A CHRONOLOGY OF PROTESTANT BEGINNINGS IN COLOMBIA: 1629-1996

By Clifton L. Holland, Director of PROLADES

(Last revised on 4 October, 2009)

Historical Overview of Colombia:

Spain conquered northern South America, later called New Granada:	1536-1539
First Roman Catholic diocese established:	1534
Independence from Spain declared:	1819
Gen. Simón Bolivar liberated New Granada (included the modern countries of Colombia, Panama, Venezuela, Ecuador) from Spain:	1819
The Federation of Gran Colombia formed:	1822
Ecuador and Venezuela become independent republics:	1829-1830
Republic of New Granada (included the Province of Panamá) established:	1830
New Granada renamed Colombia:	1863
Religious Liberty granted:	1886
Concordats with Rome established:	1887, 1974
War of a Thousand Days fought:	1899-1901
Republic of Panama becomes independent of Colombia:	1903
Religious/civil war *La Violencia*:	1948-1958
Number of North American Protestant Mission Agencies in 1989:	92
Number of North American Protestant Mission Agencies in 1996:	70
Indicates European Mission Society or Service Agency *	

Significant Protestant Beginnings:

1629 - *Puritan colonists settle on San Andrés and Providencia islands (Caribbean Sea) under British rule until 1786 (Treaty of Versalles), when the islands reverted to Spanish control.

1824 - *British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) colporteur James Thomson established a short-lived Colombian Bible Society.

1837 - *BFBS office established in Cartagena (1837-1838).

1853 - *Two Swiss evangelicals visited Bogotá, taught Bible studies and distributed New Testaments.

1855 - The Rev. Ramón Montsalvatge began evangelical work in Cartagena (1855-1867).

1856 - *BFBS agency was established in Bogotá, A.J. Duffield (1856-1859); depots were established in several cities to facilitate Bible distribution throughout the country;

the BFBS maintained a presence in Colombia until 1921, when Bible distribution was turned over to the American Bible Society (ABS).

1856 - Presbyterian Church U.S.A., Henry Barrington Pratt in Bogotá.

1860 - Jamaican Baptists begin work on San Andrés and Providencia islands.

1908 - Gospel Missionary Union (USA and Canada) in Buenaventura and Cali

1915 - Seventh-Day Adventists begin work on San Andrés and Providencia islands.

1918 - *The Evangelical Alliance Mission (Scandinavian Alliance Mission) in Cucúta

1918 - *British and Foreign Bible Society colporteur (BFBS), Seguno Pazmiño in Samaniego.

1921 - General Conference Seventh-Day Adventists

1921 - All BFBS work in Colombia transferred to the American Bible Society (ABS).

1923 - Christian and Missionary Alliance (in Ipiales and Cali)

1923 - The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM)

1923 - Protestant Episcopal Church in Cartagena and Santa Marta (English work)

1927 - Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Cali

1930 - Independent Baptist missionaries from Brazil begin work in Puerto Leticia.

1930 - Independent missionary in La Cumbre, near Cali

1932 – Early Pentecostal work in Sogamoso by Mr. and Mrs. Edward Wegner (Adah Winger Wegner); established the Colegio Americano for children; assisted the ABS with Bible distribution; established preaching points and congregations throughout the region; this ministry united with the U.S. Assemblies of God in 1942.

1933 - *Worldwide Evangelization Crusade (WEC International) in Cundinamarca y Meta; founded the Colombian Evangelical Crusade Churches.

1933 - United Brethren in Nariño

1934 - South American Indian Mission in La Guajira Peninsula (among the Guajiro, Motilón and Aruaco), now known as South American Mission (SAM); Canadian South American Mission.

1936 - Evangelical Lutheran Mission in Boyacá

1936 - Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ (merger in 1945, became United Pentecostal Church)

1937 - Calvary Pentecostal Holiness Mission in Magdelena

1937 - *Latin America Mission (LAM, Scottish Presbyterian roots, USA and Canada) begins work in Bolívar; established the Association of Evangelical Churches of the Caribbean (AIEC).

1938 - Independent self-supporting missionaries Mr. and Mrs. Verner Larsen (Verner was born in Denmark and emigrated to Canada) in Bucaramanga; was affiliated with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ in Canada (Oneness Pentecostal body).

1938 – Independent English Pentecostal missionaries John and Joanna Firth begin work in Bogotá; they became affiliated with the U.S.-based International Church of the Foursquare Gospel in 1952.

1939 - Association of Baptists for World Evangelization (ABWE)

1939 – Bolivian Indian Mission (later, Andes Evangelical Mission) in Boyacá

1941 - Southern Baptist Convention in Atlántico y Bolívar (now, Southern Baptist International Mission)

1941 – Wesleyan World Missions (Wesleyan Methodist Church World Mission) in Antioquía (1941-1943)

1942 - *South American Evangelical Union in Magdelena (among Motilones)

1942 – U.S. Assemblies of God Foreign Missions (absorbed the work begun by the Wegners in 1932).

1942 - International Church of the Foursquare Gospel was established in Barrancabermeja by Paul Anderson and Glen Martin and their families.

1943 - Child Evangelism Fellowship

1943 - Oriental Missionary Society (now, OMS International); established the Inter-American Association of Evangelical Churches in Colombia)

1944 - Evangelical Lutheran Church

1944 - New Tribes Mission (USA and Canada)

1945 - General Conference Mennonite Church

1945 - Mennonite Brethren Missions Services

1945 – United Pentecostal Church (formed by a merger of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ and the Pentecostal Church, Incorporated, in 1945); absorbed the early work begun by the Larsens in 1938; in 1969, the national church body (Iglesia Pentecostal Unida) split with the U.S. based United Pentecostal Church, which resulted in the formation of two sister denominations with virtually the same name.

1950 - The Evangelical Confederation of Colombia (CEDEC, an alliance of Evangelical groups: denominations and para-church organizations)

1951 - Assemblies of God Foreign Mission (USA), building on work begun in 1933.

1954 - By this date, the following new groups existed: Association of Evangelical Churches of the Caribbean (LAM), Independent Evangelical Tabernacles of the Casanare, and the United Evangelical Tabernacles of Colombia.

1954 - Church of God World Missions (Cleveland, TN),

1956 - Pan-American Mission (an independent national Pentecostal body)

1957 - *By this date there were two German-speaking Lutheran churches in Bogotá.

1958-60 – During this period, the following groups were established: Hispanic American Crusade, Pentecostal Church of God, Christian Brethren, World-Wide Missions, South American Mission Society, and the Society of Friends.

1961 - Church of God (Anderson, IN)

1962 - Christian Church and Churches of Christ

1962 - Wycliffe Bible Translators (USA and Canada)

1963 - Overseas Crusades, now known as OC International, Inc.

1963 - Campus Crusade for Christ

1964 - Mennonite Church

1964 - Elim Fellowship World Missions

1967 - Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada

1968 - The Body of Christ Church separated from the Pan-American Mission (Pentecostal)

1960s - Evangelical Association of Colombia (ACECOL, a Charismatic-oriented confederation of churches)

1968 - Evangelism-In-Depth nationwide campaign, led by members of the LAM.

1968 - Evangelical Covenant Church

1968 - World Baptist Fellowship Mission

1969 - FEBInternational (Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches of Canada)

1970 - Emmaus Evangelical Church

1970 - Church of God of Prophecy (separated from Church of God, Cleveland, TN, in Colombia and became affiliated with the Church of God of Prophecy in the USA in 1973)

1970 - Christian Church of North America

1970 - Christians In Action, Inc.

1970 - Deaf Missions International

1970s - Catholic Charismatic renewal movement impacts the nation; many evangelicals participated in this movement as Bible study leaders, preachers and counselors, etc.

1971 - Emanuel Evangelical Church separated from the Inter-American Churches established by OMS.

1971 - American Baptist Association

1971 - Baptist Bible Fellowship International

1973 - Christian Literature Crusade

1974 - *Philadelphia Evangelical Church (a Swedish Pentecostal mission)

1974 - Biblical Christian Churches of Caravans of the People of God (Charismatic Catholics that left the Roman Catholic Church and formed a group of Protestant churches).

1974 - Missionary Revival Crusade (nondenominational, Dallas, TX)

1974 - Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

1975 - The Christian Crusade Churches (Pentecostal-orientation) separated from the Colombian Evangelical Crusade Churches, which were established by WEC.

1975 – Bethesda Missionary Center (independent Pentecostal), founded by the Rev. Enrique Gómez Montealegre in Bogotá.

1976 - Church of the Nazarene

1976 - Presbyterian Church in America, Mission to the World

1958-76 - The following national churches were founded in this period: Independent Baptist Churches, Christian Church of the North, Evangelical Christian Church, House of Prayer, Trinitarian Fundamental Church, Evangelical Mission of Colombia, Autonomous Baptist Church of Colombia, and Union Church of Bogotá.

1974 - Spanish World Gospel Mission

1978 - World Vision International (a relief and development organization)

1979 - CLADE I (First Latin American Conference on Evangelism, sponsored by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association; the Latin American Theological Fraternity formed)

1979-92 - Formation of many (about 12) regional pastoral associations throughout Colombia, such as the Association of Evangelical Ministers of Medellín (1979), the District Association of Ministers of the Gospel in Bogotá (1989), etc.

1980-83 – International Trinitarian “Light of the World” Evangelical Work established in Colombia by the Venezuelan-based denomination, founded in 1968.

1982 - The World Evangelization Crusade (WEC) separated from the Colombian Evangelical Crusade Churches.

1983 - Maranatha Baptist Mission

1983 - International Charismatic Mission (MCI) founded by César and Claudia Castellanos in Bogotá; developed the G12 Vision of cell groups.

1985 - Brethren in Christ World Missions

1985 - Reformed Baptist Mission Services

1986 - International Outreach Ministries

1987 - Formation of COMIBAM-Colombia (part of the Ibero-American Missionary Congress movement, which aims to train and send national trans-cultural missionaries from Latin America to the rest of the world)

1987 - Action International Ministries of Canada

1989 - Merger of CEDEC and ACECOL to form CEDECOL (Evangelical Confederation of Colombia)

1989 - Enterprise Development International

1989 - Team Expansion, Inc.

1990 - Action International Ministries, USA

1990 - Baptist International Missions

1990 - Impact International

1990 – Worldwide Revival Center (*Centro de Avivamiento Mundial*) established by Ricardo Rodríguez in Bogotá; a split from MCI.

1991 - Fellowship International Mission

1993 - Reformed Synod separated from the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Colombia.

1993 – Movimiento Alfa y Omega (MAYO), led by Dr. Néstor Chamorro Pesantes, becomes independent of Campus Crusade for Christ; MAYO developed with a Charismatic emphasis on university campuses and with strong relationships with Catholic Charismatics.

1994 - Habitat for Humanity International

1994 - International Needs USA

1994 - Macedonia World Baptist Missions

1994 - The Sowers International

1995 - BCM International

1995 - Christ for the City International (affiliated with Latin America Mission)

1996 - Calvary International

Date of Origin Unknown:

Baptist Missions to Forgotten, Christian Aid Mission, International Teams USA, Youth For Christ-USA, Youth With A Mission (YWAM).

The following Pentecostal denominations were also established (date of origin unknown): Iglesia Cristiana Pentecostés, Iglesia Cruzada Evangélica Colombiana, Iglesia de Cristo Pentecostal, Iglesia Evangélica Cristiana "Casa de Oración," Iglesia Evangélica Cristiana Independiente, Iglesias Evangélica Pentecostal, and Misión Cristiana La Fe.

NOTES:

(1) Dates listed indicate the earliest ministry or in case of discrepancies, the date most frequently indicated by the sources.

(2) During "La Violencia" (1948-1958) more than forty-seven Evangelical churches and chapels were completely destroyed by fire and dynamite, many more were damaged, and over 200 primary schools were closed, mostly by government order and others due to violence. Altogether, 79 Protestants (men, women and children) (Glover and Kane 1960:392).

(3) North American Agencies include U.S. and Canadian.

SOURCES:

(1) Daryl L. Platt, "Who Represents the Evangelical Churches in Latin America? A Study of the Evangelical Fellowship Organizations." Pasadena, CA: an unpublished Doctor of Missiology Dissertation, School of World Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary, June 1991. Used by permission of the author.
(2) Juana Burford de Buchanan, ***La Iglesia Evangélica en Colombia: Una Historia***. Santafé de Bogotá: WEC International (Asociación Pro-Cruzada Mundial), 1995.
(3) PROLADES (Latin American Socio-religious Studies Program), international headquarters in San José, Costa Rica: www.prolades.com, prolades@racsa.co.cr
(4) Dayton Roberts and John Siewert, editors: ***Mission Handbook of U.S. and Canadian Christian Ministries Overseas*** (MARC 1989).
(5) John A. Siewert and Edna G. Valdez, editors: ***Mission Handbook of U.S. and Canadian Christian Ministries Overseas*** (MARC 1997).
(6) Linda J. Weber and Dotsey Welliver, editors: ***Mission Handbook of U.S. and Canadian Christian Ministries Overseas, 2007-2009*** (EMIS-Billy Graham Center, 2007).
(7) Burgess, Stanley M., editor. "Colombia" in the ***International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements.*** Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001-2002.
(8) Robert Hall Glover and J. Herbert Kane, ***The Progress of World-Wide Missions*** (Harper & Row, 1960).