

**History of Baptists in Chile**  
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**Baptist Heritage and Identity Commission - World Baptist Alliance**  
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**Introduction**

In the effort of writing a history about the origin and development of Baptist work in Chile, we provide a brief overview of the most relevant facts, presenting a tribute to the visionaries, pioneers, hardened and slaughtered brothers, who shaped the Baptist history.

At beginning it was difficult for the pioneers to take an unexpectedly great work, especially when there were big impediments, such as: the scarcity of people, the towns where Baptist churches emerged in the South of our country had a reduced population, they did not have the financial means and the majority of people worked or lived in the country side and they should attend to the services in towns or cities.

It was so, that with great enthusiasm and hard works that finally evangelical Baptist work succeeded and spread throughout Chile. From its early start they contacted other independent Baptist churches, to strengthen the character of National Baptist churches in our country, and we have to mention the great and valuable support that the Southern Baptist Convention of America would give at the beginning and other Baptist Bodies from around the world would give latter.

Currently, there are three large organizations: Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches of Chile, National Convention of Evangelical Baptist Churches and Bible Baptist Churches. This paper will only give details of the two first mentioned organizations.

This brief presentation of the Baptist History in our country begins with the arrival of Diego Thompson in 1821, considered the first Baptist to reach our country.

## Diego Thompson

Diego Thompson arrived in Buenos Aires in 1818 with the vision of serving God by promoting the Scriptures and the implementation of Lancasterian<sup>1</sup> method of popular education. The Bible-centered system of education, according to him, was the key on the development of any nation. In 1820. The success of Thompson in Buenos Aires, with more than 100 schools with about five thousand children of both genders, caught the attention of the Chilean government of that time. Therefore the Supreme Director Mr. Bernardo O'Higgins invited Mr. Diego Thompson to Chile in 1821, becoming the first Baptist on record to arrive in our country. The purpose of this invitation was to implement a series of popular schools with the Lancasterian method that had had great success in Argentina. The missionary Robert Cecil Moore would said, "The first Bible that came legally to Chile was brought by Diego Thompson with the express authorization of the President O'Higgins in 1821."<sup>2</sup>

Despite the tough opposition of the Roman Catholic Church, Thomson remained for nearly one year in Chile, importing and distributing the Word of God. Thompson, no doubt, was the forerunner of the Evangelical Educational work in Chile, devoting himself to expand careful and wisely the teachings of the New Testament under the Lancasterian system. Despite the control and strong opposition of the Roman Catholic Church in our country, and that the conditions did not allowed to carry the evangelical work openly and calmly, thanks to the method of teaching, and the support of Mr. Bernardo O'Higgins, Thompson managed to start, the First School in the September 18, 1821 under the name "Normal School Lancasterian" in the chapel of the University of San Felipe (the building of the current Municipal Theatre of Santiago) with 200 students.

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<sup>1</sup> That system was created by a British Quaker professor Mr. Lancaster, by which the teacher instructed the students fittest and they in turn would give lessons to the least developed and used as a textbook the Bible.

<sup>2</sup> Cecil, Moore, Recuerdos; vivencias de un misionero bautista, Santiago, Chile, 1978, p.37.

Another Lancaster school was founded in the houses that belonged to the Society of Jesus, (Former National Congress). In Valparaiso they also opened a school in June of 1822 with 130 students. In late 1821, Don Antonio Eston, arrived in Chile hired by the Government, to help Thompson.

Due to his outstanding educational work in Chile, Thompson received the Chilean citizenship, extended by Mr. Bernardo O'Higgins, on May 31, 1822. The System of teaching did not prosper in Chile therefore on June 18, 1822, Diego Thompon sailed from Valparaiso to Peru.

### **German Colonization**

During the two consecutive terms (1841 to 1846, and 1846 to 1851) of the presidency of General Manuel Bulnes, the first Germans immigrants arrived in the South of Chile. The immigration of Germans to Chile was initiated by the "Selective Immigration Law" which was promulgated in 1845 under President Bulnes, and which ultimate purpose was to bring people with a middle and upper socio-cultural level to colonize the southern territories of our country. All the colonists who arrived were hard working, enterprising people and many of them brought their capital to invest it in the development of agriculture and industry in Chile. While the immigration of German colonists were sporadic and sparse at the beginning, with government intervention such immigration gained strength and continuity, and therefore the country welcomed a large community of German colonists scattered in different places in the south of our country. They kept their culture and religious beliefs.

"In 1884 some German colonists arrived in South Chile and settled in places of El Salto, Contulmo and Quillen Viejo. Several of these families were Baptists. The most distinguished ones were: Reinicke, Roloff, Berg, Meier and Lichtenberg."<sup>3</sup> Once families settled, they started to develop their knowledge and skills on businesses that would allow them to have economic stability and a peaceful and

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<sup>3</sup> Valdivia, Isías. "Wenceslao Valdivia: Primer Bautista Chileno", Valparaíso, Chile, 1947, p. 19.

normal family life in the country that welcomed them. A couple of years later some German colonists in that area experienced an evangelization revival.

### **German Baptist Revival**

"Philip Meier, a layman of great spirituality, initiated a revival among the German colonists and they organized at least three Baptist churches in this decade, one of these in Quillen, other in Contulmo and in Victoria."<sup>4</sup> Isaias Valdivia in his book noticed, "Thus, and after years of tireless work, the first German Baptist Church in the colony of Contulmo is organized in 1892. As they continued to work among their countrymen, the Lord blessed them with new converts. The second church was founded in the neighborhood of "El Salto", in July 20, 1894."<sup>5</sup> It is important to highlight that these churches whose worship was initially performed in German, as a result of the revival, opened themselves to worship in Spanish in order to evangelize and educate Chileans with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is how Wenceslao Valdivia, considered the first Chilean Baptist, embraced the doctrines and principles Baptist, being baptized by immersion in 1896 in the Baptist church of Quillen. The German Baptist colonist Enrique Reinike was very important in this process. 'The brothers Joseph and German Lichtenberg also organized Spanish services on Sunday afternoon for Chileans."<sup>6</sup> "To our knowledge, these were the first Baptist Spanish preaching in Chile. The efforts had its fruits in the first Chilean Baptist preachers, Abraham Chavez and Juan Antonio Gatica, among others... "<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Moore, Roberto C., "Los Evangélicos en marcha...en América Latina" Editorial Evangélicas Bautistas: Casa Bautista de Publicaciones E.E.U.U., Junta Bautista de Publicaciones Argentina, Librería el Lucero, Santiago-Chile, 1959, pp.71,72

<sup>5</sup> Valdivia, Isaías. "Wenceslao Valdivia: Primer Bautista Chileno", Valparaíso, Chile, 1947, p.19

<sup>6</sup> Muñoz R., Humberto, "Nuestros Hermanos Evangélicos" editorial Salisina, 2ª edición, Stgo-Chile, 1984, pp.106,107

<sup>7</sup> Moore, Roberto C., "Los Evangélicos en marcha...en América Latina" Editorial Evangélicas Bautistas: Casa Bautista de Publicaciones E.E.U.U., Junta Bautista de Publicaciones Argentina, Librería el Lucero, Santiago-Chile, 1959, pp.71,72

We also note the following brothers: Gualberto Mella, Nieves Zapata, Jose Saez, Pedro Bar, Erasmo Rodriguez, Rosa Lagos, Manriquez and others. "<sup>8</sup>

### **Baptists and Missionary Alliance**

"Henry L. Weiss, a Mennonite who spoke German, and his wife, arrived in Concepcion, via Panama, in April 1897 on their own initiative; a Presbyterian missionary had suggested him to do evangelism in the South of Chile."<sup>9</sup> Weiss was the first missionary of the newly formed Christian and Missionary Alliance who came to our country. "A committee of colonists from the (German) revival convinced him to be their spiritual leader, therefore he settled in Victoria. He began his work and soon he started a preaching ministry among Chileans."<sup>10</sup> Without much knowledge of the language and no financial support from the U.S., H. Weiss received great collaboration from the German Baptists installed in Chile. Since the evangelizing project was founded on the German area and since they were predominantly Baptist, it allowed the extension of Baptist beliefs to the Chileans in Contulmo, Quillen, El Salto and Victoria. Robert Cecil Moore recalls: "I had just reached the Christian and Missionary Alliance that joined their ranks a few German-speaking Baptist churches and other Spanish-speaking German immigrants had founded in the district around Victoria, Temuco and Osorno - Puerto Varas."<sup>11</sup> Thus the Baptists doctrines and principles were spread in the South of Chile, considering and recognizing our German Baptist brothers as the initiators of the Baptist movement in Chile.

### **William Mac-Donald**

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.21

<sup>9</sup> Valdivia, Isaías. "Wenceslao Valdivia: Primer Bautista Chileno", Valparaíso, Chile, 1947, p 18.

<sup>10</sup> Diamantes Bautistas, UBACH, Santiago-Chile, 1983. p.21

<sup>11</sup> R.C.Moore, "Recuerdos, vivencias de un misionero bautista", Santiago, Chile, 1978, pp.37,38

In 1888 William MacDonald, Scottish Baptist brother, arrived in Chile to serve as a teacher hired by the Government in the British colony of Púa, near the city of Victoria.

*"Since the work of the Christian and Missionary Alliance had grown with the arrival of other missionaries and spread to Osorno. MacDonald came to the mission in 1899. The Alliance was not Baptist, it is true, but was based on the support of German and much of its missionaries belonged to the Baptist denomination. MacDonald worked effectively with them for seven years. Apparently, MacDonald, of all missionaries, was the favorite among Chilean pastors and worked especially in the district nearest his residence in the area north and south of Temuco."*<sup>12</sup>

Although MacDonald began his work of evangelization in Chile within the Christian and Missionary Alliance, he continued to feel his discomfort by their differences on issues related to administrative, ecclesiastical and doctrinal work that the Alliance was doing. "During some time, MacDonald maintained doctrinal controversies and difficulties concerning the governance of the church with his colleagues. These disagreements culminated in a conference held in early 1908 in the city of Valdivia. Some of the missionaries disapproved the attitude of MacDonald because he asked support from a Baptist church abroad. MacDonald, however, defended himself saying that each sector was autonomous, according to the administrative system of the Mission, therefore, he had the right to request support from any evangelical source, since the mission of the Alliance, was nothing but a group of evangelical church."<sup>13</sup> R. Cecil Moore referring to what William MacDonald experienced said, "But he was not happy. His colleagues accused him of disloyalty when they found out that he was writing to various parts of the world, England, Canada and the United States, trying to find support for the Baptist work. MacDonald told them that he was not guilty of being disloyal to the constitution of

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<sup>12</sup> Moore, Cecil. "Hombres y Hechos Bautistas de Chile". Editoriales Evangélicas Bautistas, sin fecha, Imprenta siglo XX, Stgo-Chile, p.10

<sup>13</sup> Pacheco, Elizabeth. "Guillermo MacDonald; el apóstol de la Frontera", 2ª edición, publicada por el Comité de Publicaciones de las Organizaciones Femeninas Bautistas de los Países Hispanoamericanos, 1956, p.55.

the Alliance that gave freedom to every missionary to seek for help among their denominations.”

### **UBACH Foundation**

Soon, the problem was a crisis. MacDonald saw, or knew firsthand about a missionary of the Alliance who baptized a baby. Then, there was break in both sides. In the annual session in early 1908, the Alliance took a decisive action against MacDonald. “But it seems that he, in turn, had already sent his resignation as a missionary. He had defended his argument on several occasions at general meetings of pastors and missionaries, therefore many of the Chilean pastors were convinced of the validity of his arguments and joined him in his break with the Alliance in January 1908.”<sup>14</sup> This resulted in the departure or formal withdrawal of William MacDonald from the Alliance. But he would not leave alone, other 300 brothers and Baptist leaders from the Christian and Missionary Alliance left as well.

They began gathering in a small field that belonged to MacDonald in the town of Freire. Within these 300 Baptist brothers stood out for their important work: Wenceslao Valdivia, Abraham Chavez, Juan Antonio Gatica, Jose Tenorio Espinosa, David Mancilla, Juan Domingo Alvarez, Joaquín Mora, Jose Ramirez, industrialist Henry Reinicke and others. MacDonald, visited many churches of the people who left with him, and on April 26, 1908 in the town of Cajon near Temuco, they founded the Evangelical Baptist Union of Chile. The churches represented at that convention were: Lastarria, Gorbea, Molco, Mune, Cajón and a group of brothers Huilio. This important convention was attended by the Baptist missionary WGBagby (member of the U.S. Southern Baptist who was working in Brazil). He traveled to Chile to participate as important Fraternal Advisory in the convention. MacDonald, considered the principal founder of Baptist work in our country, with the brothers and leaders who accompanied him, started to spread the Gospel in Chile, according to the Baptist doctrines and principles. Shortly after Chilean

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<sup>14</sup> Moore, Cecil. “Hombres y Hechos Bautistas de Chile”. Editoriales Evangélicas Bautistas, sin fecha, Imprenta siglo XX, Stgo-Chile, pp.10,11

Baptists led by MacDonald, contacted with the Baptists of Argentina and Brazil, which were related with the Southern Baptist Convention in the United States of America. This led them to sign an agreement with the Foreign Mission Board of Southern Baptists, which was formalized with the arrival of the first American missionaries in Chile in 1917. It is important to highlight that the first Baptist work in our country, also had the cooperation of Baptists from Mexico and Cuba.

### **Chronological Growth of UBACH**

1914 – On June 7, the First Baptist Church of Temuco was organized. At the meeting chaired by Pastor Juan Domingo Alvarez, Manuel Valderrama was appointed as secretary and Jose Mercedes Ulloa as treasurer.

1917 - The Board of Foreign Missions of the Southern Baptist Convention of the United States sent the first missionaries, Mrs. William and Mary Davidson, who began Missionary Baptist work in the city of Santiago under the vision and guidance of William MacDonald.

1917 - (April) Baptist Church of Valdivia was incorporated as a member of Union and Pastor Juan Domingo Alvarez provides important collaboration as a missionary to that church.

1919 - in January, W.E. Davidson and wife, the missionary Frank Marrs and wife, along with the Pastor Polidoro Aguilera and wife, organized the First Baptist Church of Santiago of Chile, but this church according to the minutes "register their organization under the pastorate Abaddon Pacheco of the April 20, 1920, and the church observes this date as their anniversary. It is probably a reorganization."<sup>15</sup>

1919 - In August of that year the First Baptist Church of Concepcion joined the Baptist Convention of Chile.

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<sup>15</sup> Moore, Cecil. "Hombres y Hechos Bautistas de Chile". Editoriales Evangélicas Bautistas, sin fecha, Imprenta siglo XX, Stgo-Chile, pp.37,38

1919 - In October the prominent missionary Robert Cecil Moore and his wife arrive in Valparaíso, and then moved to the capital, to support, in principle, the Bible education to the brothers of the First Baptist Church of Santiago.

1920 - In January, the missionary R. Cecil Moore, moved to Concepción to support the work in that area.

1920 - At the end of this year the missionary Mss. Agnes Graham comes to Chile. William MacDonald, saw the need for a school to educate especially the children of Baptist brothers and leaders. MacDonald, established contacts with the Southern Baptist Convention of America and managed to get money to buy land and build the first building the Baptist School of Temuco. In addition, he managed the appointment of a missionary teacher, Miss Agnes Graham. As the director she organized the administration and teaching of the School. "In 1920 the illiteracy in Chile was almost 50%. During the years of service of Mss. Agnes and the Baptist school, this percentage was reduced by half, certainly this was due to many factors, but it is also true that Agnes Gram and her colleagues had a significant part in such achievement."<sup>16</sup>

1921 - The missionary Joseph Lancaster Hart and wife began a Bible Institute in their home in the city of Temuco. The institute prepared biblical and theologically the pastors and leaders of the Baptist convention. "Ms. Hart provided effective cooperation in this effort as well as in the Baptist School and in many other phases of the field ... In 1934 they moved to Concepción for a while, but a year and a half later they moved to Antofagasta to open a new field the North."<sup>17</sup>

1921 - October 11 the Baptist Evangelical Society (SEB) is created, composed by foreign missionaries from the Foreign Mission Board, Richmond USA

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<sup>16</sup> Moore, Cecil. "Hombres y Hechos Bautistas de Chile". Editoriales Evangélicas Bautistas, sin fecha, Imprenta siglo XX, Stgo-Chile, p.50

<sup>17</sup> Moore, Cecil. "Hombres y Hechos Bautistas de Chile". Editoriales Evangélicas Bautistas, sin fecha, Imprenta siglo XX, Stgo-Chile, p.53

1921 - On October 26 of this year the Second Baptist Church of Santiago was organized. The founding members were: Solomon Mussiett Musalem, Berta Mussiett Channels, William Davidson and Mary Davidson, Claudine Villanueva, Manuel Morales, Felicita Valdes, Luis Carrasco, Juana Ulloa, Manuel Gonzalez, Irene Flores, Carmen and Luisa Medina Bruna Rubio.

1923 - By this year there were 29 churches with 1,154 members, 12 women unions and 10 youth unions.

1923 – The Missionary Baptist Women's Union is organized in Concepcion and in 1924, in Temuco they approve its bylaws, its first President was sister Ceferina of Fernandez and the missionary Maria Moore was chosen as Secretary General.

1925 - The Publications Board "The Lucifer" formally starts in Concepcion.

1926 - On May 8, the First Baptist Church of Talca is organized with six members, led by the missionary James McGavock and John Vallette. That same day J. Vallette was chosen as pastor, he was very young and was married to the sister of Pastor Abdon Pacheco, Mrs. Milagros Pacheco. The next day they would add 13 new members, baptized by the pastor and missionary S. MacGavock.

1929 - Under the direction of missionary W.Q. Maer the First Youth Convention is organized in the city of Temuco.

1931 - The magazine "La Ventana" is created. Mary Moore, is the first Director of this publication.

1933 – The Board of loans and construction of temples is organized for Baptist churches in Chile.

1934 - Feminine Institutes are initiated.

1936 - On March 15, this year was organized the First Baptist Church of Valparaiso with the presence of pastors William MacDonald, James McGavock, Solomon Mussiett and delegations from the First and Second Baptist Church of

Santiago. The founding members were, Pastor Isaiah Valdivia, Carlos Espinoza and his wife, Francisco Cardenas and his wife, Julia E. Cardenas, Edelmira Sanchez, Catalina Cuadra, Guillermina de Figueroa, Elisa Gutierrez, Adela Sanchez, Ernesto Labrín and Eduvina Albornoz.

1937 - The First Baptist Church of Antofagasta starts under the leadership of missionary Joseph Lancaster Hart with the help of Tennessee Hart, Maximinus Fernandez and Ceferina Fernandez. In Antofagasta there was a group of 16 Protestant brothers who were in charge of the Methodist-Presbyterian Pastor Emeterio Baez. "Emeterio Baez decided to go south and asked Hart to take over this group."<sup>18</sup> Most of these brothers changed to the Baptist church and in 1938 they constituted a small local church.

1938 - Unfortunately due to a mechanical accident Pr. Maximino Fernandez died on February 5 of that year. "Pastor Fernandez...was replaced by his most accomplished disciple, the young missionary pastor-preacher and colporteur from the South: Manuel Muñoz Gaete."<sup>19</sup> Pastor Manuel Muñoz Gaete reaches Antofagasta in September this year, and began missionary work in almost all of northern Chile, including Iquique and Tocopilla. He supported small Baptist church of Chuquicamata and initiates the church of Pedro de Valdivia, among others.

1938 - W.Q. Maer starts the first summer camp in the town of Labranza.

1938 - Theology teaching began. The first Rector is the missionary Mr. MacGavock. That same year they start the building of the Seminary at 312 Argomedo Street in the city of Santiago.

1939 - Mary McConnell started the Vacation Bible School and she was the first Director.

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<sup>18</sup> Diamantes Bautistas, UBACH, Santiago-Chile, 1983. p.12

<sup>19</sup> Diamantes Bautistas p.13

1941 - Brother Honorio Espinoza took over the rectory of the Seminary and he gave a new and refreshing boost to the Teaching Emphasis, for the Baptist theological education in Chile.

1944 - In July this year the missionary pastor Manuel Gaete arrived in Copiapo. He devoted himself to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and did some work in this city. He also spread Baptist doctrines and principles in the region of Atacama and Coquimbo.

1945 - The Home Care for Children “Centro Bienhechor” was built in Antofagasta and the “Elementary School N°8 Peggy Hart”, were created in the same center. The first Director was Mss. Lois Hart.

1955 - The home Care for Children of Chillan is inaugurated, the first director is sister Carolina Arancibia.

1956 - Pastor Alizandro Vega with his family on May 6 of that year, inaugurated the Baptist activity in Puerto Montt with the assistance of several brothers, among whom were: Pablo Navarrete, Eusebio Castillo, Lastenia Castillo, Stellite Diaz de Vega, Sarah and Esther Castillo.

1956 – The First Baptist church of Ñuñoa is constituted with 29 members registered. They started as mission in 1950 under the guidance of Missionary María Pimm de Moore.

1965 - The First Pediatric Medical Center is inaugurated in Antofagasta, its first Director is Mss. Lois Hart.

1970 - The First Board of Evangelization is organized. Missionary Evans Holmes and brother Lamar Tribble work hard for the development of its mission. This initially started in 1964, at el Tabo, in 1965 at the National Assembly they created a Committee of Evangelization and by 1966 the National Coordinator of Evangelization Commission was created.

1974 – Support to the military government. Pastor Luis Mussieth Canales, President of the Baptist Convention of Chile, along with other senior leaders of evangelical organizations, signed the Declaration of Support to the “legitimate” government of the Armed Forces. This Statement of the Evangelical Churches was granted to Chilean General Augusto Pinochet, on December 13, 1974. The statement highlights the following:

*"The evangelicals cannot keep silent about the orchestrated action of Marxism ... that viciously slander our government as lacking in the smallest human rights principles ... atheistic Marxism weapon is being used to deny the legitimacy of our government.*

*1. - Chile boldly fell into the clutches of Marxism ...*

*2. - The pronouncement of the armed forces ... it was God's answer to the prayer of all who believe that Marxism is a satanic force ... at it's the best.*

*4. - Human rights are guaranteed in Chile by the "Declaration of Principles Governing Board" and has been proven through over a year ...*

*5. - ... Recognize then as the ultimate authority in this country the government of the military junta, which, to free us from Marxism, came to answer our prayers.*

*We pray to the Almighty that He guide our leaders ...*

1978 – The COMPLA committee, in charge of planning and coordinating the activities of the convention, was created. This is formed by 41 persons and chaired by the President of the Convention. This committee studies, corrects, advises and recommends the actions and policies to follow before an issue gets to the national Assemble.

1995 - The Southern Baptist Convention of the United States ended their formal support and cooperation with the UBACH. The Evangelical Baptist Society donates every tangible property (El Tabo, Lincarray, etc.) to the UBACH. One of the important features of the Evangelical Baptist Society was the Biblical-Theological strong support they provided to the Baptist churches of Chile. All literature, ie, the Sunday School, Bible expositor, etc..

2006 - Sister Raquel Contreras (wife of former Seminary Rector Guillermo Catalan) during her presidency had the motto: "Unity in Diversity", although the emphasis

was not the vision the UBACH. During her presidency there was a Reconciliation and Forgiveness between the UBACH and National Baptist Churches.

2010 - (July) UNAPAB (Union of Baptist Pastors of Chile) approved the Pastoral Ministry of women under the same rules and conditions as men.

2011 - The UBACH resumes relations with Southern Baptist churches, under new conditions in regard to missions and education.

### **Contributions of UBACH**

Currently the Union of Baptist Churches of Chile continues its growth, education, fellowship and administration in a stable and consolidated way. There is no doubt that it is the evangelical Baptist entity with bigger representation in our country. UBACH has a solid National Union of Youth, a huge Women Union, a Theological Seminary, a National Board of Publications, Board of Loans and Construction of Temples, a Board of Evangelization, it has several Baptist schools including the nationally well known Baptist School of Temuco, a Medical Center in Antofagasta, Pastors and leaders who work on the foundation and strengthening of churches and for the Kingdom of God and several leaders and brothers intellectually prominent the Chilean society, among other contributions.

### **National Convention of Evangelical Baptist Churches (Chilean Mission)**

As in all historical fact there are usually different versions. There exist several versions of the history of how the National Convention of Evangelical Baptist (Former Corporation of Baptist Churches of the Chilean Mission).

One of the versions narrates that it was born from the destitution of three trouble makers from the UBACH in the year 1927. According to this version among these brothers there was Ismael Neveu the leader of the Chilean Mission. Nevertheless

according to some research I have found out that those three people have nothing to do with the people that did initiate the Chilean Mission Convention.

Another version accounts of differences that Pr. Ismael Neveu presented with the missionaries regarding the administration of resources that lead the Pastor to leave the Convention in 1940.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, the version of the story I prefer to remember is the one that initiates in 1937.

### **Chronological growth of Chilean Mission Baptist Churches**

1937 - Ismael Z. Neveu, with his family and the brothers: Paul Guajardo and his wife Dina Cereceda, Pablo Parada and his wife Margaret, Segundo Parada and Eusebio Isla, started an independent Baptist Church at the town of Cherquenco.

1939 - By the end of the year the National Baptist Church of Cherquenco led by Pastor Ismael Neveu, together with the Important and active support of brother Eusebio Isla was a solid and growing church.

Pastor Neveu contacted 4 independent Baptist churches to have formal relationship with them. The churches were: Tomé led by Francisco Parra, Concepción, led by José Martín Sepúlveda, 1<sup>st</sup> Church of San Bernardo led by Clemente Navarrete, Chillán led by Justo Valdebenito.

These 5 churches decided to join together in fellowship, evangelization and mutual support.

Thus the National Baptist Churches contacted other independent groups and started several missionary works in diverse areas of Chile.

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<sup>20</sup> "First there was a big division that stands until today. It was because Pr. Ismael Neveu and the Second Baptist Church of Temuco during a long time resented the direction of the Mission." Anderson, Justo. Historia de los bautistas, Tomo III. El Paso Texas: CBP, 1990. Pg. 157

1942 - The magazine "Apostolic Light" was created by pastor and missionary Neveu Ismael with the purpose of maintaining contact and unity among the churches.

1947 - In Cherquenco leaders of the Movement National Baptist churches laid their hands on Pastor Ismael Neveu, and ordered him as National Missionary.

1948 - Brother German Duran was appointed President of the Youth of the National Baptist Churches, a position he held until January 1960.

1949 - (April) The Bro. Ricardo Escobar is accepted by the assembly of the National Baptist churches, with his church (21 members) who gathered in the city of San Bernardo.

- Baptist Churches National Movement, gather in the city of Temuco on September 18 that same year to formally begin this movement to a corporation to be known as "Chilean Baptist Mission." By this time they had added the churches of Curacautín, Lanco, Panguipulli Collipulli Perquenco and Temuco.

1951 - The concentration of the National Baptist Churches held in Lancaster, was ordained Missionary Pastor Eusebio Isla for evangelistic work.

1952 - At a special meeting was held the "1st Annual Meeting of the Convention of Baptist Churches of the Chilean Mission", approving its statutes in the city of San Bernardo. Also, Pr. Gerardo Calderon Hernandez was elected as the first President of the recent Convention of Baptist Churches of the Chilean Mission.

1954 - On May 14 of that year the Convention of Baptist Churches of the Chilean Mission, achieved the Legal Status, in line with the bylaws approved by the Ministry of Justice of Chile.

1960 – By that year the following Churches were added: Talca (Pr. Marcial Miranda), Reumén, Púa, Traiguén and 2nd of San Bernardo (Pr. Juan Bustamante Galleguillos)

1960 - From the 1st Chilean Mission Baptist Church of San Bernardo was born the Church of Lo Espejo and this church helped on the plantation of the Lo Valledor church. Church of Condors de Chile was also planted by 1<sup>st</sup> of San Bernardo and condors de chile planted El Sembrador church.

1965 - At the 14th Annual Meeting of the Convention of Baptist Churches of the M.CH. in the city of Talca, the brother German Duran Valdebenito, is elected President of the Convention, a position he held until 1990 (he lasted 25 years as president). His presidency was notorious for representing the Chilean Mission Baptist Convention in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Puerto Rico and the U.S.. He supported theological education and pastoral care of pastoral leaders of the Chilean Mission, as well as friendliness, brotherhood and working together for a stronger body of Baptist churches nationwide.

1966 - Brother Norindo M. Avila, of the Church of Lanco was appointed as Evangelist.

### **Support to the Military Government**

1974 - Vice President of the Chilean Mission Baptist Convention, Pastor Ricardo Escobar along with other senior leaders of evangelical organizations, signed the Declaration of Support for the legitimate government of the Armed Forces. This Statement of the Evangelical Church is granted to Chilean General Augusto Pinochet, the December 13, 1974.

We have to mention here that, even though there was group that supported Military Government there were several brothers and sisters who were persecuted, exiled, or made disappear. The political division of the country was carried into the churchedefendants and in the other hand there were the persecuted.

1981 - Pastor Sandoval Job Isla founded the Theological Institute of Baptist Chilean Mission, beginning with 12 students at the home<sup>21</sup> of brother Germán Silva

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<sup>21</sup> It was actually at the garage of the car of German Silva. Job Isla, the founder used to tell that during the day would would put chairs and tables to study and at night would put the car on the garage.

Pávez. The following year the Convention financially supported the educational project, leasing facilities for the development of Biblical Theological education.

1985 - For this year the Chilean Mission Baptist Convention already had new churches such as: La Roca, Smyrna, The Redeemer, El Cortijo, in the Metropolitan Region:

Laja, Los Angeles, Yumbel, Monte Aguila, Rucamilla, Curihue and Pilinhue<sup>22</sup> in the South of Chile.

1994 – The President of the American Baptist Churches (ABC) Don Hector Gonzalez in the company's Latin American Area Director the Rev. José Norat of Puerto Rico came to the Annual Meeting of the Convention of Baptist Churches of the Chilean Mission. That year they signed an agreement between ABC and the Chilean Mission to work primarily in Theological Education.

1995 – The first missionaries that arrived in Santiago Chile were Pr. Stephen and Sheila Heneise. They took charge of the Chilean Mission Baptist Theological Institute. They gave a new impetus and renovation in terms of theological content and because of that the institute achieves its incorporation as a member of the Association of Theological Seminaries and Institutes of the Southern Cone of Latin America.

1999 – Missionaries Rev. Juan Gutierrez and his wife Rev. Kristina Gutierrez arrived in Chile for one year to replace the Heneise on their year to the US.

2000 - Missionaries Carlos and Mayra Bonilla arrived in Santiago to pursue teaching at the Institute in replacement of the missionaries Gutierrez.

- Missionaries Dwight and Barbara Bolick also arrived in Chile, to work on improving the living conditions of the churches of the Lakes District, particularly

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<sup>22</sup> The Churches of Curihue and Pilinhue were some of the first churches in the Mapuche area in the southern region of Los Rios.

using the skills acquired in their business studies to focus on sustainable economic development especially the Mapuche area.

2003 - One of the characteristics of the Chilean Mission, is its conservative style in the liturgical aspect. Of the 50 churches of the National Baptist Convention (Chilean Mission) almost all of the churches identify with this trend, and only a few churches, located in the metropolitan area mostly favor a charismatic worship style. These same facts led to some tensions between the leaders and pastors, but were finally overcome. The most serious conflict happened, starting this year, when some pastors in the city of Santiago, adopted a radical model G-12 Cellular Vision of Cesar Castellano, ending the congregational government and marginalizing the work and objectives of the Convention. This led to the withdrawal of at least 5 churches.

2004- By that year the work of the missionaries showed its first fruits, the majority teachers of the theological institute of the conventions were Chileans again including its Rector and Dean, this time there were the students graduated of the new generation who completed their theological studies in other institutions and abroad, such as Victor Aguilar Susan Calliñir, Lucila Alvarez and Patricia Cofré.

2006 – There was a ceremony of reconciliation with the UBACH, and during those years the mission Chilena has also worked together with other churches from Latin América in the Program Hay Vida en Jesús, which is emphasis is the evangelization of the continent.

2008 – Rev. Margarita Campos was ordained as pastor, being the first Baptist woman in Chile to be ordained by the Pastors Board of the Convention. Currently there are 5 women ordained and several others on the process.

2010 – The earthquake of February that severally impacted our country led to the discovering a new way of doing mission, the social work in the community. Since then youth, women and men constitute volunteer teams and spread the gospel through service.

## **Contributions of the National Baptist Convention**

Currently the National Convention Chile continues its growth, education, fellowship and administration in a stable and consolidated way. Though it is a small convention is doing important job. Currently it has a solid National Union of Youth, a huge Women Union who work in different areas such as evangelism and with adolescents, a Theological Institute that works closely to the local churches, group of volunteers that works in reconstruction after earthquake, a Board of Evangelization, it has several Baptist schools and nurseries, it has a recognized work among Mapuche indigenes people, it is the first convention that ordained women to pastoral ministry, and pastors, leaders and people who work on the foundation and strengthening of churches and for the Kingdom of God.

## **Conclusion**

As we have seen, the work of writing over two hundred years of history is complex.

The history of Baptists is built by many stories of brave men and women who spread the Gospel among their closest, beginning in small towns and extending to what we find now, Baptist presence in almost all the cities of the country.

There is a strong growth, marked by the Baptist structure of education, freedom, independence and firmness in the spread of Baptist principles.

The story invites us to continue the work of establishing the Kingdom in earth, following the Biblical principles that stain our Baptist identity

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