

LESSON 6

THE WITNESS IN LATIN AMERICA: A WITNESS OF INTERPRETATION

PART I

Latin America was born out of the encounter of two hemispheres and several cultures. With the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the region in 1492, there began an encounter between Latin Christianity and the indigenous religions of the region, and with that the meeting of several cultures. Latin Christianity as it was interpreted by Spanish Catholicism was absolute orthodoxy and brooked no rivals as it was fired with a missionary zeal forged in the fires of resistance to the Moors. It was the faith which soon subjugated the South American continent.

But whenever there is absolutism and the restraint of freedom, consent, religious or political, is shallow and so it was in most of Latin America. Added to this, it must also be remembered that the Reformation had not yet taken place when the continent was being colonized, nor had Separatism in Europe emerged. Thus, Latin America enjoyed a single interpretation of the Christian faith, and this was imposed on the people not so much as "joyful response to God" in faith, but rather as a duty necessary to the well being of the State.

It was this context to which Latin Baptists responded in two ways. Firstly, these Baptists evangelized and brought the fruits of the Reformation to those for whom faith was simply a matter of legal propositions and internal requirements. Secondly, they attempted to evangelize and to acculturate those groups on the fringes of society to whom the gospel had not yet been addressed. They also provided suitable education and literature to help support their efforts.

The first Baptist contacts with the continent occurred in the early nineteenth century, but were not formalized until well into the twentieth century.

Argentina

Baptist Witness in Argentina was cultured within the context of the work of James Thompson. In 1818, Thompson introduced the "public school" system in Buenos Aires, using the Bible as a textbook and utilizing the British and Foreign School System. Thompson was a Baptist minister and although his work did provide a foundation for the Welsh Baptists in 1865 and other

*Is the following statement true or false?
Due to the emergence of the Reformation in Europe and Separatism in England, Latin America developed as a religious pot-pourri. _____*

(false)

Latin Baptists responded to their religious context in _____ ways.

(two)

Baptist Witness in Argentina was cultured within the context of the work of James _____

evangelical witness, his work was broad based. Added to which, in the following years he travelled most of Latin America promoting Bible Societies and the "monitorial" school system.

Formal Witness did not begin in the nation until the arrival of a Swiss pastor, Pablo Besson, on the invitation of a small immigrant congregation. Besson soon moved to Buenos Aires and organized the first Argentine Baptist church. He further translated the New Testament into Spanish and advocated amidst much odds the cause of religious liberty.

Besson worked single-handedly while he pleaded with the Southern Baptist Convention for help with funds and personnel, but it was not until 1903 that the Convention was able to respond positively with the valediction of Sidney Sowell. In 1909, twenty-three delegates representing five churches decided to form the Evangelical Baptist Convention. This Convention was formed on January 1 of that year. In the next two years the Convention was further organized into "Boards" corresponding somewhat to the S.B.C. model. Five Boards were formed to administer the Convention's programme for Missions, Publications, Evangelism, Social Work and Education. A Bible Institute was formed in 1912 to train pastors. Between 1911 and 1936 the Convention developed rapidly, establishing two auxiliaries to itself, the Woman's (Missionary) Convention and the Young People's Convention. Each auxiliary takes responsibility for its own affairs. So important did the Convention consider Women's affairs that in 1936 a woman's training institute was formed.

Today, Baptist Witness has been firmly established. Baptists form an integral part of the United Seminary Complex in Buenos Aires and have contributed much to the ferment in theological thought in the continent. There is a strong Co-operative Programme which has enabled Argentine Baptists to begin and sustain work in Paraguay and Uruguay. There are summer camp programmes on associational and national levels together with a strong social outreach catering to the aged and to children. There is also a well received radio and television ministry.

Until recently the Witness was limited to Buenos Aires, but in the last decade there has been a marked outreach. So much so that the membership of the churches has doubled. There are now some 327 churches and 25,000 members.

Peru

Once more Baptist Witness began within the context of the work of James Thompson in the 1820s. At this time Peru was involved in a war of liberation from Spain. It was at this time that Thompson, who had travelled through most of Latin America under the auspices of the Bible Societies, set up a school. Nothing more was heard of this beginning of evangelical witness until in 1888 when Francisco Penzotti not only established a church, but also advocated and

(Thompson)

Formal Baptist Witness began with _____

(Pablo Besson)

Outline the organization of the new Evangelical Baptist Convention. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Baptist Witness has been firmly _____

(established)

The Baptist Witness began within the context of James Thompson's work _____

secured for the population freedom of worship and the right to civil marriage.

Sometime in the 1880s, a large Irish migration took place due to famine in Ireland and oppressive political and social conditions. Many of the immigrants were Protestants and among them were Irish Baptists who maintained a work among themselves. Later the work influenced the Indians, and today many of the Baptist congregations among the Indians owe their origins to the Irish.

The work progressed slowly and in 1950 Southern Baptists decided to begin work in Lima. The Ebenezer Baptist Church was organized and constituted in 1951 and by 1966 the *Evangelical Baptist Convention of Peru* was formed.

The Witness was systematically related to strategic areas of the country. In every important city a church was established. This has paid off because now that the interior is being slowly opened up Baptist Witness is able to take advantage of the new possibilities. Already, there are two churches in Arequipa in the far South, as well as a church in Bagua, in the North.

In 1970, Peru suffered a devastating earthquake which had a debilitating effect upon the people. But it presented to Baptists a chance to establish a Witness in Huaraz where laymen had been involved in the rebuilding of that town. Today, a mission has been opened there. While the Baptist World Alliance responded through the Convention to alleviate some of the suffering, the Witness has been able to use with increasing effect the modern methods and means of evangelism. A theological seminary has been maintained in Trujillo and a Conference and Camp Centre established just outside Lima. Radio and television, together with literature, are used to undergrid the gospel. But the problems are enormous in a country with 50 per cent of its population under 19 and 30 per cent of all babies dying before they attain a year old. There are today 47 churches and 4,198 members.

Belize and Ruatan

Angus and Co.

Baptist Witness began in Belize in the early nineteenth century. It is not quite clear how it began since Frederick Crowe, an early convert, does mention coming into contact with black sailors who were Baptists. Nevertheless, the first organized work began in 1822, with the approach to the B.M.S. of the commercial enterprise of Angus and Co.

This company had already had many Baptist connections. The firm had its own ships which plied between Newcastle and the Caribbean. The early missionaries to Jamaica were transported free of cost for the most part by the firm on their journeys to Belize for mahogany. As early as 1820, the firm was imploring the B.M.S. to send a missionary to Belize (British Honduras). So in 1822, the *Missionary Herald* reported that the B.M.S. had decided to comply with the request of Angus and Co.

(once, more)

Southern Baptists began work in Lima in _____

(1950)

Baptists were given a chance to establish a Witness in _____

(Huaraz)

In Belize, the first organized work began when Angus and Company approached the _____

Joseph Bourne of Bradford Academy (Northern Baptist College) was chosen and he sailed in April, 1822.

The Bournes arrived in Belize in the following June, but unfortunately Mrs. Bourne died that December. Joseph Bourne nevertheless remained until 1834.

Bourne was a carpenter and he immediately planned, supervised and built a Mission Hall and a minister's house. During this time, a church was organized and by 1825 the membership was seven. In 1827, Bourne married again and his wife started a school which helped to finance the cause. By the time the Bournes left in 1834, a cause had been established.

Joseph Bourne was succeeded by Alexander Henderson, who arrived with his family on November 20, 1834. The departure of Bourne had left the Mission in shambles so Henderson set about building it up. He preached to the soldiers, the slaves and the prisoners, and he opened schools for the several age groups on the Mission premises. These methods stimulated an increase in the church activities and soon the congregation doubled. Among the young men attracted to his preaching was Frederick Crowe, who was to take the Baptist Witness to Guatemala.

Crowe was born in Bruges (Belgium) of British parentage. His parents had migrated on the fall of Napoleon in the hope of a better life. Frederick was, however, sent back to England for some schooling, and his knowledge of languages later helped him to work as an interpreter with a shipping line which traded with Guatemala.

In 1836, Crowe decided to take one of these voyages himself, and at his destination discovered himself a virtual prisoner in the hands of the Spanish, from whom he escaped to Belize. There he came in contact with Henderson and was converted. He became a teacher in the Baptist school and later a missionary of the Belize Baptist Mission.

The Mission began to grow and soon Henderson was hard put to manage and so he appealed to London for help. In 1838, Mr. Henry Philpot of Canterbury arrived to teach and to begin a second Witness in the town. But he died on September 7 of that year after only four months in the country.

The B.M.S. sent a replacement in Mr. William Weatherall of Bury St. Edmunds, but he died of fever in Trinidad before he arrived. His wife remained for nine months to assist in the school in Belize and then returned to England. In 1841, Mr. C. H. Hosken and his wife arrived in Belize to carry on the work, but withdrew to New York after three months.

Henderson, faced with the shortage of workers, decided to do something about it himself and he began to train local leadership. It must be noted that in the 1840s, the concept of the *Native Agency* was being promoted by missionary agencies through their magazines. It was the same idea as the Lancastrian method in education, i.e., the

(B.M.S.)

The Bournes arrived in Belize in the following

(June)

List two things begun by Alexander Henderson.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Is the following statement true or false?

After escaping from Guatemala, Frederick Crowe came under the influence of Henderson's preaching and was converted.

(true)

What was the idea of Native Agency based upon?

converted becoming the means of conversion. It is not clear whether Henderson had consulted on the idea of the Native Agency, but it is instructive to note that about this same time a theological college for Jamaicans was being suggested by William Knibb and others.

Three men stand out in the Mission's history at this time: (a) George Braddick, who had helped to build the chapel and was converted at the opening; (b) William Michael, a Carib who after his conversion helped Henderson translate St. Matthew's Gospel into Carib; and (c) John Warner, a sailor who was finally ordained and went as a missionary to Ruatan.

Besides these there were others of outstanding ability among them: Joseph Kelly, who was responsible for the Mission at Bakers and his brother Edward whose contribution to the work in Nicaragua was immense.

These men were trained by Henderson in the Mission School. Henderson taught Bible and other theological subjects to prepare them for the ministry.

The Butterfield crisis

In 1844, the B.M.S. sent out J. P. Butterfield and his wife. His wife was the granddaughter of William Carey. They arrived in December, 1844, but Butterfield did not work harmoniously with Henderson. Mr. Henderson was a Particular Baptist and Butterfield was a General Baptist.

The B.M.S. decided to ask the Jamaica Baptist Mission to investigate and to take over the Belize Mission. For this purpose, the J.B.M.S. sent out the Rev. John Kingdom who sided with Butterfield against Henderson. The results were twofold: (a) the B.M.S. withdrew from the scene completely since the Society itself was Particular in origin, if not consistent in bias, and (b) Henderson withdrew from the Belize Mission and was asked by the B.M.S. to return to England. Henderson refused and started an independent church leaving the Mission to Rev. Kingdom. The situation continued until 1850 when the B.M.S. put up their premises for sale and withdrew Butterfield and Kingdom. Kingdom offered himself to an American society and went to do missionary work in Africa.

By this time, however, the Baptist Witness had established itself in Belize. Firstly, there was the central Witness consisting of over 200 members, with three outstations and three schools. Secondly, there was a Witness at Crooked Tree, in the Orange Walk district with thirty members and two schools. Thirdly, there was a Witness at Bakers, on the Belize River, developed by the Rev. Joseph Kelly, who also managed the local school. Fourthly, in the South there was the Sibun work conducted by Edward Thurton, with a small membership and a school. Fifthly, there existed Northern River, where James Goff and James York had begun a small work. Sixthly, there was Stann Creek, the second town of importance, where William Michael was in charge. He preached both in English and in Carib.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Joseph Kelly was responsible for the work at

(Bakers)

Name two results of the Butterfield crisis. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The Baptist Witness had established itself in Belize by this _____

(time)

Ruatan

The Seventh Witness was in Ruatan, which is an island off the coast of the Republic of Honduras. It is one of the Bay Islands, which are a bone of contention between the British and Spanish Honduras. A church was constituted there in 1846 by some settlers and the Belize Mission sent Mr. Francis Curran, who had been ordained, to organize the work. In 1849, a Mission was established. Curran was succeeded by John Warner who, with his wife and four children, landed there on May 4, 1849. Warner secured a property at Flowers Bay with two small houses for \$250 and began to organize. He erected a chapel and enclosed the premises. Since the Belize Church was not financially strong, Warner appealed to the Bacup Baptist Church in London, England and they underwrote much of this development.

When Warner died in 1887 and Hobson his successor was murdered, Joseph Kelly went to Ruatan to supervise the work and remained there until 1893. He died in Belize in 1899.

In Belize, Henderson's health gave out and in 1881, David Waring, his wife and children replaced him. Henderson did not live long after this, passing away on November 11, 1881. Waring began renewing contacts with the Missionary Society in the region. He persuaded the Jamaican Baptists to send Charles Hobson and his wife who were serving in Jamaica to Ruatan: where unfortunately, they were murdered. Later he secured James Bryant as a missionary teacher and an agent of the J.B.M.S. for Belize. This was in 1886. About this time Waring's health broke down, and so in 1887, Bryant was ordained and left to run the Mission single-handedly.

Waring went to Jamaica on his way to England to spend his furlough. While in Jamaica he initiated discussions on a possible merger of the two Missions but they failed. He proceeded to Britain but there developed pneumonia and died in the Spring of 1888. With the death of Waring, Bryant wrote to the J.B.M.S. with regard to closer ties. Certain resolutions had been drawn up by the church and forwarded, and Pastor James Bryant went to Jamaica to lead further discussions. In November, 1888, he returned accompanied by Philip Williams, the secretary of the J.B.M.S. These two men were to confer with the Belize Mission and settle matters. As a result the Belize Mission was again associated with Jamaica and in December, 1888 Charles Brown moved at the request of the J.B.M.S. from Montego Bay, Jamaica to Belize.

His first task was to settle the matters in Ruatan where the Hobsons had been murdered. He took with him Joseph Kelly who was no stranger to the area. Kelly remained at Flowers Bay to minister in Hobson's place until someone else could be found. Meanwhile Brown returned to Belize and wrote to Jamaica for help.

In 1889, the J.B.M.S. sent out James Nathaniel Anglin, who had attended Calabar College and was the

The Seventh Witness was in _____

(Ruatan)

Is the following statement true or false?

After lengthy discussions concerning Belize, the J.B.M.S. decided not to get involved in the work there.

(false)

He took Joseph Kelly with _____

(him)

headmaster of the Baptist School in Montego Bay. Mr. Anglin had been associated with Brown and so did not hesitate to come. Anglin built up the school in Belize and while there involved himself in church work. And so, Brown divided the Mission, giving a half to Anglin who by then had resigned from the school and taken charge of the Orange Walk churches.

Robert Cleghorn, who has left us much of the evidence we have on the early Belizan Witness, had accompanied his uncle Charles Brown to Belize and had been associated with him in all his endeavours. He supervised the school, as well as the Bakers district work when Joseph Kelly was transferred to Ruatan. In the meantime, the work in Ruatan had increased, but had not spread since the Methodists had established themselves in the other islands and there still existed a comity agreement between the Baptists and Methodists of Britain.

In 1900, Cleghorn was recalled to Belize, but by then John Abbott and Stephen Hinds, two islanders, had been trained to assume leadership. They carried on until the Rev. Charles Thorpe was sent to Ruatan from Belize as pastor in 1901.

Brown who was on furlough to Scotland returned to Belize in 1901 and received a visit from Joshua Sobey, the J.B.M.S. missionary in Costa Rica. Sobey had been asked to visit Brown and confer on the state of the Mission. As a result Brown sent in his resignation in 1901 and retired to the United States.

With the departure of Brown, the J.B.M.S. asked if the Belize Mission needed another pastor. The Mission replied that Robert Cleghorn, Brown's nephew was there and they wished him to be appointed as the Society's representative. The J.B.M.S. did not reply, and so the Mission found itself independent once more and not by choice.

The Trust

In 1904, the Mission therefore set up itself as a Trust incorporated under the laws of British Honduras and began to solicit help overseas. The J.B.M.S. refused to take it again under its umbrella, and J. H. Shakespeare, the General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, suggested that help might be obtained from the Baptist Colonial Society. But this did not materialize.

The Baptist Witness, however, held its own. In 1909, a Christian Endeavour Society was formed. In 1910, the Bible Class held the first Convention of its kind for two weeks under the leadership of one of the deacons. In 1923, James Anglin who had carried on was ordained in Montego Bay by the Rev. T. Gordon-Somers, and returned as assistant-pastor in Belize. The twenties and thirties were thus times of consolidation and growth.

But the forties saw a time of decline. At that time the Baptists became divided again, this time on the issues of the interpretation of the Bible. The result was a falling away to the Presbyterians and the Methodists, who had become

Joseph Kelly was transferred to _____

(Ruatan)

The Mission became an incorporated _____

(Trust)

The forties saw a time of _____

very strong and were wisely led by Caleb Cousins, a Jamaican pastor.

The outlook

The issues were resolved by inviting the Baptists of the U.S.A. to take over the work. At first, the Conservative Baptists or Mid-Missions were approached, but this did not work out. Lately, the Foreign Mission Board has assumed some responsibility. With the new developments in Belmopan and elsewhere, the future of the Baptist Witness looks promising.

Guyana

Guyana is the only English-speaking republic in South America. Closely allied with Suriname in history and culture, Guyana remained British until 1966, when it became constitutionally independent. Since that time it has become a Co-operative Republic.

Baptist presence in Guyana dates from the 1840s. John Clarke and George Prince, on their way back to Britain, after their exploratory mission to Fernando Po (see Jamaica story), on the *Mary*, landed in Georgetown on April 11, 1842. They found lodgings with one of the pilots and next day went to see two Methodist ministers who lived nearby. From one of them, Mr. Padgham, they learned that Wallbridge, an old friend and associate of theirs from those Jamaica days, was now in Demerara as the pastor of the famous Congregationalist Church, where John Smith, the Demerara martyr had been minister. This John Smith had figured in the British Parliament during the fight against slavery. Wallbridge had developed the work further with an adjunct ministry in the training of men in a Normal School, to which a theological department had been added.

After having made contact with Wallbridge, the two men were advised to see the Governor, Henry Light, to discuss the possibility of a West Indian mission to Africa. While he sympathized with their faith in the West Indies to evangelize Africa, he did not support a mission to Africa by Africans because it would rob the Guyanese plantations of workers. He did, however, allow them to hold a mass meeting to present their views. Clarke and Prince were then invited to preach in many other churches and purchased two properties with the view of establishing a Baptist Witness. This did not materialize.

It was not until after the 1880s that a Witness began. At that time the Guyanese government embarked upon a policy of attracting "indentured" labour from Asia. Chinese Christians were recruited in Hong Kong and Swatow. It appears that some of those were Baptists, and they began a Witness. Subsequent to this Chinese church, the Seventh Day Baptists started a work in 1927, but both these ventures fell on bad days. In 1961 a survey of the region was made by Baker J. Cauthen, Frank Means and Charles Bryan of the S.B.C. and in August 1962, as a result, Otis Brady and his family were settled in Georgetown.

(decline)

The issues were resolved by inviting the Baptists of the U.S.A. to take over the _____.

(work)

The only English-speaking republic in South America is _____.

(Guyana)

Baptist presence in Guyana dates from the _____.

(1840s)

Is the following statement true or false?
While in Guyana in 1842, John Clarke and George Prince purchased two properties and established two Baptist churches. _____

(false)

It appears that some were _____, and they began a _____.

Within the first decade Baptist Witness increased considerably because around the S.B.C. Mission other Baptists groups found a rallying point. The Baptists Mid-Missions, although small, co-operated at certain levels.

On March 25, 1973, the Baptist Co-operative Convention of Guyana was organized. This Convention included some fifteen churches. By 1976, a theological institute based on Guided Study was established and forms the main basis of pastoral training at the moment. Although there is a strong camping programme administered for a twenty-five acre camp site on the Essequibo River, it is not very easy to set up certain programmes due to certain government restrictions. Nevertheless, through newspaper ads, correspondence courses and some few radio broadcasts allowed the nature of Baptist Witness is maintained in what after all is mainly a Lutheran, Anglican and Roman Catholic land.

Suriname

Suriname is a nation of many peoples attempting to become a people, and in this regard both culture and religion have not helped. Culled from the differences of five Indian tribes, together with the multilingual and cultural differences of successive European colonizers the task of integration has been monumental. This has been further complicated by the employment of indentured labour at the turn of the century which provided an influx of Asians.

Despite the differences the people have been held together by the continuous overlordship of the Dutch, who have been there since 1667 and whose "responsibilities" were passed over at independence in 1978.

Dutch overlordship has provided two things. Firstly, it has created a pro-Protestant bias in the nation thus enabling the Moravian Church to be the most influential and secondly, it has provided the Dutch language as a medium of communication and of integration.

Baptist Witness developed in Suriname in 1888, about the same time that the B.M.S. took Javanese work more seriously. The Javanese were migrating to Suriname in large numbers at this time and some of them were Baptist due to Carey's work during the previous century. It was to these that Solomon Bromet, a Surinamer himself, went. Bromet was trained in England probably in Spurgeon's College and returned to organize the work. To date the Baptiste Centrum, the work he developed, sponsors three elementary schools and is involved in a prison ministry.

The West Indies Mission has also established work in Paramaribo of a Baptist character and has taken its witness inland to the Indians and the Bush Negroes. And as an adjunct ministry, it has provided the Scriptures in a written form to three segmented societies. While this is indeed a good thing, the very presence of a written literature will make the process of national integration more difficult.

In keeping with the decision to attempt to evangelize the Caribbean, the S.B.C. sent the Lewises to Paramaribo

(Baptist, Witness)

The Baptist Co-operative Convention of Guyana was organized on March 25, _____.

(1973)

Name two things the Dutch have provided Suriname.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Some of the Javanese who were migrating to Suriname were _____.

(Baptists)

Who are three Baptist groups working in Suriname?

to begin work in 1973. Since that time the Waldrops have arrived, but the Witness is still in its infancy. At present there is emphasis upon leadership development, language study and music.

Honduras

The Baptist Witness in Honduras is comparatively new although there are linkages which go back to the early years of the century. With the expansion of the banana industry from Panama and Costa Rica after the digging of the Panama Canal, emigrant workers from the Caribbean had established small "meeting houses." These workers, chiefly from Jamaica, had come to work on the railroads and in the banana plantations.

There were two things which made it difficult for Baptists to establish a Witness. The first was that Honduras was predominantly Roman Catholic and Catholicism was integral to national consciousness. Since there was estrangement between Honduras and Britain over the Ruatan Islands where Baptists had already been established since 1888, when C. S. Hobson went from Jamaica, any spread to the mainland was resisted. The second was a matter of language, since most of the Jamaicans spoke English only. Nevertheless, some rudimentary but unorganized work did begin.

Modern Baptist Witness did not begin in earnest until Paul Bell (Senior) at the request of certain indigenous groups made contact in 1946. Evangelical witness had been initiated by the Central American Mission, a non-denominational agency of American origins. Subsequent to them arrived several "faith missions," as well as the Mennonites, Moravians and the World Gospel Mission. From the Central American Mission certain congregations were started and these began using Baptist literature published by the Baptist Spanish Publishing House in El Paso, Texas. In order to use the literature well, the advice of Paul Bell who was stationed in Panama was sought, and soon these churches opted for a Baptist association. In 1947, the S.B.C. transferred William Webb from Mexico to Guatemala and he gave oversight to the Honduran work until in 1954 Harold Hurst and John Ratliff and their families were subsequently settled. By 1958, an Association of Honduran Baptist Churches was formed.

Since 1959 there have been many areas of outreach. A book store has been established. The home study courses began in 1959 have become a full-fledged theological education programme. This programme has been conducted by the association since 1978.

In the area of mass media communications, the association puts out a programme, "La iglesia en el Hogar" which has aided immensely in evangelization. Associated with the Mission are also ministries in medicine and music to which couples have been appointed by the Foreign Mission Board of the S.B.C. Youth work is centred in the churches, but as an aid a camp site has been developed at Lake Yojoa.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

What two reasons made it difficult to establish a Baptist Witness in Honduras? _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Paul Bell made contact with certain _____ groups in _____

(indigenous, 1946)

The advice of _____ was sought.

(Paul Bell)

There have been many areas of _____

(outreach)

But, the Baptist Witness still has problems of tension and division. The earlier Baptist groups have been taken over by the Conservative Baptist Home Mission Society which operates a radio station in Tegucigalpa, the capital. This Conservative Mission has a number of churches among the English-speaking Hondurans and further work in the north of the country. These churches have now been organized into the Fellowship of Conservative Baptist Churches. And as yet there is no natural co-ordination of Baptist Witness.

Colombia

Early efforts

Baptist Witness in Colombia goes back in a sense to the visit of the Baptist colporteur, James Thompson, in 1825. He had been sent to Argentina as a representative of the British and Foreign Bible Society to train teachers in the Joseph Lancaster method.

The Lancastrian method entailed a system of monitorship in which the older and taught children would instruct the younger and untaught. The basis of the lessons were Scripture texts and so the "Evangelicals" supported the method, as opposed to the Anglican method.

Thompson had already set up Lancastrian schools in Argentina, when after an invitation to Chile, a travel through Ecuador and Peru, he arrived in Colombia.

While there he met with the leaders of government who encouraged him and so he set up a Colombian Bible Society, arranging for supplies from the British and Foreign Bible Society and from the American Bible Society.

When Thompson left for Mexico, he was succeeded by Lucas Matthews who did not fare as well. Indeed, he disappeared quite soon after his advent in suspicious circumstances.

San Andres and Providencia

Nothing more can be traced of Baptist Witness or presence in Colombia itself at this time, but in the off shore islands of San Andres and Providencia, a Baptist work flourished.

The origins of the work is obscure. We do not know who started it except that there is a tradition that the Witness came from Jamaica. There is no evidence of any organized work from the Jamaica Baptist Missionary Society.

The work could have begun one of two ways. Firstly, it could have been begun by runaway slaves who had been transferred to the Livingstone plantations in San Andres from Jamaica. Or secondly, the Witness could have spread from Nicaragua. But the second is the most unlikely. In any case there was a work established by the 1850s. Its architect was Philip Livingstone.

In 1858, the American Baptist Home Mission Society reported that a missionary now occupies a field in New Granada (Colombia) and that the church was now

The Baptist Witness still has _____

(problems)

In a sense, the Baptist Witness in Colombia goes back to _____

(James Thompson)

In San Andres and Providencia, a Baptist work _____

(flourished)

Who was Philip Brookhurst Livingstone? _____

self-supporting. Behind that cryptic statement lies the story of Philip Brookhurst Livingstone, who was pastor on these islands until 1894.

The Livingstone family was native to New York and New Jersey and owned slaves and property in these islands. Philip Livingstone had taken the unprecedented step of setting his slaves free before the event occurred in the U.S.A.; and after he was converted and baptized at Laight Street Baptist Church, he returned to the islands as a missionary. It appears that the American Baptist Home Mission Society came to his assistance in order to consolidate the Witness.

Philip Livingstone was succeeded by his son as pastor and after the death of his son the church entered upon some "trying" times. There were two reasons for this. The first was a struggle for leadership since there was no clear successor. A split occurred in the church and another church was organized. The second reason was the new policy of inspiring a common language and religion upon all Colombian citizens. The common language of these islanders was English and their religion was Christianity in its Baptist form. The government sent priests and nuns to the island to set up schools, to teach Spanish and also Roman Catholicism. Indeed, some children were sent to the mainland in the hope that they having been indoctrinated, they might return to influence their society. The experiment failed. The parents refused to send their children to school especially since the nuns had insisted on the veneration of Mary as an integral part of this school curriculum.

The church continued and being without a pastor sent urgent appeals to the American Baptist Home Mission Society, for a pastor. In time Pastor Noel Gonsalves, a Guyanese, who was resident in Virginia, volunteered to go. He arrived there in January, 1927.

He soon got into trouble with Colombian authorities because of his teaching of certain Baptist doctrines. He was accused of working against the government and had to retire to Guyana where he remained for six months.

The events caused alarm in the Mission Society and the secretary, Dr. Charles Detweiler, wrote about it in several articles. One of these articles attracted the attention of a Tucson widow, a school teacher, Mrs. M. A. Dawes, who decided to go to San Andres and Providencia at her own expense. She had to go by way of Panama in order to get her visa. There she met with Gonsalves, who had decided to return to the islands come what may. Mrs. Dawes obtained her visa and gave valuable service for a year. She died suddenly and was buried on the island.

The Gonsalves had been denied visas in Panama, but they sailed for the islands anyway. On their arrival, they were arrested but were released in their own surety and remained to minister until 1944, when they retired. Gonsalves was succeeded by Rev. and Mrs. C. W. McCollough of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1946, who took over the witness.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Give two reasons why the work in San Andres and Providencia fell on hard times. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Noel Gonsalves volunteered to _____

(go)

Identify Mrs. M. A. Dawes. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Since 1930

The second Baptist foothold in Colombia was in 1930 when two Cuban missionaries under the sponsorship of the Western Baptist Convention were sent to Barranquilla. The work was abandoned very soon afterwards.

In 1941, Southern Baptists sent Joseph Hart and Henry Schweinsberg to make a survey of Colombia with the intention of establishing a Baptist work there. It was decided to begin in Barranquilla where the original Cuban witness had been. The Schweinbergs found six members of the former work of which only three were active. Schweinsberg was originally from Australia. He had been converted in a remarkable way and for five years had worked in Bolivia among the Quecha Indians. There he met an married Dorothy Bricknell and after some seminary training in the United States entered upon the work in Colombia.

By 1942, the church had grown to twenty-six and outreach was attempted in Rebelo and in Central Barranquilla. The Foreign Mission Board increased its missionaries to Colombia, created a radio programme and began a book store in the centre of town. By 1943, the Central Baptist Church had a membership of seventy-four and a Sunday School of 310. Added to which, a smaller work was developed in two other areas of the city. One of these areas was San Felipe where a church, a school, and a parsonage were built.

At Rebelo, the approach was different. Here the Baptists began with educational work. An elementary school was conducted in close relationship to the church and its activities.

In 1944, the Neelys opened a work in Cartagena. The nucleus of this work was about sixty Baptist who had come from San Andres and Providencia to the mainland. By June 1944, the Central Church of Cartagena was constituted and in 1945, a chapel was built. The work attracted to itself an independent witness headed by Victor Martinez, an employee of an American oil company. Martinez decided to recreate the church of the New Testament and had gathered forty-four believers, baptized them by immersion, but knew nothing of the Baptists. The church had called itself Misión Evangélica de Cartagena. After a decision with the Baptists, the church declared itself to be a Baptist church and changed its name to Iglesia Bautista de Alcibia.

Sabanalarga first had a Baptist Witness in 1943, when two Canadian Baptist women established a work there. With the coming of the Southern Baptists, these ladies turned to them and the Renich Daileys were sent to their aid. In time a magnificent sanctuary was built and a congregation of some 400 attended its dedication.

A Witness was established in Cali, one of the fastest growing cities in 1946, under the leadership of John and Evelyn Thomas together with Mr. and Mrs. Ulman Ross. Property was secured in the city centre and an auditorium

The second Baptist foothold in Colombia was in _____.

(1930)

Identify Henry Schweinsberg. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

The church had grown to _____ by _____.

(twenty-six, 1942)

The approach was different at _____.

(Rebelo)

The Neelys opened a work in _____.

(Cartagena)

A Witness was established in _____.

and education building erected. The site proved to be ideal and so the Baptists decided to set up the administrative centre of the Mission in Cali. A large church with an increasing membership exists.

Bogota is the cultural centre of Colombia and in 1946, the Daileys attempted to establish a Witness there. They were succeeded by General and Virgie Riddell, who were the pioneers of this Witness. They were given a twofold task: (a) to establish a church and (b) to publish a Colombian Baptist paper. They began by introducing the "Baptist Half-Hour" a radio programme to the local station. By 1949, they had acquired land and constituted on November 13, 1949 the Central Baptist Church of Bogota.

Within the first six years of the Witness the growth was phenomenal. It included two aspects: (a) a gathering and consolidation of that which already existed and (b) the establishment of new work. In 1947, the Baptist Convention of Colombia (and Venezuela) was formed which included the churches from San Andres and Providencia, as well.

Difficult days

Between 1948 and 1960, Baptists had a difficult time. The political situation condemned all Protestants to abuse and violence. While the details do not concern us here and can be gleaned in any case from *Colombia, Land of Conflict and Promise* by William Estep, Jr., it is important to know that a ban was put on Protestant work. Agreements had been entered into and entertained by the Roman Catholic Church to support the dictatorial regions at the expense of fellow Christians. Dr. Muñoz Uribe testified before the United States Congress in December, 1959 that at that time 88 churches and chapels had been destroyed, 183 ordered closed by the civil authorities, 206 primary schools closed and 15,600 Protestants deprived of their homes or imprisoned and the children of Protestants were expelled from the public schools. Nevertheless in 1960, the membership of the fifty-four Baptist churches were 3,422 and a supporting community of 15,000 people.

In 1953, the Foreign Mission Board decided to establish a seminary in Cali. It was designed to serve Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras and Peru. Today, Baptist Witness had been firmly established. There are now student centres in Bogota and Medellin and an increased attempt to indigenize the ministry.

Mexico

The first evidences of a Baptist Witness in Mexico go back to the preaching and organization of James Thompson. He worked as a colporteur of the British and Foreign Bible Society in Mexico between 1827 and 1830. Because of the mobile nature of his job, he did not establish a church. For it is known that he was in Jamaica in 1828 and in Cuba in 1830. Associated with him was W. H. Norris, who was employed to the American Bible Society and a Witness of sorts arose.

(Cali)

List the accomplishments of General and Virgie Riddell.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Is the following statement true or false?
A Baptist convention was formed with churches from Colombia and Venezuela. _____

(true)

Between 1948 and 1960, Baptists had a _____

(difficult, time)

The seminary established in Cali was to serve _____ and _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The first evidences of a Baptist Witness in Mexico go back to the preaching of _____

(James Thompson)

Reports of the possibilities arrived at the American Baptist Home Mission Society and it was decided to begin work in Mexico. But this decision was delayed because (a) in 1845, there was a split in the Mission Society resulting in the formation of the Southern Convention as a separate entity, and (b) between 1861–1865 the U.S.A. was wrecked by a Civil War.

Meantime in Mexico itself, a Witness had begun. In 1852, an English engineer moved to Mexico and he invited James Hickey, whom he had heard preach, to come to Monterrey, where he now lived, to minister to the household. Hickey had been employed as a representative of the American Tract Society after he had renounced his priesthood. Thomas Westrup, who had invited him, persuaded him to stay, but there was opposition and he moved back to Brownsville.

In 1861, he crossed the Rio Grande again, and this time he remained in Monterrey. On January 30, 1864, he baptized Thomas Westrup and together with him the first Mexicans, Jose and Arcadia Uranga. A church was organized with five members and Thomas Westrup was ordained to preach.

In 1866, Thomas Westrup led to Christ a young man named Korman, who was to be one of the leaders in the church. Westrup continued as pastor in a self-supporting capacity and unaided until 1869, when he was invited by the American Home Mission Society to New York to a conference. At the conclusion of the discussions the Northern Baptists adopted the Mission. By 1871, Westrup reported a work in Canderieta (thirty-two), Santa Rosa (twenty-six), Los Ebanos (nineteen), Montemorelos (fifteen) and Monterrey (nineteen). In all, the Mission now had one hundred and ten members and four ordained ministers.

In 1871, a revolution broke out in northern Mexico and this seriously curtailed the development of the infant Witness. Plans had already been prepared to establish a Witness in Mexico City, but these were shelved due to the financial crises of 1873 in the U.S.A. which had seriously affected the finances of the Missionary Society and as a result in 1876, the Northern Convention suspended its work in Mexico.

Five years later (1881), the work was again reopened and Thomas Westrup was reappointed as the missionary.

Meanwhile, the Southern Baptist Convention had become interested in Mexico. Discussion took place on the subject in 1880, and the Texas Association recommended John Westrup, the younger brother of Thomas to begin the work. The Foreign Mission Board accepted John, but on December 21, 1880, John and a travelling companion Don Bacilio were murdered by bandits.

The Foreign Mission Board then employed Thomas for a few months and stationed him at Muzquiz, where a church had been constituted in 1877. At the end of 1881, the Southern Baptists sent William Flourney as a replacement and stationed him in Progreso, where young Westrup's body had been buried. In their report that year

An English engineer moved to _____ in _____

(Mexico, 1852)

He baptized Thomas _____

(Westrup)

The Northern Baptists adopted the _____

(Mission)

The Southern Baptist Convention became interested in _____

(Mexico)

The Foreign Mission Board then employed _____

the Southern Baptists had established eight churches with a total membership of one hundred and fifty, and had also sent to Southern Seminary Polio Rodriguez to study for the ministry.

In 1882, a decision by the Northern Convention was taken to establish a Baptist Witness in Mexico City. The Rev. W. T. Green a pastor from Illinois and later California was appointed by the Northern Convention to supervise the work in Mexico. He arrived in Monterrey in 1883 and later proceeded to the capital where he established a church in 1884 with five members on San Filipe Neri Street. The work in Mexico City progressed slowly. The Convention was also hampered by a lack of funds and this meant that Green was dropped. After a time the work was revived by W. H. Sloan and in 1886 he invited some leading Baptists from the Convention to visit the work. These visitors put pressure on the Convention either to abandon the capital or erect suitable buildings, as a headquarters. An appeal was made for \$25,000. As a response, John D. Rockefeller offered to buy the site for \$7,000. By February 26, 1887 the total amount was received. Ground was broken and the building dedicated on November 27, 1887. By 1890, the Northern Work had been well established in Nuevo Leon, San Luis Potosi, Puebla and in the city, itself.

The Southern Baptists, in the meantime, had appointed three missionaries in 1883, Mr. and Mrs. William F. Powell and Miss Anna Mayberry. They arrived in Saltillo and established a Witness there. A school was organized at Progreso by Powell, and another in Monterrey by Mayberry. And in the following year, 1884, a Baptist newspaper was published. In the same year also the first Mexican Baptist association was formed composed of the churches under Southern Baptist leadership and José González, a local, was ordained to the ministry.

Powell was a good organizer and had a good relationship with the secular authorities. Because of this, the Witness in the states of Coahuila, Aguascalientes, Zacatecas and Jalisco in which he had concentrated grew very quickly.

One good feature of the Mexican mission was the co-operation which existed between Southern and Northern Baptists. As a result by 1890, the Mexican National Foreign Mission Society was formed and became a forum in which all Baptist bodies formally co-operated as equals. It was responsible for distributing tracts, but it was also to serve as the vehicle to evangelize the rest of Central America.

The 1890s saw the continual spread of the Baptist Witness and the formation of new Baptist associations. These years also saw the publication of *El Expositor Bíblico* (1890), a Sunday School paper edited by David A. Wilson. In 1895, Moody and Sankey conducted a revival which left a lasting impression on the nation. But the decade was to close on an unfortunate note, at least so it appeared then. In 1898 nearly all missionaries resigned because of government opposition, but as a result the work developed

(Thomas)

Some Northern Convention leaders visited the work in Mexico City in _____.

(1886)

List the contributions of William D. Powell to the Baptist Witness in Mexico. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

One good feature of the Mexican mission was the co-operation between _____ and _____ Baptists.

(Southern, Northern)

List publications that aided the work in Mexico. _____

and became more indigenous.

The work continued to develop between 1900–1930 despite the Revolution of 1910. Indeed on September 13, 1903 a National Convention was formed. In 1910, revolution put some strains upon the work. The government decreed that all education work should have Mexican leadership and that the Church could no longer own property. The first response by the Conventions was to close down and move out, but better counsels prevailed and in time the work was consolidated and made more local. A resultant of this feverish activity appears to be the many publications which mushroomed. Apart from *El Expositor Bíblico* there were *Revista Juvenil*, a young people's magazine; a quarterly called *El Atalaya*; a paper for children called *Nuestros Niños*; Sunday School lesson picture cards entitled *Tarjetas Ilustrativas* and *La Revista Homilética*, a magazine for Spanish-speaking pastors. Added to this, there was an outgrowth of medical work in which nurses were trained and a hospital established at Puebla. Recently, another hospital has been established by the S.B.C. at Guadalajara. In fact by March, 1918 much of this was done.

In 1960, Baptist Mid-Missions established work in Mexico. The work is centred in Poza Rica, Veracruz. And there is also work in Papantla, Tuxpan, Tihuatlán, and Alamo.

There is an Institute for the training of pastors and teachers, as well as a centre for organizing correspondence courses and radio ministry.

The Mexican Baptist story has been one of growth, tension, division and reconciliations. The Baptist Witness is now solidly Mexican although Mexican theological thought could be more so. This is probably due to the misfortunes of the seminary which was moved from Torreón, to Saltillo in 1917 and had to move from Mexican soil in 1935 due to federal laws. Since then (1946) the seminary has returned to Torreón. Mention must be made also of the Baptist seminary in Mexico City which is part of the United Theological College complex. This seminary is supported by the Northern Baptist Convention and was brought into being in the late 1940s. But having said this, it is true that Mexican Baptists have played a major role in the evangelization of South America. From the Mexican Mission many have been sent to plant the Witness elsewhere.

Guatemala

The Baptist Witness went from Belize to Guatemala with Fredrick Crowe in 1840. Crowe was a Baptist colporteur who had come with a group to settle in Veracruz. When the plan collapsed in 1841, he consulted with Henderson his spiritual adviser and pastor who advised him to sell Bibles. Crowe began to preach and was expelled by the government, which was Roman Catholic. It was not until forty years later that another attempt was made.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The Baptist Witness in Mexico is now solidly

(Mexican)

The Baptist Witness went from Belize to Guatemala with

(Frederick Crowe)

In 1884 President Barrios allowed certain Presbyterians to enter the country and several Protestants groups followed. Many of these groups were of loose affiliation and quite independent. Some of these independent groups began to take the form of Baptist congregations and were Baptists in all but name.

In 1928, twenty young people withdrew from one of these independent churches and began to preach in the open air. They established a Fraternal Guatemala Convention and in their endeavours came across the tracts *A Missionary Church* and *The Passion for Souls* published by the Baptist Spanish Publishing House in El Paso, Texas. They entered into conversation with the Publishing House and by August, 1939 they were ready to covenant together as a Convention of Independent Churches. They had taken ten years to come to this position. Soon after this the Convention adopted the use of a Baptist manual and began to seek fraternal relations with other Baptists. In 1942, messengers were sent to the Nicaraguan Baptist Convention. Two of their young men were sent to the El Paso Mexican Seminary, and in 1946, they sent representatives to the Baptist churches of Panama and Costa Rica asking them to discuss with them the methods and ways by which they could become Baptists.

A deputation of S.B.C.-related personnel, Paul Bell (Panama) and Aurelio Gutiérrez (Costa Rica) waited on them. A number of baptisms followed these discussions and in July, 1946 six churches were constituted as Baptist churches. That same year the Baptist Convention of Guatemala was formed and in 1947 it was recognized by the S.B.C. as a mission possibility.

To the new Convention the S.B.C. sent the Rev. William Webb and his wife. The work is still in its infancy. And although it now has twenty-four churches it does not influence the interior of Guatemala as it might.

Name two tracts published by the Baptist Spanish Publishing House that influenced the development of Baptist work in Guatemala.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The Baptist Convention of Guatemala was formed in

(1946)

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide, answer the following questions.

1. What was different about the development of the Christian faith in Latin America? _____

2. According to Russell, in what two ways did the Latin Baptist Witness respond to its situation and environment? _____

3. Who was Pablo Besson? _____

4. Outline the development of the work of the Evangelical Baptist Convention in Argentina. _____

5. What opportunity did the devastating earthquake of 1970 present to Baptists in Peru? _____

6. What part did Angus and Co. play in missionary efforts in the Caribbean? _____

7. Identify Frederick Crowe and Joseph Kelly. _____

8. What reasons does the author give for a promising future for Baptists in Belize? _____

9. How did Baptist Witness begin and develop in Guyana? _____

10. Identify the Baptist Co-operative Convention of Guyana. _____

11. Name three Baptist groups working in Suriname. _____

12. What is the importance of Paul Bell to the work in Honduras and Guatemala? _____

13. What was the influence of the Livingstone family on the origin of Baptist work in Colombia? _____

14. Describe the Witness of the Columbian Baptists since the S.B.C. involvement. _____

15. Who were the Westrup brothers and what is their significance to the Baptist Witness in Mexico? _____

16. Describe the work of William Powell. _____

17. How did the Baptist Witness reach Guatemala? _____

18. What influence did the Baptist Spanish Publishing House have on the development of the Baptist Witness in Guatemala? _____

19. When was the Baptist Convention of Guatemala formed? _____

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3).

1. Write a paper of not more than one page showing the influence of James Thompson on Baptist work throughout Latin America.
2. Explain the concept of Native Agency mentioned by Dr. Russell.
3. Describe the Baptist story in Ruatan.
4. Show the significance of the Baptist Witness in San Andrés and Providencia in opening Baptist work in Colombia.

5. Describe the persecution of Protestants in Columbia between 1948 and 1960.
6. List the publications used in Mexico to strengthen the Baptist Witness.

Advanced activity (Level 3).

1. Write a paper describing the growth of the Baptist Witness in Latin America.
2. Describe the influence of the Baptist Spanish Publishing House upon the formation and sustaining of the Baptist Witness in at least two places in Latin America.
3. Explain the importance of the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention in the establishment of the Mexican work.

Seminar Discussion

1. Discuss the Caribbean contribution to the establishment of the Baptist Witness in Latin America.
2. Discuss briefly the establishment and growth of the Baptist Witness in the following places: Argentina, Peru, Belize and Ruatan, Guyana, Suriname, Honduras, Colombia, Mexico, and Guatemala.
3. What do you think the future holds for the Baptist Witness in Latin America? Why?