you are off in the Solomon Islands or in Tonga and don't have any contact except by occasional mail once a month with headquarters or with one regional office, they wonder, you know, to what extent are we remembered? Are we known? And I would like to take this opportunity that Mr. Ames has provided to encourage you to give some serious thought to something that is no further east than the east coast of the United States.

But in this case, it's down southeast.

And it would certainly be an experience, I would say a third of the people in the church have some adequate knowledge of English and give them a chance to speak English, some of them really do remarkably well.

So before we close, and I'll be happy to discuss some things with you, if you have any personal questions, I'd like you to give consideration to some of the experiences that I addressed, both in the Old Testament and the New, something you can read from week to week.

I pointed up that when Moses was told that he should have others share the load, Moses asked the people to select a certain number and he would set them apart for the service of the Lord, who had the character and the responsibility that goes with that to execute the work.

There are some people who lack the ability to carry something out, that is, they can wilt and you don't want people who just wilt, you can be nice, you can be full of love and mercy and all these things, but you can also run headlong into people who will take advantage of you and you also have to have the ability to lead.

But Moses couldn't decide this.

Now the interesting thing you see is that he suggested that they, the tribes themselves, search out responsible people and that they should be ordained to the office of sharing the load that Moses had.

The Apostles said much later, well, choose you out seven to take care of the widows of the Greek-speaking Jews because they simply didn't have the same efficient management of their people as the Aramaic-speaking Jews right there in the city of Jerusalem had.

And that was a responsibility.

Now it isn't always something that's perfect.

One of the men was Nicholas and whether you say it is proved or not, we do recognize that the Nicolaitans in tradition, in Greek tradition, Latin tradition, are those who followed the lead of a man named Nicholas and it has been tradition.

That's all.

It goes back so early, it is simply tradition, but already was in the first century because it's recognized in the book of Revelation as something that had already occurred and that is that the man who led some of the brethren astray was Nicholas, one of the seven deacons.

I mention it because we've had some problems, as you well know, around the world, especially in the U.S. and in Latin America.

The decision isn't always perfect, but remember we make decisions in life.

You can make right decisions and in the end make the wrong one that may prove very costly.

Or you can make a whole series of wrong ones and come to your senses before the end of life and it's different like King Manasseh did.

Solomon was like the first one, Manasseh was like the last one.

We can't decide what somebody else will choose to do, but we have to make wise choices on the basis of his track record.

Some of you here have a long track record, Cameron Funt, for example, and the Abens, whom I have known, and one of the Miller brothers, and I don't have to go around because I don't remember whether some of you are longer yet or not, but that's irrelevant.

There's a track record and we have to base it on that, and the Greek-speaking Jews made recommendations and the apostles examined those recommendations and made it official.

So we have in the Bible responsibilities that perhaps we haven't seen, and it becomes apparent even in recommendations in our local churches where we now have to give consideration in some cases to people who should be made deacons or elders or ministers as a result of what's happened locally.

We've done it here, but we've never quite seen it in connection with the various duties in both Old and New Testament and our duties with respect to Mr. Tkach's concerns, with respect to the importance of the boards to represent the different branches of the work in different countries.

I'm on the board for Zaire.

Someday I may want to go there, and I should inquire since I'm on the board.

I'm on the board in Britain, and I'm not on any board here in this country.

And then we have people locally.

We are being given new responsibilities.

The time may come when the kind of international capacity to manage everything from Pasadena will cease to be possible physically and financially, and where we will have to do many things locally because we can no longer afford a radio or a television program or publishing the magazine.

In many countries we have to rely on local public speaking.

We have to rely on inviting people.

I say, how are we making progress in Costa Rica? Well, the answer is people invite other people to church.

I met at least three people who were relatively new who had never seen me before.

Relatively new, as distinct from older members who might have come in after my wife and I were there in 1983.

But this is a responsibility that Mr. Tkach is placing on the church.

And Randall Dick told me that one of the things I needed to mention was that we're placing a certain confidence in them to make the right decisions and any good recommendations because more and more is going to depend upon how the local church supports the ministry and how they work together and how we concern ourselves with them through prayer and vice versa, how they concern themselves with respect to loyalty.

It isn't a question we all have to agree on every point, and if we disagree on one we blow out.

I keep reminding people of the importance of knowing that the church should not be divided.

The church is to be the bride of Christ.

If they're going to be unable to work together now, what do you think it's going to be like in the resurrection? I think we better ask the question.

If we can't work together now, what's going to happen to change things in the resurrection? You can be spirit, but are you going to be spirit if you can't get along and work with one another now and know how? Husbands and wives must know how to work with each other.

They don't have to agree a hundred percent, but they should agree not to be disagreeable.

I shouldn't pick on people, but sometimes I like to.

I think Mrs. Yebens is one of the most agreeable sort of persons I know.

You probably thought I was going to pick on her anyway because now if you want to know whether I know what I'm talking about, ask Mrs. Yebens.

But she's forthright.

She would tell me if she thinks I'm wrong.

Those things can happen, you know, and it is important that I know how she thinks.

Then we know how to work with one another as a team.

Husbands and wives need to be able to do that.

Then you can say that you can be a member of the church or the bride of Christ, the body of Christ, and be there in the resurrection, but we've been going through an experience where we do have the serious question of people not knowing how to work with others and to know how to handle differences.

I tell a little story.

I met Mr. Armstrong in 1947.

He was in his car.

He had driven up.

I was already here that day.

First time I was on the property.

Within seconds, I knew he wasn't perfect.

I've told some of you, if you remember, and people begin to ask, how did they know? How did he know? Well, it wasn't that everybody is not yet perfect.

That was not the issue.

He was overweight.

That's how I knew he wasn't perfect.

But did that mean that I shouldn't listen to him anymore? In fact, later I used one of those overweight pictures because I still thought it had dignity and he scolded me for it.

I should have used one that didn't show it so.

Later on, he lost some of that weight.

The fact remains that I was able, for some 39, 38 to 39 years more, to work as a part of a team over which he was captain on earth.

I think one of the great tragedies is that we have people who have proved that they can't do that.

One of the most important things is to prove what you can do even when you don't see eye to eye.

Our Costa Rican brethren are quite candid to say that they don't all see eye to eye.

They made no issue of it, but it was obvious they had different points of views.

But they never made it an issue.

And that was the most wonderful thing to experience.

They were all there.

They learned how to work through those problems and work with one another.

Now, it isn't always easy because sometimes there are serious marital problems and they exist down there.

It's not a country whose culture, maritely, I can approve, where daughters are protected against someone else's sons while you pay no attention to your own.

That's wrong.

That's one reason we happen to have a good daughter-in-law.

But the other side of the coin is not good.

So brethren, at the festival coming this autumn, wherever you will be, it is very important that you learn and you spread the word of your example.

Which is that we need to learn how to work as a team.

The Jews and the Greeks needed to learn how to work as one team, even with the differences that they had culturally.

We have to do the same thing.

And it is not good if, with a first adversity, you give up and run away from your responsibility.

But we have a lot of people who have decided that, quote, they can't take it.

It isn't a question of who's right or who's wrong.

That's not what I'm raising as a question.

Because even in the family, there will be differences of points of view.

It's a question of how you learn to work them out.

I want to be plain here.

I think it's a good example.

I've heard of cases where a minister has said, quite contrary to what Mr. Guy Ames and Mr.

Andrus have said, he said, now, if you don't go along with what the church is teaching in all points, you're a Judaizer, you're an Old Testament Christian, and he ends up by saying, why don't you just leave and let us alone? Now, that's not what we're told in our congregation here, but that can happen.

That's not what church administration wants.

The man who told that to me, I answered him, and I said, you know what, I would have said, I would have gone up to him in private.

I would have said, what you called me today was a Judaizer, an Old Testament Christian and you told me that I ought to get out and let you alone.

I'm not going to do it.

I'm going to be back here next week.

Now that's what you have to face.

You don't want to run away from yourself, but say it politely, say it with a smile.

Maybe if need be, invite the minister over Wednesday.

Have some goat meat and whatever good vegetables.

There are ways of bridging the gap and helping us realize that if we think, you know, we're all going to be there in the resurrection, why aren't we all here now working together to make it a bigger and a better work? That's the issue.

And I think Costa Rica illustrates a point, but there are people south of the border despite tragedies in some places who have shown that is what their spirit is and I'm very glad to be able to report how successful they have been.