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## THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN FLORIDA DURING THE CIVIL WAR

by JOSEPH D. CUSHMAN, JR.

AS THE CIVIL WAR approached, the Episcopal Church in Florida found herself for the first time since the opening of the territory in a position of stability. She had weathered the hardships and uncertainties of the territorial period; her older parishes had become self-supporting congregations, and were embarking on vigorous parochial and educational projects; and a new group of lively missions was springing up in towns like Fernandina, Ocala, and Palatka, and in agricultural villages like Waukeena and Milton. The Diocese of Florida, which had been bishopless for thirteen years after its organization in 1838, had enjoyed the episcopal ministrations of its own diocesan since 1851, and as a sign of financial stability, the diocesan enjoyed a stipend which was paid with a degree of regularity that would have seemed strange to him five years before.

The territory of the Diocese of Florida embraced the whole state and contained 14 congregations:

Trinity, Apalachicola  
St. Peter's, Fernandina  
St. John's, Jacksonville  
St. Paul's, Key West  
St. Luke's, Marianna  
Christ Church, Monticello  
Grace Church, Ocala  
St. Mark's, Palatka

Christ Church, Pensacola  
St. Paul's, Quincy  
Trinity, St. Augustine  
St. John's, Tallahassee  
St. Philip's, Waukeena  
St. John's, Warrington  
Trinity, Bel-Air (a  
summer chapel of St. John's,  
Tallahassee).

The year 1861 found twelve clergymen serving these congregations, seventy-six Sunday School teachers, and 680 pupils.<sup>2</sup> Much interest in secondary education was manifested throughout the diocese, and several of the larger parishes had parochial academies. Trinity Parish in St. Augustine not only operated a parish academy "for both sexes" that boasted thirty to forty

1. Diocese of Florida, *The Journal of the Proceedings of the Annual Convention, 1861, of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the State of Florida* (Jacksonville: C. Drew, 1861), pp. 3-4. Cited hereafter as the *Diocesan Journal*.
2. Edgar Legare Pennington, "The Episcopal Church in Florida, 1763-1892," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, VII (March, 1938), 45.

scholars, but it possessed a library of some two hundred volumes.<sup>3</sup> The Rev. Dr. John Jackson Scott, the energetic rector of Christ Church, Pensacola, had long been working with education in his parish. On the eve of the war, his academy numbered twenty students, had a newly purchased schoolhouse, and a private endowment of five hundred dollars.<sup>4</sup> Enrollment at the newly established St. John's School in Jacksonville in 1860 was thirty students, and the rector expected a large increase the coming fall. The curate at St. John's Church, Tallahassee, served as headmaster of the Tallahassee Female Academy during the pre-war years.<sup>5</sup>

The average parson served a congregation of some 75 to 100 communicants, an approximately equal number of non-members, and the Negro servants who were attached to each household. He usually served as principal of his parish academy if he had one. In the commercial towns like Jacksonville, Pensacola, or Key West, the salaries of the rectors varied from \$600 to \$900 per year. In the smaller plantation communities such as Marianna and Monticello, the cleric generally received around \$250. St. John's, Tallahassee, was the exception. In this center of the planter aristocracy the rector received a salary of \$2,000 per year and oft-times had a curate to assist him.<sup>6</sup>

The first bishop of the diocese was the Rt. Rev. Francis Huger Rutledge, a mild, scholarly, and devoted clergyman, who came from South Carolina to St. Augustine as a mission priest in 1840.<sup>7</sup> He was educated at Yale and General Theological Seminary in New York. He was ordained deacon in 1823, priest in 1825, and was consecrated Bishop of Florida in 1851 after a period of some six years as rector of St. John's in Tallahassee.<sup>8</sup> The duties of the bishop were many. In addition to his episcopal functions, Rutledge served as rector of St. John's Parish for most of his episcopate. Much of his time was taken up by travel. The *Journal* of 1853, for instance, records Bishop Rutledge baptizing, confirming, and preaching in Tallahassee, Quincy, Apalachicola, Jacksonville, Pensacola, and Warrington. In addition to

3. *Diocesan Journal*, 1860, pp. 19-20.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

5. *Ibid.*, 1853, p. 14.

6. *Ibid.*, 1854, p. 40.

7. *St. Augustine Examiner*, February 20, 1869.

8. *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, XIII, 501.

these visitations, the bishop made a trip to South Carolina and traveled by steamboat from Apalachicola to Columbus, Georgia.<sup>9</sup>

As the secession movement gathered momentum, the clergy and laity of the Diocese of Florida generally enthusiastically supported the disruption of the union. Bishop Rutledge remained quiet for a time, but he did not follow the example of his Rt. Rev. Brother, Bishop Otey of Tennessee, who branded the secession of South Carolina as a "criminal action,"<sup>10</sup> and pontifically ordered his clergy to "let their moderation be known to all men . . . to study to be quiet and to mind their own business."<sup>11</sup> Bishop Rutledge, speaking gravely as a successor of the apostles, could not "contemplate the dismemberment of the Union without the deepest regret,"<sup>12</sup> but when he spoke as a transplanted South Carolinian, he could contemplate secession with such unrestrained enthusiasm that he offered the state of Florida the sum of \$500 "whenever by ordinance she shall be declared an independent republic."<sup>13</sup> On another occasion, Bishop Rutledge informed Edmund Ruffin, the old Virginia fire-eater who had come to Tallahassee to see Florida secede, that "he [Rutledge] had himself already seceded with his native state, and in advance of Florida."<sup>14</sup> Ruffin stated in his diary that he was highly pleased with the venerable old prelate's "ardent and active patriotic sentiments."<sup>15</sup>

There were several reasons for the bishop's strong secession proclivities. He was a native of South Carolina and the descendant of a family that had rendered much service to that commonwealth. It was natural that he should want Florida to stand with his native state. Bishop Rutledge was also under the influence of his old friend and Yale contemporary, John Beard, the ardent

9. *Diocesan Journal*, 1853, pp. 8-14.

10. James W. Silver, *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: Confederate Publishing Co., Inc., 1957), p. 21.

11. Joseph Blount Cheshire, *The Church in the Confederate States* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912), p. 12.

12. *Ibid.*

13. State of Florida, *Journal of the Proceedings of the Convention of the People of Florida*, 1861 (Tallahassee: Office of the Floridian and Journal, 1861), p. 22.

14. Edmund Ruffin, "Edmund Ruffin's Account of the Florida Secession Convention, 1861," ed. Dorothy Dodd, *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XII (October, 1933), 69.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

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Florida secessionist leader.<sup>16</sup> Then too, the bishop owned a number of house servants<sup>17</sup> and probably a large number of slaves from inherited holdings in South Carolina.

In order to bring the various dioceses of the South into some form of national ecclesiastical unity, a convention was assembled in Montgomery, Alabama, on July 3, 1861. Bishop Rutledge, John Beard, and George Fairbanks represented the Diocese of Florida,<sup>18</sup> but delegates from several southern dioceses could not attend. All important action was tabled until the adjourned convention could reassemble in Columbia, South Carolina. At that time the Church in the Confederate States "was formally organized, and the necessary changes were made in the liturgy and canons."<sup>19</sup> It was ironic that conditions of war prevented a diocesan meeting until December, 1863, so that the ratification came two years later and several months after the eventual Southern defeat was obvious.<sup>20</sup>

As the military forces of the State of Florida began to take possession of the various United States government installations, resistance was offered at only two places—Fort Taylor in Key West and Fort Pickens in Pensacola. It was in Pensacola that the first action took place.<sup>21</sup> Not long after General Bragg assumed command of the Confederate forces, the Rev. John Jackson Scott, rector of Christ Church, offered his services to the general and was appointed a Confederate chaplain.<sup>22</sup> In this position, Dr. Scott buried several casualties who "were killed in action . . . with the Yankees on the Island of Santa Rosa."<sup>23</sup> He was on active duty during the hostilities at Pensacola, but remained with his family and flock when Confederate forces evacuated Pensacola in favor of Mobile.<sup>24</sup> Scott was the only clergyman in the diocese who saw service in the Confederate Army.<sup>25</sup>

16. George R. Fairbanks, "Early Churchmen of Florida," *Historical Papers and Semi-Centennial Journal of the Church in Florida*, 1888 (Jacksonville: Church Publishing Co., 1889), pp. 8-9.

17. See Vestry records, St. John's Church, Tallahassee.

18. *Diocesan Journal*, 1867, p. 9.

19. Cheshire, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42.

20. *Diocesan Journal*, 1867, pp. 18-19.

21. Caroline Mays Brevard, *A History of Florida*, 2 vols. (DeLand, Florida: Florida Historical Society, 1925), II, 58-65.

22. *Diocesan Journal*, 1861, p. 15.

23. Parish Register, Christ Church, Pensacola, II, 172.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 173.

25. Cheshire, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

In March, 1862, Confederate forces evacuated Fernandina, Jacksonville, and St. Augustine, and the majority of the inhabitants of these towns took refuge in the inland communities.<sup>26</sup> The Episcopal congregations of middle Florida increased to an amazing extent. St. John's, Tallahassee, received forty-one new communicants who were "added by removal from other places." Christ Church, Monticello, increased by seventeen and reported building a new chapel at Aucilla, some miles away to accommodate the new families there. A large group of churchmen settled in towns which had no church buildings—thirty in Madison and twenty-seven in Lake City. These figures do not include servants or children who were not counted as communicants, but who none the less increased the inland congregations. Thus, while the activities of the Church practically ceased in the coastal towns, she doubled her activities in the interior to minister to her established flocks and the added influx of refugees.<sup>27</sup>

The Church suffered a long succession of disasters during the war. St. John's Church in Warrington, which was completed in 1860 and stood ready for consecration at the bishop's next visit, was the first ecclesiastical casualty of the war. The church stood in an exposed position in the line of fire between Fort Pickens and the Confederate fortifications at Warrington. The steeple was struck by a shell during the first bombardment of November 22, 1861, and caught fire. In a short time the fire entirely consumed the church and all its furnishings.<sup>28</sup> The loss of St. John's was a bitter blow to Dr. Scott who served Warrington as well as Pensacola: "In a brief space all our cruel enemy left us of this house we had built for the good of man and the glory of our God, was a heap of ashes."<sup>29</sup>

Dr. Scott stated that when the Confederate forces left Pensacola most of his congregation left with them "and were scattered abroad, most in south Alabama, where I visit and minister to them."<sup>30</sup> Only two Anglican families remained in the city, both of whom went over to the enemy. At first, Christ Church

26. Brevard, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-73.

27. *Diocesan Journal*, 1867, pp. 12-13.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

was used as a barracks for Federal soldiers, then a US. Army chaplain in priest's orders restored it and used it as a military chapel. During the occupation, the parochial academy and the rector's house were burned by the Federal forces, and the church organ and furnishings were destroyed. At the close of the war, Federal soldiers desecrated the church by exhuming the bodies of two former rectors, who were buried beneath the chancel floor, leaving them exposed in the church.<sup>31</sup>

Trinity Parish in St. Augustine was left without a clergyman in July of 1862, after the Federal forces had been in possession of the city for several months. A St. Augustine paper gives an account of the departure of the Rev. L. R. Staudenmayer. This priest could not be persuaded to substitute in the liturgy "the President of the United States" for the "the President of the Confederate States." For this reason, Staudenmayer was a marked man. Soldiers followed him by day and watched him by night. He was charged with plotting treason, partly because voices were heard upstairs in his study apparently engaged in heated conversation in several languages—German, French, and English. (The secret of these conversations centered around a pet cat, with whom the rector played and at the same time exercised his linguistic accomplishments.) Finally, Staudenmayer's presence could be tolerated no longer, and he was forced to leave the city.<sup>32</sup> When the new Union commander took over his duties at St. Augustine, he "found the church doors thrown open, and animals walking in and out."<sup>33</sup>

St. John's Church, Jacksonville, went through the first and second Federal occupations unharmed, but when U. S. troops evacuated the city for the third time, the church was destroyed by fire in the hasty retreat. As the Federal forces were leaving, "some evilly disposed persons . . . without official sanction, set fire to a number of wooden buildings," sacked churches, stores, and private dwellings. A high wind spread the flames, and soon the whole town was consumed.<sup>34</sup> Official reports are scant about

31. Julia Yonge, *Christ Church Parish, Pensacola, Florida, 1827-1927* (n.p., n.d.), pp. 21-22.

32. L. Fitz-James Hindry, *Centennial Historical Sermon Covering the History of Trinity Parish, St. Augustine, Florida, 1821-1921* (St. Augustine: Record Company, Printers, n.d.), pp. 14-15.

33. *St. Augustine Examiner*, February 20, 1869.

34. Brevard, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86.

the evacuation, but a persistent rumor that the fire came about because of bad feeling between the two white Federal regiments stationed in Jacksonville has been handed down. One regiment was solidly Roman Catholic, while the other was strongly Protestant. For reasons unknown, hatred prevailed between the two to such an extent that vandals in the Protestant regiment put the torch to the Roman church. In retaliation, certain members of the "papist" regiment set fire to St. John's Church.<sup>35</sup>

The congregation of St. Luke's in Marianna completed its neo-gothic church at the beginning of the war and presented the building to Bishop Rutledge for consecration on his visitation in 1863. In the fall of 1864, a battle was fought at Marianna, and the recently consecrated church was burned to the ground by Union forces who captured the town.<sup>36</sup>

The prosperity of Apalachicola greatly declined during the war and with it the membership and resources of Trinity Church. There was no money available to keep the church in repair.<sup>37</sup> The same was true of Grace Church in Ocala. In Palatka, St. Mark's had deteriorated so much that the rotting belfry made the church unsafe for worship.<sup>38</sup> St. Paul's in Quincy became so financially embarrassed that the church building was sold to pay off the parish debt.<sup>39</sup> St. Paul's in Key West came out of the war in better condition than her sister parishes, for the church building was in excellent condition and debt free, but many of her communicants were scattered or had become indifferent to the Church. There had been no episcopal visitation to Key West since 1860.<sup>40</sup>

The calamities of war had fallen heavily on the diocese. At the beginning of the war, there were fourteen parishes and twelve clergy in the diocese, but at the first postwar convention only three churches were represented. Of these, only St. John's, Tallahassee, had its affairs sufficiently in order to give a parochial report. The diocese was over \$1500 behind in the bishop's salary.<sup>41</sup> Three churches were burned, one sold for debt, and

35. Thomas Frederick Davis, *History of Early Jacksonville* (Jacksonville: The Drew Company, 1911), pp. 183-184.

36. *Diocesan Journal*, 1867, p. 37.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-26.



most all of the others were in dire need of repair. The parochial academies of the diocese were disrupted or destroyed. The physical plant of the University of the South at Sewanee, Tennessee, of which the diocese was a part owner, was burned and its large endowment gone. In addition to this, there was an acute shortage of clergy to serve the withered congregations.

The Church in Florida was faced with a tremendous problem of reconstruction, but the burden of this task was not to fall on the shoulders of Bishop Rutledge. The strain of the war years had shattered his health and rendered him incapable of discharging his duties at a time when strong leadership was needed. Within a year, death took him, and the mantle of leadership fell on younger and stronger shoulders, John Freeman Young, second bishop of Florida,<sup>42</sup> faced the future with unbounded vigor and quiet optimism-qualities he much needed to direct a materially and spiritually shattered people.

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42. Pennington, *op. cit.*, p. 48.