

LATIN AMERICAN SOCIO-RELIGIOUS STUDIES PROJECT

(PROLADES)

CHAPTER EIGHT

**STATUS OF CHRISTIANITY COUNTRY PROFILE:
PANAMA**

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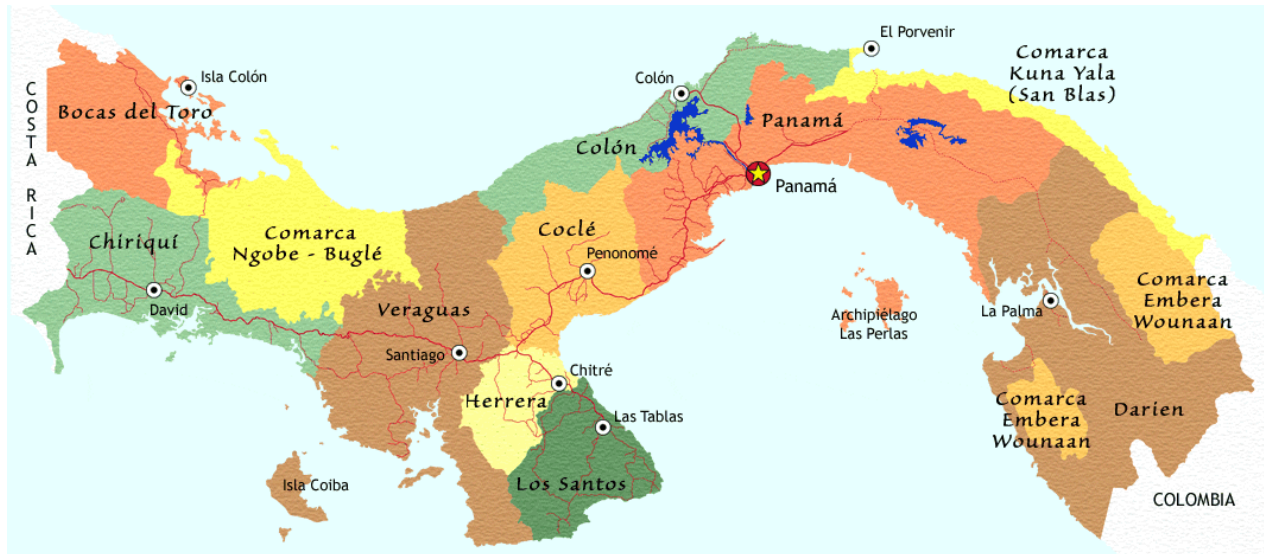
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FIGURE 1: MAP OF PANAMA BY PROVINCES

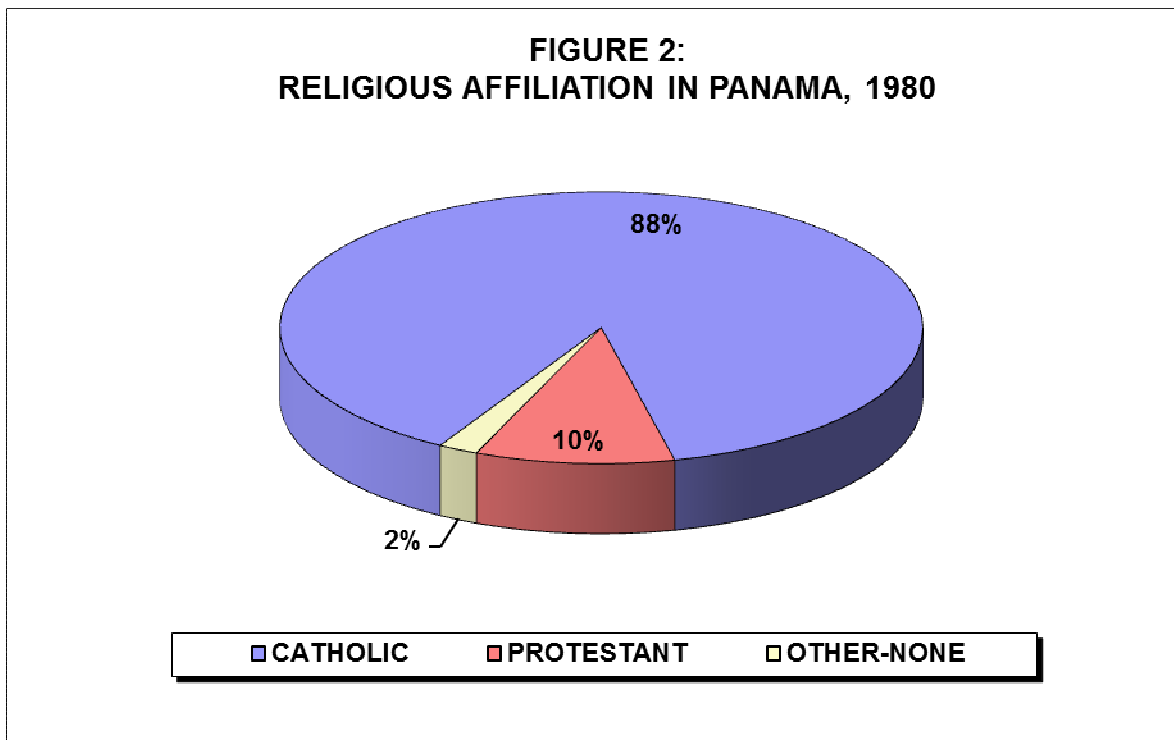


STATUS OF CHRISTIANITY COUNTRY PROFILE: PANAMA

I. OVERVIEW OF STATUS OF CHRISTIANITY IN PANAMA

Because of its strategic location at the narrowest point between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, Panama has historically been the center of international attention. Panama became the staging area for the Spanish conquest of South America. During the California Gold Rush of 1849, Panama was a major route of travel. The increase of trade and travel between the east and west coasts of the American continents pointed out the need for an interoceanic canal. The Republic of Panama was formed as a direct result of U.S. interest in the building of this canal.

The Panama Canal has profoundly affected the nation's life in other ways. Its population is the most heterogeneous in all of Central America due to the immigration of various peoples to work on and service the Canal. Furthermore, due to its control over the Canal Zone, U.S. influence has been keenly felt in the Panamanian government and economy. The Carter-Torrijos Treaty of 1977-1978 will give Panama complete ownership of the Canal by the year 2000.



One of the other effects of building the Panama Canal was the introduction of Protestantism into Panama. Although originally limited to the West Indians and U.S. citizens in the Canal Zone, Protestant Christianity has spread to the surrounding mestizo community. Today, about 88% of the total Panamanian population is considered Roman Catholic while an estimated 10% are considered Protestant, and about 2% are affiliated

with other religions or no religion. Over two-thirds of the Protestants are mestizos. The Protestant Church grew at an overall annual rate of 4.7% between 1960 and 1978, based on research by PROCADES.

II. UNREACHED PEOPLES

2.1 Mestizos (70% of all Panamanians)

Although the presence of the Catholic faith is felt in most aspects of Panamanian life, its impact is relatively weak on most panameños. While birth, marriage and death are generally marked by religious rites and many of the national holidays are religious celebrations, a style of renewed life and signs of a redeemed community are largely absent. Fewer than 20% of Roman Catholics regularly attend mass, which applies to the bulk of the nation's mestizo population. Those who attend regularly, mostly women and children, frequently are only complying with expected social norms and are not acting from deep religious convictions.

Few men attend mass regularly and even fewer take an active part in the religious life of the community. Church teachings, particularly its restrictive morality and emphasis on humility and abnegation, are at direct variance with the most important features of Panamanian *machismo*. While subscribing to Catholicism and recognizing it as a part of their heritage, most mestizo men feel that religious matters fall more properly within the realm of feminine interest. Their lack of participation is reflected in the small number of panameños who enter the priesthood.

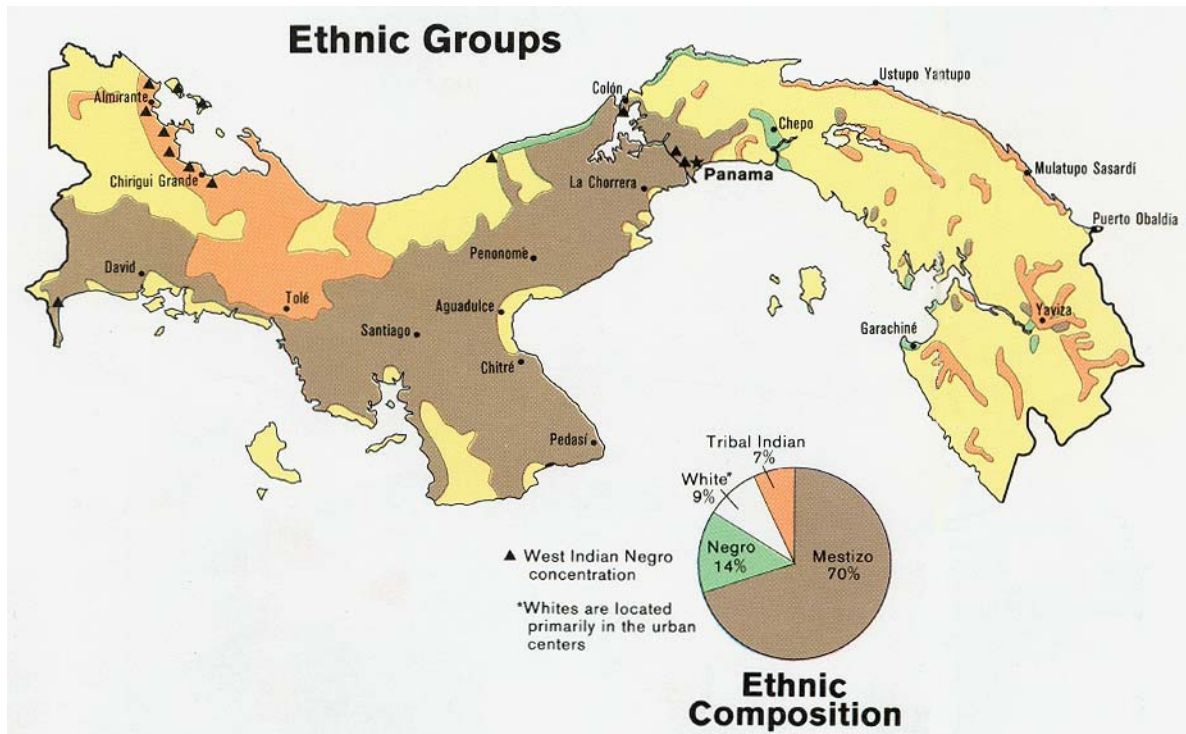
The Catholic Archbishop, Monsignor McGrath, has denounced the attitude of nominal Panamanian Catholics who see Catholicism no more than an exterior quality that lends decorum and order to life. Even so, it is doubtful that even this function of religion is taken seriously. Many Catholic precepts and proscriptions are ignored or violated, rarely drawing public censure.

As in other Latin American countries, many Catholic mestizos approach the treatment of disease and illness on the basis of folk cures and remedies. Treatment of such ills can be either by physical or herbal means, or by techniques that involve supernatural cures. There is a common belief that supernatural forces, either impersonal or purposefully directed, can cause serious illness. Numerous ailments are attributed to these forces, and many supernatural or magical cures are used as antidotes by *curanderos* (folk medicine specialists), *comadronas* (midwives), or *brujos / brujas* (witches). The *brujo(a)* is considered especially valuable for fortune telling, interpretation of dreams, determining one's lucky number, helping one's love life or folk psychiatry. These folk specialists are considered to be especially gifted by God, and the total belief system is an integration of indigenous animism and Catholicism.

These weaknesses with Panamanian Catholicism, sometimes referred to as Christo-paganism or Popular Catholicism, help to explain why a growing number of mestizos are turning to evangelical churches in search of a more dynamic and relevant faith. Mestizos form the majority of Protestant adherents in Panama, especially in areas where evangelicals are growing rapidly, such as Chiriquí Province. It can no longer be said that the relatively large Protestant Community in Panama (11.6%) is composed mainly of West Indians and Anglo-American residents of the Canal Zone. Now, about

69% of all Panamanian Protestants are mestizos, but only about 11.4% of all mestizos have ever had the opportunity of coming to know Christ personally as Lord and Savior. They are still an unreached people in many regions throughout Panama.

**FIGURE 3:
MAP OF RACE-ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION IN PANAMA, 1980**



2.2 Antillean Negroes (14%)

The term Antillean (West Indian Islanders) refers to English-speaking Negroes who immigrated to Panama from the Caribbean Islands formerly controlled by the British. Large-scale immigration of the West Indians took place in the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. The distribution of West Indians in the country still reflects the circumstances of their arrival. With the exception of a sizable concentration of Antilleans (or *antillanos*) around Puerto Armuelles in the banana zone of Chiriquí Province, most reside in the Inter-oceanic Region--Panama City, Colón and the Canal Zone.

While most Panamanians of the West Indian origin call themselves Protestants, relatively few take their religion seriously. Although a dozen or more Protestant denominations can be found among them, most of these local congregations have low attendance at their services except on special occasions, just like the nominal Catholics. More than ever before, West Indian young people prefer to worship in Spanish-speaking mestizo churches, if they choose to attend church at all. Most Antillean Protestant churches have a ghetto mentality, exhibiting a strong desire to preserve cherished traditions based on their British Caribbean heritage and to resist acculturation to

Hispanic norms. Consequently, the West Indian population is a declining ethnic group, with little hope of being strengthened by large numbers of new arrivals from the Caribbean Islands. Instead, growing numbers of West Indians are emigrating from Panama and are seeking employment opportunities in the United States or in neighboring Latin American countries.

Nominal Protestantism being the norm among the Antilleans, this minority ethnic group comprises a significant segment of unreached people in Panama. Since few Protestant churches among West Indians are communicating a vital Christian faith, some Antilleans are turning to revitalization movements that take the form of African spiritism--reminiscent of revivals of Obeah, Myalism and Pocomania that occurred during the last century. Several spiritist sects are active in the black neighborhoods of Panama City, Colón and surrounding areas. Today the choice among West Indians seems to be between the spiritist sects and the Spanish-speaking Protestant churches that have experienced significant growth among the mestizo population, especially Pentecostal denominations in Panama City and Colón.

2.3 White Upper Class (9%)

Although not all wealthy Panamanians are Caucasians, most whites in Panamanian society are members of the upper class. This class, centered mainly in the capital, is formed by old families of Spanish descent, augmented to a slight degree by newer European or North American immigrants. The upper class is composed of large landowning families and those who have acquired wealth through commerce or industry. It also includes government leaders and some who have achieved success as professionals. This is a small, close-knit group that has developed strong ties of association and kinship over the years. Among Panama's upper class, the fact that Catholic religious practice is seen merely as an aspect of their Spanish heritage makes it necessary to view this group as largely unreached. However, during the 1970s, the Catholic Charismatic movement had considerable impact among members of the upper class, although few have become members of evangelical churches. But a growing receptivity among the upper class is evidenced by attendance at meetings sponsored by the Full Gospel Businessmen's Association and Women's Aglow during the past few years.

2.4 Amerindians (7%)

Panama's Amerindian population numbers about 76,500. The three major groups--the Guaymí, the Kuna and the Chocó--are concentrated in three distinct and widely separated localities, where they are exposed to varying degrees of contact with rural Panamanians in the same territory. Most of the Indians have chosen to remain in their own semiautonomous communities, subject to tribal government, and to live according to century-old traditions.

The Guaymí are largest Amerindian group in Panama, comprising about 50% of the Indigenous population, and are chiefly located in the western provinces of Bocas del Toro, Veraguas and Chiriquí. The Guaymí are descended from various pre-conquest tribes and are generally divided into two groups: the Valientes in Bocas del Toro and the northern part of Veraguas, and the Sabaneros in Chiriquí and the southern part of

Veraguas. Government statistics on language usage among the indigenous population indicate that in Bocas del Toro and Chiriquí Provinces approximately 97% speak their native language at home, 55% also speak Spanish, and 3% use Spanish exclusively. In Veraguas Province, on the other hand, 69% use their native language at home, 21% know Spanish as a second language, and 31% speak Spanish as their first language. Naturally, the degree of hispanization is closely associated with the use of Spanish; as Spanish fluency increases, Guaymí cultural traits become less apparent in this region.

However, there are two distinct cultural worlds among the Guaymí in western Panama, in addition to language variables caused by hispanization. On the Atlantic watershed, north of the continental divide, the Valiente Guaymí forge swollen rivers and streams in the highlands to cultivate their crops, or risk the heat of the coastal lowlands to sell their labor on large banana plantations in Bocas del Toro Province. But on the southern slope of the mountains, the Sabanero Guaymí often see drought destroy their struggling corn fields, or have to travel long distances over dry ground to work as herdsmen or miners in Chiriquí and Veraguas Provinces.

The Wesleyan Methodists pioneered among the Valiente Indians in the early 1900s, but most Protestant groups among the Guaymí date from the 1950s. During a recent survey, the following groups reported congregations among the Guaymí: the Foursquare Church, Church of God (Cleveland), New Tribes Mission, Southern Baptists and the Wesleyan Methodists.

Wycliffe Bible Translators reported that Scripture portions in Guaymí (Ngobere) were available prior to 1950. A rough translation of the New Testament was done in Guaymí in the 1970s, but a reliable version will not be available until the mid-1980s. However, the Gospel of John in Ngobere has been published by the United Bible Societies.

The small Bulgere tribe, now integrated among the Valiente Guaymí, speak Montaña Sabanero and live among the coastal mountains of Veraguas and Bocas del Toro Provinces. This group, also known as the Bokotá Indians, number about 2,000. About 50% speak some Spanish, but only 25% are functionally bilingual in Bulgere and Spanish, although most also speak Ngobere. Wycliffe reports that some Scripture portions are now available in Bulgere. The New Tribes Mission is the only Protestant group known to have congregations among them.

Another small tribe in western Panama, the Teribe, number about 1,000 and live in the Teribe Valley on the Caribbean coast, near Changuinola in Bocas del Toro. In this region, the United Fruit Company has large banana plantations, which provide occasional employment for the Teribe. They are related to a similar tribe in the mountains of Costa Rica, called the Terrabas, who number only a few dozen. Portions of the New Testament are available in Naso, the language of the Teribe. However, this group is extremely bilingual; perhaps 95% speak some Spanish. The Adventists have worked among the Teribe for about 50 years, but the number of converts among them is unknown.

The most highly organized and economically active Indians in Panama, the Kuna (26,000), preserve their native customs with relative ease in their isolated habitat. Most Kuna live on the San Blas Islands off the northeastern coast (Kuna-San Blas). In addition, there are several mainland Kuna groups that have little contact with Hispanic Panamanians because these tribal people (Kuna-Colombia) live in remote regions of the

provinces of Panama and Darien. The latter group numbers only about 300 in Panama, while 600 or more live in neighboring Colombia.

The Kuna constitute 42% of the Indian population of Panama. They engage in considerable trade with surrounding Panamanians and speak Spanish extensively. Local surveys indicate that almost 37% are bilingual, and about 20% speak Spanish in the home. Nevertheless, the Kuna maintain a close-knit internal organization that tends to shield them from the eroding effects of exposure to alien influences. However, some Kuna have found employment in the Canal Zone, or aboard ships passing through the canal, while others have left the islands to live and work in Colón or Panama City. Some have attained a university education. Most of the public school teachers on the San Blas Islands are Kuna.

The Kuna economy depends on coconut production, fishing, subsistence agriculture and native handcrafts. Coconuts are cultivated in large quantities on the San Blas Islands and sold to Colombian traders. However, little farming is done on the islands. Many national and foreign tourists have been drawn to the San Blas Islands, largely due to the scenic beauty of the palm-covered islands and to the handcrafts made by Kuna women, who are famous for both the quality and the designs of their hand-sewn Molas.

Protestant work began among the Kuna in the early 1900s. Thousands of islanders have been converted over the years and are members of numerous Baptist, Church of God (Anderson), or Adventist congregations. A strong national church exists among the Kuna in the San Blas Islands, as well as among Kuna migrants in Panama City and Colón where several congregations have been formed using both Kuna and Spanish. The New Testament in Kuna was translated during the 1960s, but it needs revision. Much of the translation work has been done by capable Kuna linguists.

Two tribes now dwelling in the jungles of Darien Province originally came from the Province of Chocó in Colombia. The Waunana number about 1,000 in Panama and 2,000 in Colombia, whereas the Emberá total 4,000 in Panama and 2,000 across the border. The Chocoos, comprising 8% of the indigenous population of Panamá, live in the eastern provinces of Darién and Colón, close to Kuna territory along the north coast, in a region that stretches to the Colombian border. Owing to their dispersion, the Chocoos tend to have weak tribal organization, with most Chocoos living in houses separated by large distances as opposed to living in recognizable villages. They are not as strongly opposed to assimilation as the Kuna or Guaymí, and most Chocoos speak Spanish in addition to their native language. The Darien region has witnessed a continuous infusion of Spanish-speaking Negroes from Colombia, who have fled from political disturbances in their own country beginning in the 1950s. Many hispanicized Negroes have intermarried freely with the Chocoos, which has resulted in high rates of acculturation among the Waunana and Emberá. Most Chocoos engage in hunting and subsistence agriculture for survival in this remote area of Panama.

Protestant efforts among the Chocoos began in the late 1950s when the Mennonite Brethren sent linguists and teachers into the region. The first congregation of Chocó believers was formed in 1961, and there are now about 1,000 adherents in 10 or more congregations. An indigenous national church organization has been formed by the Mennonite Brethren. The New Tribes Mission and the Church of the Foursquare Gospel also have churches among the Chocoos. Scripture portions are now available in

Waunana and Emberá through the efforts of several workers, but the New Testament will not be completed until the mid-1980s.

2.5 Chinese (25,000)

The Chinese population of Panama is the largest in Central America. But only about 6,000 are considered "pure" Chinese--those who are the least hispanicized. Members of this group tend to keep to themselves, mainly speaking Hakka or Cantonese, and adhering to traditional Chinese customs and values.

The present Chinese population in Panama has resulted from several waves of immigration: the older overseas-born Chinese, who came to Panama as railroad or canal workers prior to 1910; other overseas-born Chinese who fled from China after the Communist revolution during the late 1940s; and younger overseas-born Chinese who arrived during the 1960s or 1970s from Hong Kong and Taiwan. Added to these immigrant groups are their descendants who are Panamanian-born and predominantly Spanish-speaking.

Most Chinese live in Panama City and Colón, although many can also be found in the larger towns of the interior. The Chinese are said to hold a virtual monopoly on the retail grocery business in the capital, while others operate shops, restaurants and hotels along the Pan-American Highway that stretches across the Panamanian plains to the west. Four small Chinese newspapers are published in Panama.

Many of the earlier Chinese immigrants have intermarried and adopted mestizo culture, including nominal Roman Catholicism. Apparently there is no intense non-Christian religious life, although most of the "pure" Chinese families still maintain Buddhist or ancestral shrines in their homes. However, for many Chinese in Panama, materialism provides the main competition for the Christian faith.

Few efforts have been made by Protestants to reach the Chinese in Panama. The Methodist Episcopal Church sponsored work among the 3,000 Chinese in Panama City during 1918-1919, by means of a primary school and Sunday school operated by missionaries. However, this outreach was soon discontinued, and no known attempts were made by other Protestant groups until the 1970s.

Two Chinese Protestant churches were established a few years ago, not as a formal denominational thrust, but rather through the sincere efforts of a small group of Chinese Christian women who began to pray for their relatives and friends and organized a Bible study group. Now, the Chinese Christian Mission of about 50 members meets in Panama City, along with a smaller group of about 15 in Colón. For a few years, these small congregations were assisted by a Spanish-speaking Panamanian pastor and were loosely related to the Southern Baptist Convention of Panama. More recently, however, they have been aided and encouraged by the Chinese Christian Mission of Petaluma, California, who have sent Chinese workers to Panama from the United States during 1979-1980. Obviously, more intensified efforts must be made to reach the Chinese of Panama.

2.6 Jews (2,500-3,000)

Today there are about 3,000 Jews in Panama, most of whom live in the capital city. The first Jews to enter Panama did so in the 19th century, coming mainly from

Spain and Portugal and arriving prior to 1850. Then, during the 1930s, hundreds of Jews relocated in Panama from central and eastern Europe. The most recent arrivals have come from the Middle East, including about half of the present population, during the 1960s.

Jewish community life is reportedly strong. A Jewish school, the Albert Einstein Institute, was founded in 1955 in Panama City. In 1970, this institute had nearly 50 teachers and offered preschool, primary and secondary education. Hebrew and Jewish culture was taught, and many of its graduates went off to Israel for a year or two of advanced studies. Several other Jewish organizations also exist: the Cultural Center of Panama, the B'nai B'rith Benevolence Society and the Central Council.

However, Jews have tended to integrate into Panamanian social, political and cultural life to a great extent, while preserving some important aspects of their Jewish heritage, especially the religious values. There are seven Jewish synagogues in Panama, but only three had their own rabbis in 1970. Most Jews are members of the middle and upper classes of Panamanian society. Few are known to have become Christians, thus making them one of Panama's unreached peoples.

2.7 Others

Several smaller ethnic groups can be found in Panama, especially in Panama City and Colón. Although their size is unknown, groups of East Indian Hindus and Middle Eastern Muslims are reportedly quite active in the import-export business and in retail trade stores that cater to tourists. Hundreds of thousands of tourists flood Panama's duty-free stores annually, especially during holiday seasons. Some Eastern Mediterranean people have also migrated to Panama as evidenced by the appearance of two Greek Orthodox Churches in two major port cities. None of these smaller ethnic groups are known to have Protestant believers, which indicates that they should be considered unreached peoples.

III. OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL CHURCHES

3.2 ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Roman Catholic Church holds a respected, though not powerful, position in Panamanian society and is a familiar facet of daily life. The Constitution of 1946 recognizes that the Catholic faith is the country's predominant religion, and Catholicism is taught in the public schools. Such instruction or other religious activity is not compulsory, however.

In 1980, approximately 87% of the population is considered Roman Catholic. Virtually every town has a Catholic church, although many do not have a resident priest. Due to the small number of Catholic clergy in Panama, only one priest for every 6,299 inhabitants in 1980, many rural dwellers receive only an occasional visit from a very busy priest who travels among a number of parishes. While Catholicism permeates the environment of most Panamanians, its impact is not as pronounced as in many other Catholic countries of Latin America.

The Catholic Church in Panama consists of one archdiocese, three dioceses, a vicar apostolic in Darien and a nullius prelate in Bocas del Toro. A papal nuncio also represents the Vatican. The archbishop of Panama is Monsignor Marcos Gregorio McGrath. Panama is organized into 133 parishes, served by 79 diocesan priests, and was supported by the efforts of 209 religious priests, 490 sisters and 58 lay brothers. Catholic institutions include 70 schools, a Catholic university, a seminary for training diocesan priests and numerous charitable programs.

In recent years, the Catholic Church has attempted to revive active interest in religious affairs, raise church attendance and increase the incidence of church marriages. This has been a continuing effort since 1958, when a lay mission group, *La Santa Misión Católica* (The Holy Catholic Mission), arrived from Rome to stimulate and support the local clergy. Focusing first on the lower classes in the capital, the campaign soon spread throughout the country. It helped introduce Church-sponsored social welfare projects, and served to rouse Catholics from the lethargy that had traditionally plagued the Church in Panama. However, the Panamanian Church continues to confront obstacles: a shortage of priests, the indifference of nominal Catholics and the secular attitudes of a growing urban population, especially among the youth.

Today, the Catholic Church receives moderate public support, bolstered at times by militant Catholic action groups, such as federations of Catholic doctors and lawyers, who have campaigned for a more dynamic role for the Church in community life. A growing number of priests and nuns have taken a more active role in labor movements, formation of cooperatives, concern for the poor and in activities that seek to produce moderate reform within Panamanian society.

An added dimension during the 1970s was the growth of the Catholic Charismatic Movement. The movement began when a Spanish priest and a Panamanian nun were strongly influenced by Charismatics in the United States. Numerous Bible study, prayer and fellowship groups were organized in the early 1970s, along with Charismatic masses and rallies. Soon, Protestant pastors and laymen were participating in the movement, which then took on an ecumenical flavor. More recently, however, the Catholic hierarchy has attempted to place restrictions on the Charismatic Movement and to more strongly direct its course in order to avoid losing members to evangelical groups, which are seen as a threat largely due to wide-spread Pentecostal growth in the capital.

3.2 PROTESTANT CHURCHES

Data on Protestantism in Panama can be confusing and misleading if a distinction is not made between the Panama Canal Zone and the Republic of Panama, between church statistics on various ethnic groups within the general population, and between denominational families of churches.

Protestantism has traditionally had a large following among the English-speaking Canal Zone population, predominantly West Indians and North Americans, but by 1935 the proportion of Protestants in the Republic of Panama had increased to 48% of the total Protestant Community in Panama and the Canal Zone, compared to 52% in the Zone. Panama only had 38 organized congregations, while the Canal Zone had 52. However, by 1960, Panama accounted for 90% of all Protestants and the Canal Zone

only 10%; by 1978, 95% of the total Protestant Community lived in the Republic of Panama and only 5% in the old Canal Zone.

On the other hand, it is often assumed that the majority of Protestants in Panama are Negroes who brought their Protestant faith with them from the British West Indies. Although this was true prior to 1940, by 1960 only 33.4% of the Protestant population were West Indians who resided not only in segregated towns in the Canal Zone, but also in the large seaports of Panama City and Colón, located at either end of the waterway. Moreover, the Hispanic population (white-mestizo and Spanish-speaking) constituted 44.3% of all Protestants in 1960, while Amerindians were 11.9% and North Americans 10.5%. The ethnic distribution of Protestants in 1978 was: Hispanic 68.7%, West Indian 17.5%, Amerindian 9.3% and North American 4.6%.

An overview of Protestant membership in Panama by families of denominations between 1935 and 1978 reveals that, proportionally, the Liturgical Family declined while the Pentecostal Family greatly increased. Although the Adventist Family has remained about the same, the Evangelical non-Pentecostal Family has decreased proportionally in size. In 1935, the Liturgical Family accounted for 40.6% of all Protestant communicants, the Evangelical non-Pentecostals 40.2%, the Adventists 17.9% and the Pentecostals 1.3%. However, by 1960, the Liturgical Family had declined to 15.1% and, in 1978, was only 6.7% of all communicant members. The Evangelical non-Pentecostals declined to 33.3% in 1960 and 27.0% in 1978. The Adventist Family changed little proportionally: 17.9% in 1935, 14.8% in 1960 and 16.1% in 1978. The Pentecostals, on the other hand, increased notably from 1.3% in 1935, to 36.9% in 1960, to 50.2% in 1978.

Regionally, the Evangelical non-Pentecostals predominate in the Western Atlantic and Eastern Regions, whereas the Pentecostals constitute the majority of churches in the Western Pacific, Central Pacific and Inter-Oceanic Regions. The Adventists are strongest in the Western Pacific Region and the Liturgical Family in the Inter-Oceanic Region.

Overall, Protestant communicant membership increased more rapidly between 1935 and 1960 (7.2% AAGR) than between 1960 and 1978 (4.7% AAGR). This is due to several principal factors:

- (1) A large proportion of Protestants prior to 1960 were English-speaking West Indians, but since 1960 that population has had relatively little growth due to emigration and acculturation;
- (2) The high number of North American Protestants in the Canal Zone prior to the 1950s constituted a large proportion of all Protestants in Panama; and
- (3) The rapid growth of the large Foursquare Church prior to 1960, which increased from 550 in 1935 to 9,173 in 1960 (11.9% AAGR), slowed down between 1960 and 1978 (4.6% AAGR).

However, while Protestant growth among West Indians and North Americans in Panama has been relatively static since the 1950s, notable increases were recorded among Hispanics and, to a lesser degree, among Amerindians since 1960. In fact, prior to 1960, only the Foursquare Church, Adventists and Baptist Convention showed much increase among Hispanics, with Foursquare growth dominating the scene. Since 1960,

Protestant growth among Hispanics has been significant: from 14,102 in 1960 to 49,943 in 1978 (7.3% AAGR). The number of Protestant Amerindians increased at a slower rate: from 3,752 in 1960 to 6,751 in 1978 (3.3% AAGR).

**FIGURE 4:
A CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM OF THE PROTESTANT MOVEMENT BY
MAJOR TRADITIONS AND DENOMINATIONAL FAMILIES**

B1.0	OLDER LITURGICAL (CLASSICAL) TRADITION, 1517-1530
B1.1	Lutheran Family (1517, 1530)
B1.2	Reformed/Presbyterian Family (1523)
B1.3	Anglican/Episcopal Family (1534)
B2.0	EVANGELICAL SEPARATIST ("FREE CHURCH") TRADITION, 1521
B2.1	Anabaptist/Mennonite Family (1521)
B2.2	Baptist Family (1610)
B2.3	Pietist Family (1670)
B2.4	Independent Fundamentalist Family (1827)
B2.5	Holiness Family (1830s)
B2.6	Restoration Movement Family (1830s)
B2.7	Other Separatist churches
B3.0	ADVENTIST TRADITION, 1836
B3.1	Millerist Family that observes Sunday (1855)
B3.2	Millerist Family that observes Saturday (1850s)
B3.3	Adventist Church of God Family (1863)
B3.4	Other Adventist churches
B4.0	PENTECOSTAL TRADITION: 1901, 1906
B4.01	Apostolic Faith Pentecostal Family (1901)
B4.02	Pentecostal Holiness Family (1906)
B4.03	Name of Jesus ("Oneness") Pentecostal Family (1907)
B4.04	Finished Work Pentecostal Family (1910)
B4.05	Sabbatical Pentecostal Family (1930s)
B4.06	Healing/Deliverance Pentecostal Family (1947)
B4.07	Latter Rain Pentecostal Family (1948)
B4.08	Charismatic/Pentecostal Family (1950s)
B4.09	Shepherding Pentecostal Family (1968)
B4.10	Word of Faith Pentecostal Family (1970s)
B4.11	Other Pentecostal churches
B5.0	UNCLASSIFIED GROUPS
B6.0	PARA-CHURCH GROUPS/NON-DENOMINATIONAL GROUPS

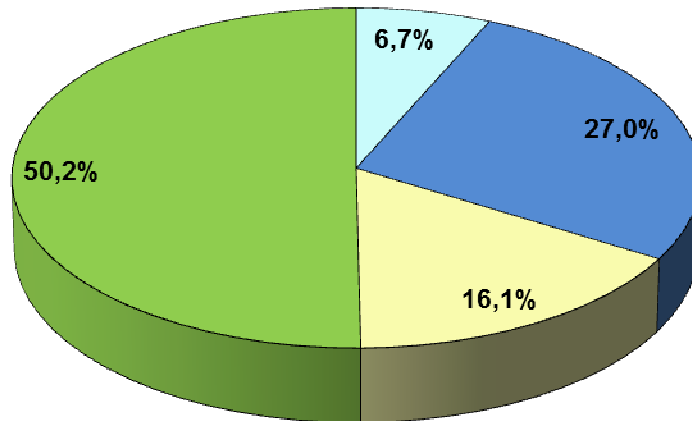
Today, the largest Protestant denominations in Panama are the Foursquare Church (21,700 baptized members), Seventh Day Adventists (11,735), Baptist Convention (6,245), Assemblies of God (5,500) and the Episcopal Church (4,738 communicants only).

**FIGURE 5:
PROTESTANT CHURCH STATISTICS FOR PANAMA, 1978**

CHURCH OR MISSION NAME	NUMBER OF CONGREGATIONS	NUMBER OF COMMUNICANTS	% OF TOTAL
LITURGICAL	25	4,848	6.7%
Episcopal Church	23	4,738	
Redeemer Lutheran Church	2	110	
EVANGELICAL NON-PENTECOSTAL	391	19,657	27.0%
Southern Baptist Convention	123	6,245	
Church of Christ	44	3,000	
New Tribes Mission	46	3,000	
Wesleyan Methodist Church	17	1,795	
Salvation Army	6	851	
United Methodist Church	10	695	
Church of God (Anderson)	24	600	
Misc.	121	3,472	
PENTECOSTAL	498	36,460	50.2%
Foursquare Church	218	21,700	
Assemblies of God	50	5,500	
Doctrinal Evangelistic Church of Puerto Pilón	28	1,882	
Church of God (Cleveland)	57	1,657	
Doctrinal Evangelistic Church (Independent)	28	1,070	
Pentecostal Church of God	14	941	
Apostolic Assembly	16	786	
Ebenezer Christian Association	2	700	
Church of God of Prophecy	23	572	
Misc.	62	1,652	
ADVENTIST	120	11,735	16.1%
Seventh Day Adventist	120	11,735	
TOTALS (1978)	1,034	72,700	100.0%

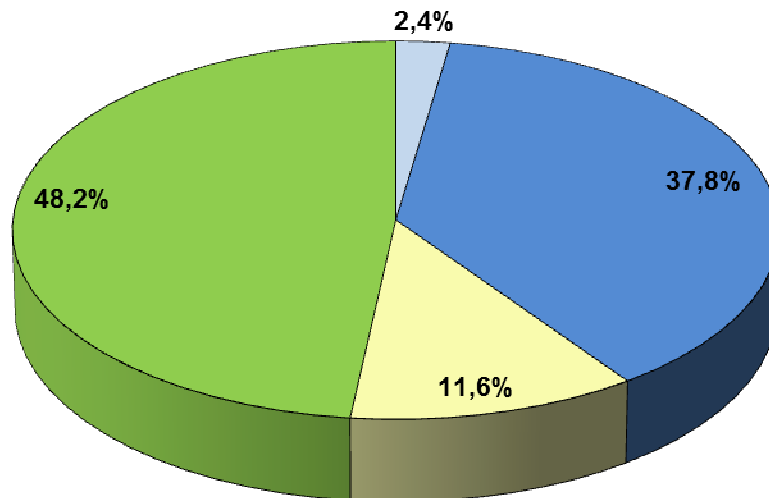
ESTIMATED PROTESTANT POP. 195,840 = 10.1% OF TOTAL POPULATION IN 1980

**FIGURE 6:
PROTESTANT MEMBERSHIP IN PANAMA
BY MAJOR TRADITIONS, 1978**



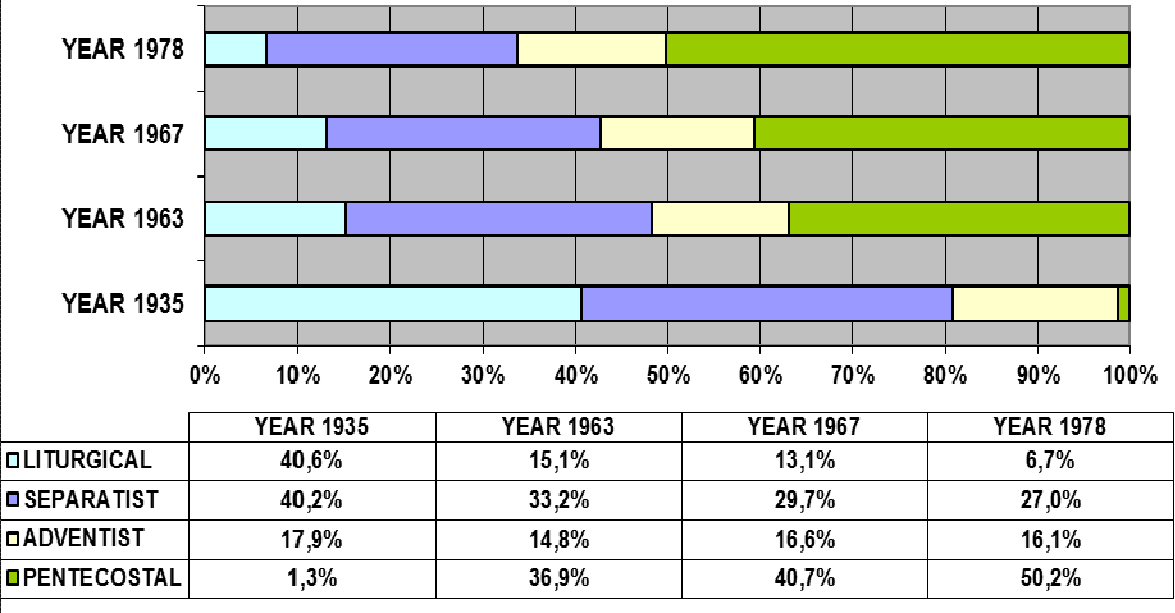
□ LITURGICAL ■ SEPARATIST □ ADVENTIST ■ PENTECOSTAL

**FIGURE 7:
PROPORTION OF PROTESTANT CONGREGATIONS
IN PANAMA BY MAJOR TRADITIONS, 1978**

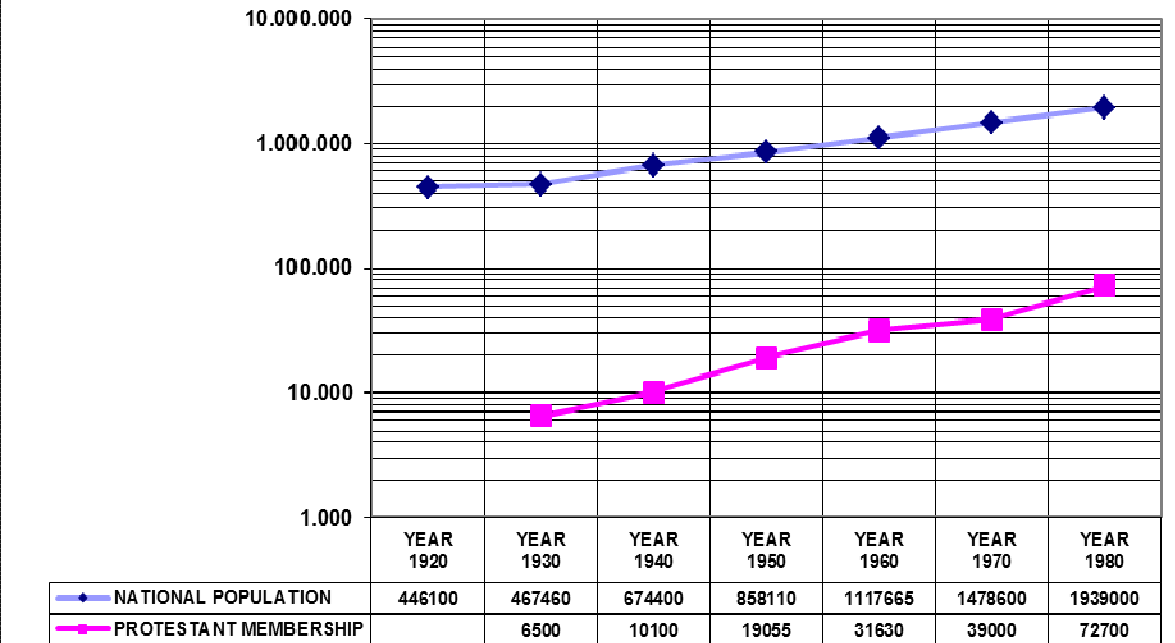


□ LITURGICAL ■ SEPARATIST □ ADVENTIST ■ PENTECOSTAL

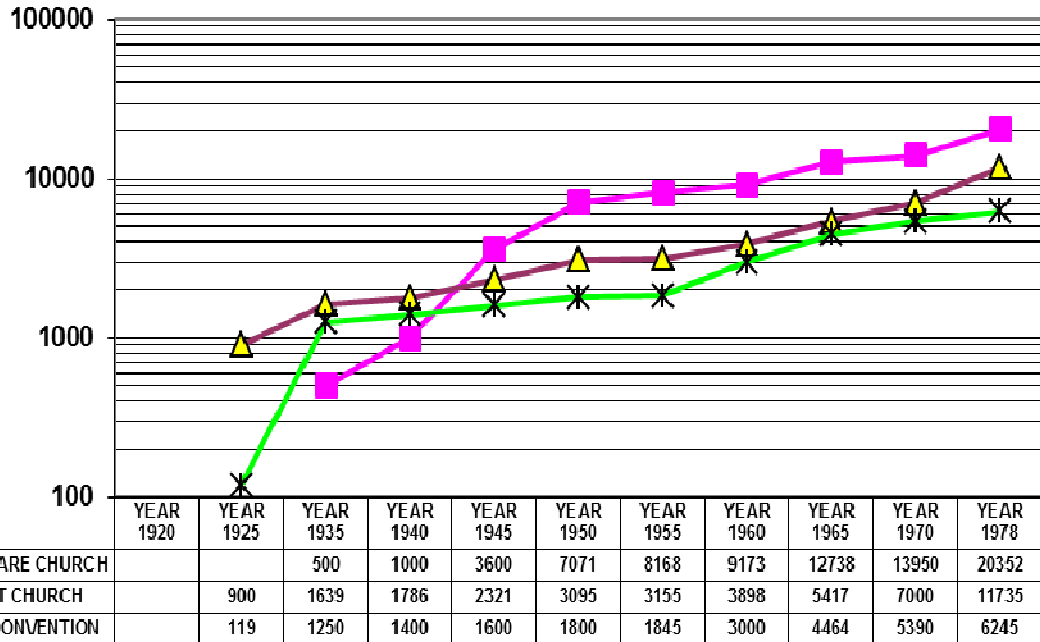
**FIGURE 8:
PROPORTION OF PROTESTANT MEMBERSHIP
BY MAJOR FAMILIES, 1935-1978**



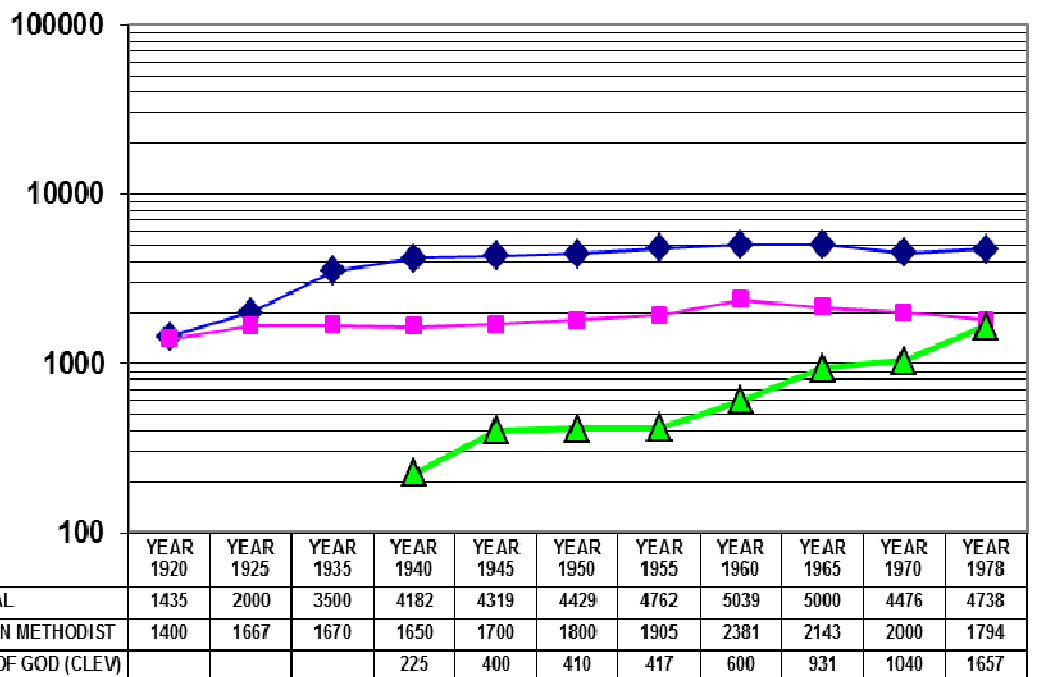
**FIGURE 9:
POPULATION GROWTH COMPARED TO PROTESTANT
MEMBERSHIP GROWTH IN PANAMA, 1920-1980**



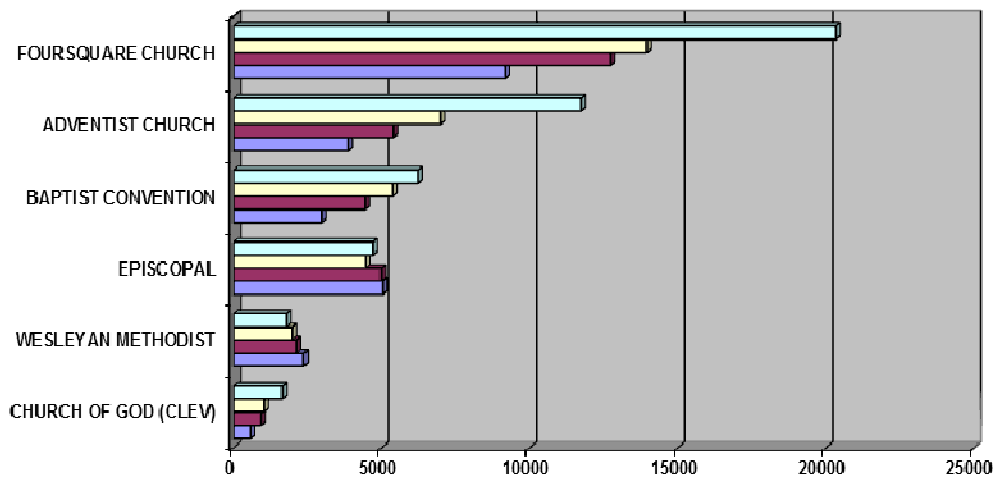
**FIGURE 10:
MEMBERSHIP GROWTH OF SELECTED PROTESTANT
DENOMINATIONS IN PANAMA, 1920-1978**



**FIGURE 11
MEMBERSHIP GROWTH OF SELECTED PROTESTANT
DENOMINATIONS IN PANAMA, 1920-1978**

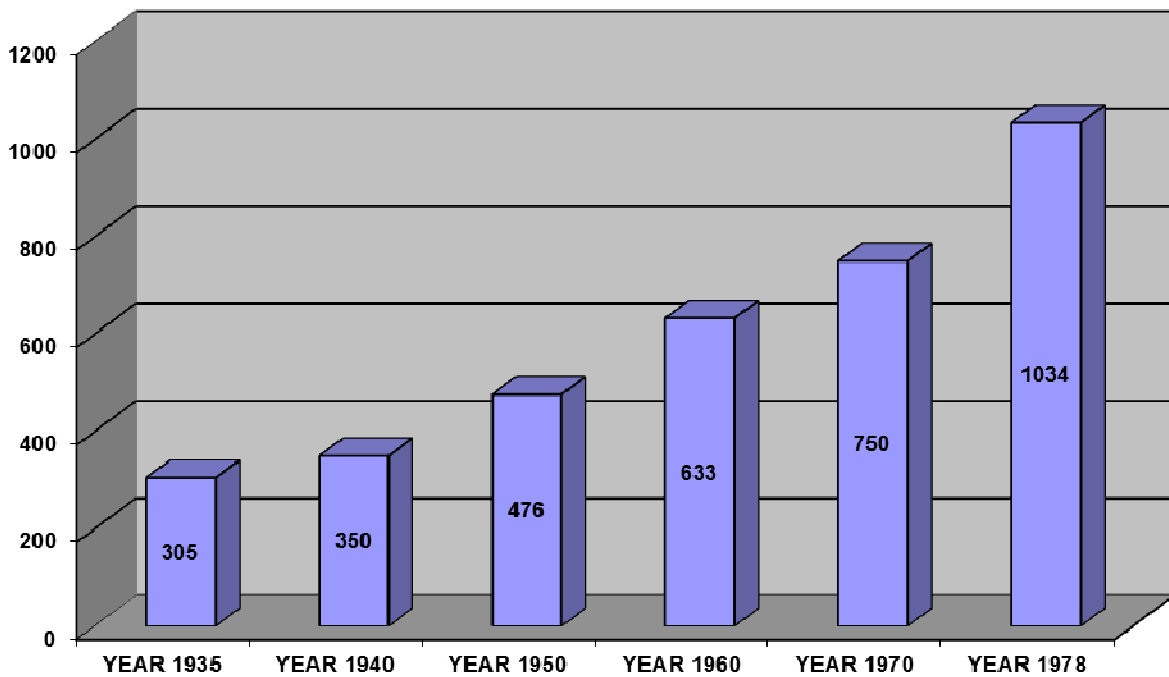


**FIGURE 12
MEMBERSHIP GROWTH OF SELECTED PROTESTANT
DENOMINATIONS IN PANAMA, 1960-1978**

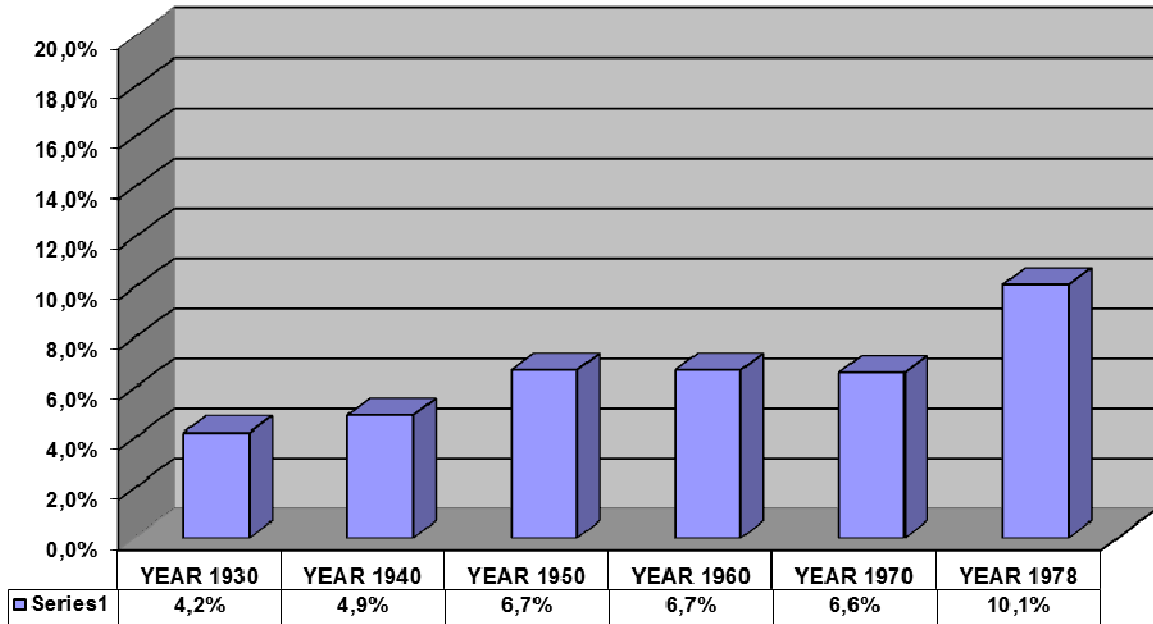


	CHURCH OF GOD (CLEV)	WESLEYAN METHODIST	EPISCOPAL	BAPTIST CONVENTION	ADVENTIST CHURCH	FOURSQUARE CHURCH
YEAR 1978	1657	1794	4738	6245	11735	20352
YEAR 1970	1040	2000	4476	5390	7000	13950
YEAR 1965	931	2143	5000	4464	5417	12738
YEAR 1960	600	2381	5039	3000	3898	9173

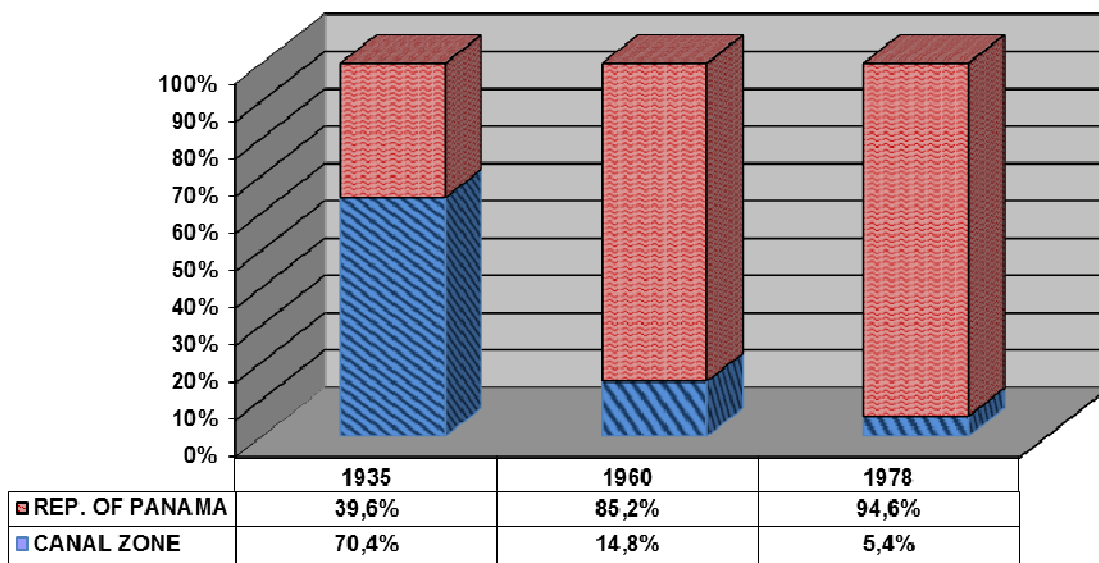
**FIGURE 13:
ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PROTESTANT
CONGREGATIONS IN PANAMA, 1935-1978**



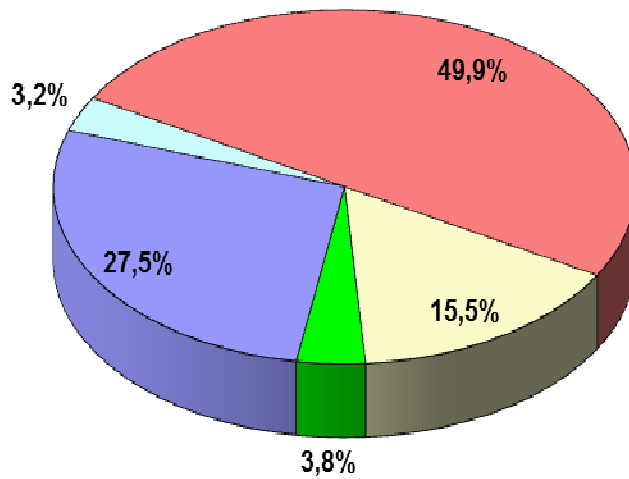
**FIGURE 14:
ESTIMATED SIZE OF PROTESTANT
POPULATION IN PANAMA, 1930-1978**



**FIGURE 15
PROTESTANT MEMBERSHIP IN THE CANAL ZONE COMPARED
TO THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA, 1935-1978**

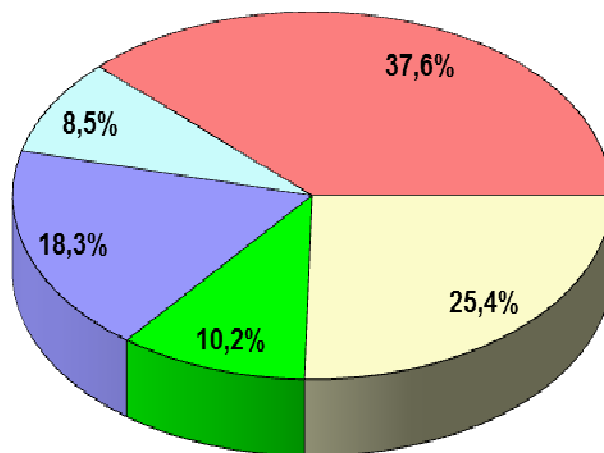


**FIGURA 16:
DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN PANAMA
BY REGIONS, 1978**



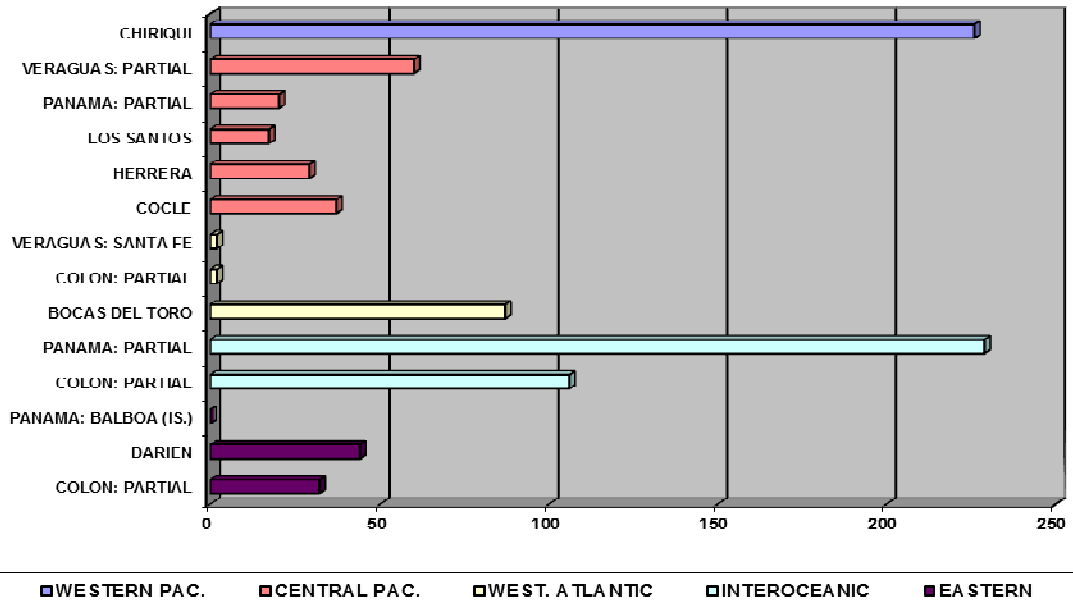
□WESTERN PACIFIC ■WESTERN ATLANTIC □CENTRAL PACIFIC □EASTERN ■INTEROCEANIC

**FIGURE 17:
DISTRIBUTION OF PROTESTANT CONGREGATIONS
IN PANAMA BY REGIONS, 1978**



□WESTERN PACIFIC ■WESTERN ATLANTIC □CENTRAL PACIFIC □EASTERN ■INTEROCEANIC

**FIGURE 18:
DISTRIBUTION OF PROTESTANT CONGREGATIONS
IN PANAMA BY REGIONS AND PROVINCES, 1978**



**FIGURE 19:
PROTESTANT MEMBERSHIP BY ETHNIC COMPOSITION
IN PANAMA, 1963-1978**

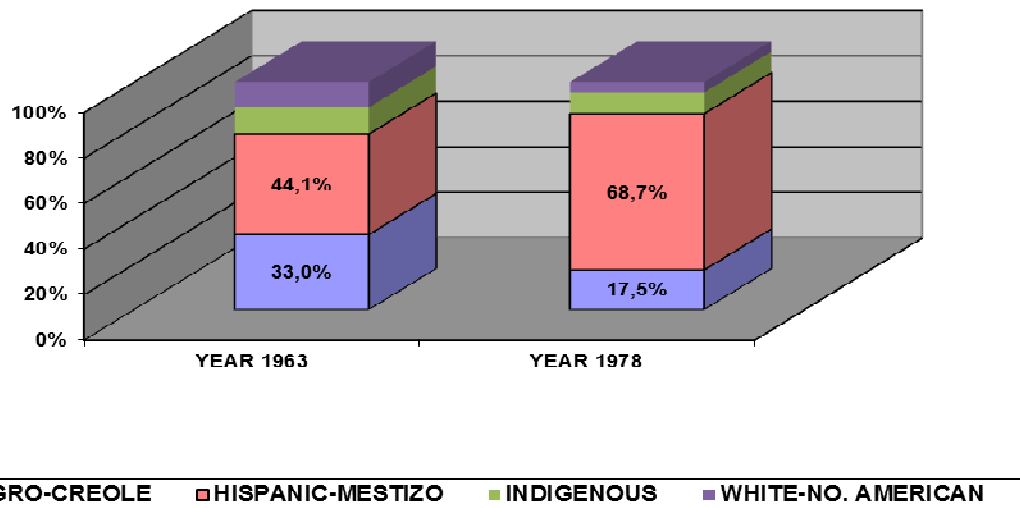


FIGURE 20
PANAMA: NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF PROTESTANT CONGREGATIONS
IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE POPULATION BY REGIONS

REGIÓN, PROVINCIA Y DISTRITO	POBLACIÓN 1980 ¹	NUMERO DE CONGREGACIONES	PROPORCIÓN DE CONGREG. A LA POBLACIÓN TOTAL
Región del Atlántico Occidental	(3,8%) 73.980	(10.2%) 91	1:0813
Bocas del Toro	59.440	87	1:0683
Colón: Donoso	8.010	2	1:4005
Veraguas: Santa Fe	6.530	2	1:3265
Región del Este	(3,2%) 62.170	(8.5%) 76	1:0818
Colón: Comarca de San Blas, Portobelo, St. Isabel y	33.420	32	1:1044
Darién	26.380	44	1:0600
Panamá: Balboa (islas)	2.370	0	1:2370
Región Interoceánica	(49.9%) 967.980	(37.6%) 335	1:2889
Colón (parcial)	134.270	106	1:1267
Panamá (parcial)	833.710	229	1:3641
Región del Pacífico Central	(27.5%) 533.610	(18.3%) 163	1:3274
Coclé	152.180	37	1:4113
Herrera	86.420	29	1:2980
Los Santos	74.390	17	1:4376
Panamá: Capira, Chame, San Carlos y Taboga	49.350	20	1:2467
Veraguas (parcial)	171.270	60	1:2855
Región del Pacífico Occidental	(15.5%) 301.260	(25.4%) 226	1:1333
Chiriquí	301.260	226	1:1333
TOTALES	(100%) 1.939.000	(100%) 891²	1:2176
TOTALES²	1.939.000	1.034³	1:1875

NOTES:

#1 Total estimated population of Panama on 30 June 1980 by Regions, Provinces and Districts, according to the Census Dept.

#2 Number of congregations registered with geographical data in the AEPAD National Directory of 1978.

#3 Total number of congregations reported to exist in the AEPAD National Directory of 1978.

IV. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIANITY

4.1 ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Members of the Catholic clergy accompanied the Spanish conquistadores from the earliest days of exploration and conquest in the New World. The first Catholic Church established in Panama was called Santa María la Antigua del Darién, built in 1510. It became the seat of the first diocese to be formed on the mainland of the Western Hemisphere, when Bishop Quevedo arrived with Governor Pedrarias in 1514. The Bishop's authority, received from the King of Spain, made him in effect a Vice-Governor. Later, the bishops were often the presidents of the colonial courts, called *audiencias*, and a number of bishops became Viceroys.

The Catholic Church, particularly the Franciscans, became concerned with the welfare of the Indians, especially after Bartolomé de las Casas awakened the social conscience of his fellow priests through his writings. The Church had the responsibility of Christian instruction and conversion of the Indians and, in general, did much to protect them. It worked against the frequent abuses of the *encomienda* system that, strictly speaking, was neither slavery nor serfdom, but the right given to a Spanish official or private individual, or to a Church functionary, to collect tribute from a group, village or tribe of Indians, called an *encomienda*. In practice, the extraction of such "tribute" (under feudalism, a tax paid by a vassal to his lord) from the Indians produced a condition indistinguishable from slavery.

Under Spanish rule, both the Church and the religious orders required considerable wealth. The orders profited from banking activities in the absence of organized commercial houses on the Isthmus of Panama, where mineral treasures from the Andean region were transshipped to Spain. Panama City was a key link in the chain of Spanish commerce during the colonial period. The Catholic Church acquired the resources, then, to build schools and other institutions in addition to elaborate churches in the old city of Panama, where a famous golden altar attracted the attention of colonists, pilgrims and even British pirates. Public education in Panama was attended to by priests, friars and nuns, and the short-lived San-Xavier University was established by the Jesuits in 1749.

However, the expulsion of the Jesuit Order in 1767 was followed by a long period of religious apathy, during which the Church lost much of its power and wealth. During the 19th century, in particular, liberal thought and the belated effects of the European Enlightenment resulted in a widespread lack of interest and support for the Catholic Church, although Panama averted the surge of strong anti-clericalism that swept the Spanish colonies at this time.

After independence from Spain, but before Panama departed from Colombia in 1904, the close association between Church and State continued for a number of years. As the 20th century progressed, however, the country underwent a period of marked decline in religious interest. The Church steadily became less important in secular matters and lost much of its temporal power. The religious and civil authorities continued to be mutually supporting, but their respective functions and authority were more clearly defined and more strictly separated.

The position of the Church was specifically outlined in 1887 in a concordat signed by the Catholic hierarchy in Rome and the Government of Colombia. This provided for the independence of the Church from civil authority and its right to establish religious orders in the Republic of Colombia, including the territory of Panama. The agreement also recognized Catholic matrimony as fully binding and provided for compulsory religious instruction at all grade levels in the public schools.

The Constitution of 1904 provided for complete religious freedom, claimed no government jurisdiction in the appointment of Church officials, and specified no restrictions on Church management of internal religious or economic affairs. No religious criteria were required for holding public office, and religious instruction in the public schools was provided only for those who wanted it. Except for a few scholarships at the Catholic Seminary, the government did not contribute funds for support of Catholic activities. The Catholic religion was recognized as the faith of the majority, and the State assumed the responsibility of encouraging the conversion of tribal Indians to Christianity.

The basic principles governing the Church's activities or its relationship with the government were not affected by the Constitution of 1946. From the early years of independence up until the late 1960s, the Catholic Church continued to emphasize its spiritual role and generally avoided involvement in secular affairs. However, since the Second Vatican Council in 1965 and the Conference of Latin American Bishops in Medellín in 1969, the Catholic Church has become more active in temporal matters, due to its increasing concern for, and commitment to, improving the social conditions of the impoverished masses in Panama and elsewhere.

Traditionally, Panama has had a very low percentage of native-born priests and nuns within religious orders. In 1970, more than 75% of the Catholic missionaries in Panama were foreigners, mostly coming from Spain, Italy and the United States, or from other Latin American countries. Present in Panama are religious orders and personnel from Catholic missions in North America that include: 28 male religious orders representing the Vincentians (21), Benedictines (1), Holy Cross Father (1) and Sulpicians (1), plus three diocesan priests and one lay brother. In addition, there are ten female religious groups representing the Maryknolls (6), Mercy of Brooklin (1), Franciscans of Mary Immaculate (1) and St. Joseph of Medaille (1), as well as one lay sister. Also, the Scarboro Foreign Mission Society of Canada has one priest in Panama.

However, these religious orders and missionaries from North America represent a small part of the total number of Catholic mission workers in Panama during 1980. Most of the 209 religious priests, 490 sisters and 58 lay brothers in Panama were from Europe or other Latin American countries. The Jesuits, Carmelites, Paulists and La Salle Christian Brothers were the major groups represented in Panama, whereas the Visitandinas was the only order of cloistered nuns in the country.

4.2 THE PROTESTANT MOVEMENT

4.2.1 The first Protestants to arrive in Panama were part of a group of twelve hundred colonists from Scotland (some of whom were **Presbyterian**) who attempted to build a commercial colony on the Caribbean coast of the Darien Peninsula in 1698. However, the colony was abandoned in April 1700 as a complete commercial failure.

4.2.2 The Wesleyan Methodists were the first known Protestants to establish permanent work in present-day Panama, when Mother Abel landed at Careening Cay in western Panama with a party of English and Jamaican settlers, about 1815-1825. Mother Abel, a mulatto, evangelized among the Creole fisher folk on the Caribbean coast of the Bocas del Toro region, where a Methodist society was formed at Old Bank. This work was later developed by **the United Methodist Free Churches of England**, who sent ministers and teachers to organize churches and schools at Old Bank and Bocas about 1879, responding to a request by the small Methodist community formed and led by Mother Abel for more than 60 years. However, this pioneer work was eventually passed to the care of the Wesleyan Methodists when the circuit was reorganized in 1913.

Meanwhile, the **West Indian Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Jamaica**, acting on a request from a small group of West Indian Methodists in Panama City, sent their first missionary to the Isthmus in 1884, the Rev. Thomas Geddes. He was followed by several short-term workers until his son, Alexander, arrived in 1887 to become the first resident Wesleyan Methodist minister in Panama. Permanent work was started in Panama City, Emperador and Aspinwall (now Puerto Colón) among the immigrant West Indians who labored on the French canal.

Alexander Geddes traveled far and wide ministering to West Indian Methodists and winning many new converts who were formed into a growing number of Methodist congregations along the canal and railroad lines, as well as in the coastal settlements along the Caribbean shore. Geddes encouraged the training and ordination of two important figures in the history of Wesleyan Methodism in Central America: Edward A. Pitt and Clifford Mortimer Surgeon. Pitt carried out a successful ministry in Costa Rica for more than 30 years (1897-1927), and Surgeon started a missionary outreach to the Valiente Indians in Panama in 1913. It was this mission, sponsored by the Wesleyan Methodists and led by the Rev. Ephraim S. Alphonse, that gave the Guaymí Indians of Western Panama a written language and translations of the Scriptures. Alphonse, a native of Bocas and a disciple of Surgeon, continued Surgeon's work among the Guaymí as a lay evangelist and teacher in 1917 and as an ordained Wesleyan minister after 1930. Except for two years spent in a theological college in Jamaica, Alphonse worked among the Guaymí from 1917 to 1938, and again from 1948 to 1957.

By the mid-1930s, the Wesleyan Methodist mission effort, under Alphonse's direction, had spread along the whole coast of Bocas del Toro Province and, with help from new workers, had reached into the interior of the Province, into the very heart of the Guaymí territory. In 1936, there were four chapel-schools and about 150 communicant members, with a Methodist community of about 500 among the Guaymí of the Valiente region.

However, most Wesleyan Methodist work was centered in the interoceanic region among West Indians in Panama City and Colón, and in the segregated West Indian towns in the Canal Zone. In 1936, 14 Wesleyan congregations were in existence, with 1,896 communicants and about 2,700 adherents, led by six missionaries supported by the Methodist Missionary Society of Great Britain through the Jamaican Synod which had become independent in 1933. Eleven national workers also rendered valuable service on the circuits.

FIGURE 21
CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF
PROTESTANT ORIGINS IN PANAMA, 1698-1980

FOUNDING DATE	DENOMINATIONAL NAME	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN
1600-1899		
1698	Presbyterian Church of Scotland (1567, John Knox)	UK
1820	Wesleyan Methodist Church (Diocese of the West Indies, Jamaica)	UK
1850	Anglican Church (1534, Bishop of Canterbury, England)	UK
1864	Protestant Episcopal Church in the USA (1607, New York City)	USA
1879	United Free Methodist Churches of England	UK
1884	The Methodist Church (1739, England; John Wesley)	UK
1892	American Bible Society (1826)	USA
1892	British & Foreign Bible Society (1804, London)	UK
1893	Jamaican Baptist Missionary Society (1842, Jamaica)	JAMAICA
1900-1919		
1904	The Salvation Army (1878, England)	UK
1904	Seventh-Day Adventist Church, General Conference	USA
1905	Southern Baptist Home Mission Board	USA
1906	Methodist Episcopal Church, North	USA
1908	Church of God (Anderson, Indiana)	USA
1913	Free Methodist Church of North America	USA
1918	Brethren Assemblies / Christian Brethren	USA
1920-1929		
1928	Evangelical Christian Church	PANAMA
1928	International Church of the Foursquare Gospel (1923, Los Angeles, CA)	USA
1930-1939		
1931	The Christian Mission (Barbados / Panama)	BARBADOS
1935	National Association of Free Will Baptists	USA
1936	Church of God (Cleveland, TN)	USA
1940-1949		
1942	Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (St. Louis, 1847)	USA
1943	Central American Mission-related churches (CAM-1890)	USA
1943	Christian Churches / Churches of Christ	USA
1943	Southern Baptist Home Mission Board begins Spanish-speaking work in Panama City	USA
1944	Nazarene Evangelical Christian Church	USA
1946	Church of God of Prophecy	USA
1950-1959		
1950	International Evangelical Church of Soldiers of the Cross (Cuba, 1930s)	CUBA

1953	Gospel Missionary Union	USA
1953	New Tribes Mission (independent Fundamentalist)	USA
1955	Latin America Mission (1921, Costa Rica; Strachans)	USA
1958	Church of the Brethren (Elgin, IL - 1919)	USA
1958	Mennonite Brethren Church of N.A.-Bruedergemeinde (1876; Hillsboro, KS)	USA
1960-1969		
1960	Apostolic Assembly of Faith in Jesus Christ - Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús (1916, Los Angeles)	USA
1961	Baptist International Missions, Inc. (Chattanooga, TN)	USA
1962	Church of the Nazarene (1895)	USA
1963	Assoc. of Lutheran Churches of Costa Rica & Panama (Ken Mahler)	USA
1963	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (1748, merger 1988, ALC w/LCA)	USA
1967	Assemblies of God, General Conference (1914, Hot Springs, AR)	USA
1970-1979		
1971	United Evangelical Church (Panama)	PANAMA
1973	Avance Misionero (Puerto Rico)	PUERTO RICO
1973	Movimiento Misionero Mundial (1950s, Puerto Rico)	PUERTO RICO
1974	Asamblea Pentecostal de Jesucristo (see PAJC)	PUERTO RICO
unknown	Pentecostal Church of God, International Mission - Iglesia de Dios Pentecostal, Mision Internacional (Puerto Rico)	PUERTO RICO
Sources:		
	(1) Grubb, Kenneth G. <i>Religion in Central America</i> . London: World Dominion Press, 1937.	
	(2) Holland, Clifton L., editor. <i>World Christianity: Central America and the Caribbean</i> . Monrovia, CA: MARC-World Vision International, 1981.	
	(3) Holland, Clifton L. "Expanded Status of Christianity Country Profile: Panama, 1980" (first edition, October 1982)	
	(4) IINDEF-PROCADES. <i>Directorio de Iglesias, Organizaciones y Ministerios del Movimiento Protestante en Panamá, 1980</i> . San José, Costa Rica: IINDEF-PROCADES, mayo de 1980.	
	(5) Nelson, Wilton M. <i>El Protestantismo en Centro América</i> . San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Caribe, 1982.	
	(6) Read, William R., et al. <i>Latin American Church Growth</i> . Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969.	
	(7) Taylor, Clyde W. and Wade T. Coggins, editors. <i>Protestant Missions in Latin America: A Statistical Survey</i> . Washington, DC: EFMA, 1961.	
	(8) Published denominational sources.	

In 1954, the Central American Synod was formed, which represented Wesleyan Methodist efforts in Panama and Costa Rica. The Rev. Efraim Alphonse became chairman of the district in 1957, and served until his retirement in 1967. His son, Alford, is presently chairman of the Panama-Costa Rica District of the **Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas**, which was formed in May 1967 with headquarters in Antigua, West Indies. In 1979, the Wesleyan Methodists reported 16 congregations and 1,794 members in the provinces of Panama, Colón and Bocas del Toro.

4.2.3 The Protestant Episcopal Church (The Church of England, or Anglican) was apparently the first Protestant church to be formally organized with a resident minister in present-day Panama, with the founding of Christ Church By-the-Sea in 1864 at

Aspinwall, Colombia (now Colón, Panama). Occasional worship services had been held on the Isthmus as early as 1849 by Protestant Episcopal clergymen en route to the California gold fields, but it was not until 1851 that the first Episcopal congregation, the Church of the Ascension, was organized at Taboga by the Rev. William Richmond. Taboga was a port with both American and British residents who were served by chaplains of the South American Missionary Society or Navy chaplains from American or British ships. Services were held in Taboga and Panama City in rented rooms, or sometimes in the reading room of *Panama's Star & Herald* newspaper. However, in Colón, employees of the Panama Railroad Company were served by chaplains recruited through the Missionary Society of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. The first church building, Christ Church By-the-Sea, was constructed in 1864 with private funds under the supervision of the Panama Railroad Company. This church, consecrated in 1865 by the Rev. Alonzo Potter, Bishop of Pennsylvania, while en route to California, was the second non-Roman Catholic church built in Central America; the oldest is St. John's Cathedral in Belize City, founded in 1825.

Although an "Isthmian Mission" was established in 1853 by the **Church of England**, Anglican missionary work in Panama was sparse until 1883. In that year, the Bishop of Jamaica brought before the **Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts** the spiritual needs of 15,000 West Indians who were laboring in the construction of the French canal, begun in 1881. Many of these workers were Anglicans from the British West Indies, but there were among them no Anglican or Episcopal priests in Panama at that time to minister among them. The last Episcopal priest had left the Isthmus in 1876.

Consequently, the Society and the Bishop of Jamaica sent a chaplain, the Rev. Samuel Kerr, to resume work at Christ Church in Colón (1883-1890). Kerr, aided by lay workers, established a chain of eight mission stations across the Isthmus, from Colón to Panama City. However, in 1892, only 250 communicants and about 2,000 baptized members (children and adults) were reported. Christ Church Academy, a parochial school, was established in Colón in 1893.

In 1894, jurisdiction of Anglican work in Panama was transferred from the Bishop of Jamaica to the Bishop of British Honduras. The work was supervised in Panama by Archdeacon S. P. Hendrick. New mission stations were opened in Bocas del Toro in 1900. Although the Isthmian Mission of the Anglican Church was placed under American Episcopal Church jurisdiction in 1906, the Anglicans maintained responsibility for work in western Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and other parts of Central America, which were supervised by the Bishop of British Honduras. In 1935, Anglican work in western Panama totaled about 250 communicants and about 1,000 adherents.

In 1906, the Anglican missionary effort on the Isthmus was transferred to the American Protestant Episcopal Church because of the growing U.S. influence in the newly-created Panama Canal Zone and the building of the new canal. As new towns were developed in the Canal Zone, the Episcopal Church established missions in Ancón, La Boca, Gatún, Paraíso, Empire and Las Cascadas, as well as maintaining work in the cities of Panama and Colón.

Because of Episcopal church growth on the Isthmus, the Missionary District of the Panama Canal Zone was established in 1919, with the Rev. James Morris as the first bishop. The District included the Canal Zone, eastern Panama and northern Colombia. At this time, there were about 7,500 adherents and 1,400 communicants in the District.

During the tenure of Bishop Morris, who served until 1930, several missions were started on the San Blas Islands, in addition to the founding of the Bella Vista Children's Home and the Diocesan Academy in Panama City.

In 1947, the Church of England's work in western Panama was transferred to the American Episcopal Church. The Anglican work included missions and churches in an area that extended from Bocas del Toro on the Atlantic side, to Puerto Armuelles on the Pacific coast. This transfer also included Anglican work in Costa Rica and Nicaragua. In 1956, Anglican work in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador was also placed under the Panama District of the Episcopal Church, but in 1964 the diocese was reduced to include only Panama and the Canal Zone.

After 1947, Episcopal work in Panama was divided into two archdeaconries. The Archdeaconry of Western Panama included many missions in a large area that extended from Bocas del Toro on the Atlantic side to Puerto Armuelles on the Pacific Coast. The Archdeaconry of Panama and Colón comprised churches in the terminal cities on the Canal route, as well as other organized churches in the Canal Zone and in the Republic of Panama.

The constituency of the Episcopal Church in Panama reflects the heterogeneous character of the general population, but its work among the Spanish-speaking inhabitants has been somewhat limited. The Cathedral of St. Luke, at Ancon in the Canal Zone, for example, has served as parish church to Canal Zone employees, military personnel and businessmen. On the other hand, the Church of St. Mary the Virgin and St. George's Church, located on the Atlantic side of the Canal Zone, minister to English-speaking West Indians, as do most of the Episcopal churches in Colón Province. The Episcopal Church in Panama carries out ministries that include chaplaincies at Gamboa Penitentiary and Canal Zone hospitals, in addition to regular parish ministries, educational, youth and social work.

Statistics of the Episcopal Church in Panama reflect the changing patterns of West Indian and Canal Zone population fluctuations over the years. Beginning in 1920 with 1,435 communicants and 9,763 adherents, growth increased to 3,465 communicants and 14,404 adherents in 1935, and to 4,429 communicants and 16,540 adherents in 1950. Communicant membership peaked in 1960 with 5,039 and has continued to maintain this level; 4,738 communicants were reported in 1978. From 18 churches and missions in 1920, Episcopal work increased to 29 congregations in 1960, with 23 congregations reported in 1978. The total Episcopal Community was estimated at 13,000. In 1950, about half of all Episcopalians were located in the Canal Zone, but by 1960, 60% were located in the western provinces of Bocas del Toro and Chiriquí, mainly among West Indian workers in the Banana zones.

4.2.4 The Methodist Episcopal Church sent its first missionaries to Panama in 1905, stimulated by the independence of Panama from Colombia and by the creation of the Canal Zone under U.S. administration. Since the Wesleyan Methodists and the Anglicans were already working among the West Indians, the new missionaries concentrated their efforts among Hispanics in Panama and among North Americans in the Canal Zone. The Rev. Thomas B. Wood, veteran missionary in Peru, was appointed supervisor of the Panama field and devoted himself to itinerant evangelistic work, both in English and Spanish. Educational work in Panama City, begun by Carl N. Vance in 1905, was continued by John C. Elkins in 1906 and Charles W. Ports in 1907.

The slow development of a small Spanish-speaking congregation eventually led to the organization of Seawall Methodist Church in 1909 with only 10 members; the same building also housed the American College of Panama under the direction of Ports. The college's 91 pupils came from Panamanian, American, Jewish, Italian, Spanish and Dutch families. Soon, Americans outnumbered Hispanics at Seawall Church, which included 51 English-speaking and 14 Spanish-speaking members in 1911. However, separate ministries were soon developed for the two ethnic groups under the leadership of William W. Gray, Supervisor from 1908 to 1911, and Harry B. Compton (1911-1916).

The opening of the Panama Canal in 1914 brought a reduction in the American labor force and a corresponding decrease in the American church constituency. This fact, together with the creation of the **Union Churches of the Canal Zone** in 1914, led to a lack of attention to American work and a greater concentration on Hispanic ministry. New missions were established at Guachapalí in Panama City (1913) and in Colón (1914). Special revival services, held at these locations during 1913-1914, reportedly led to hundreds of conversions, but to only a small increase in church membership.

Street meetings and regular preaching campaigns in Panama City and Colón also led to the conversion of a number of West Indians, especially at Guachapalí and Colón. New West Indian congregations were started in Red Tank and La Boca in 1915. However, these early mission endeavors among West Indians were all discontinued by 1927, due to three principal causes: defections by three West Indian congregations that became independent by 1924; critical shortages of personnel and finances; and the growing commitment of Methodist leaders to Hispanic work.

In 1921, the **Panama Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church** became the **Central America Mission Conference** with two districts: Panama and Costa Rica. The constituency of the Panama Mission was still small in 1919; only 179 full members, 65 probationers and 447 Sunday school pupils. These efforts were led by a dozen missionaries and five national workers. New mission efforts were begun in the interior at David (1918), Chitre (1920) and El Valle (1923); the latter outreach became the Antón Circuit in 1929. During the 1920s, the work in David was strengthened by financial aid from the Union of Churches of the Canal Zone, who helped support four Methodist missionaries periodically.

The Methodist commitment to develop Hispanic work is reflected in the growth of the Spanish-speaking efforts in Panama City. At Seawall Church, the English-speaking congregation was discontinued in 1920, and the church was renamed "Iglesia Metodista Episcopal" in 1922. By 1929, Spanish work in Panama City included Sunday schools and regular preaching services at 18th Street West, Santa Mesa, Chorrillo, Pueblo Nuevo, Juan Diaz and San Francisco, in addition to organized Hispanic congregations at Seawall and Guachapalí.

The Great Depression of the 1930s brought severe financial hardship to Methodist Episcopal work, almost forcing the closure of the Central America Mission Conference in both Panama and Costa Rica. The proposal to withdraw from Central America was strongly resisted by missionaries on the field, led by Bishop Miller who returned to Panama in 1936 as Supervisor. The Conference continued, but with meager appropriations from the Board of Missions. In 1935, the work in Panama included 378 full and probationary members and 1,223 adherents, among seven churches and five mission stations. Only four missionaries and six national workers were retained by the

Panama District. Methodist educational endeavors suffered greatly, and only the *colegio*, renamed Instituto Pan-Americano (IPA), survived as a self-supporting elementary and high school. In 1979, IPA had a student enrollment of 3,500.

Statistically, Methodist Episcopal (now **United Methodist Church**) work in Panama shows very slow membership growth since its origin in 1905. Membership peaked at 239 full members in 1925, declined to 102 in 1940, and rose to 211 in 1950. By 1960, there were 490 full members among 11 organized congregations and 16 preaching points. Only about 500 members were reported in 1970, but by 1978 the Evangelical Methodist Church of Panama had increased to 695 members among five churches and five missions, predominantly composed of Spanish-speaking Panamanians.

4.2.5 The Seventh-Day Adventist Church began work among West Indians in Panama when American missionaries serving in the Bay Islands of Honduras visited the Caribbean coastal areas in the 1890s. In 1901, regional headquarters for Adventist work were established at Bocas del Toro, where a small gasoline-powered launch aided missionary efforts. Although the work suffered a setback in 1902 when two medical workers died, by the end of 1903 there were three churches and four missions, with a total membership of 129 in western Panama. In 1907, an Adventist church was organized among West Indians at Mount Hope in the Canal Zone, about two miles from Colón. This church, with a membership of 40, provided numerous "canvassers" or colporteurs, who were sent throughout Panama to distribute literature, evangelize and plant churches, mainly among West Indians.

Several institutions were also established by the Adventists in Panama. From 1917 to 1955, the Inter-American branch of the Pacific Press was operated at Cristóbal, which exerted a stabilizing influence on early Adventist work in the Colón area. The West Caribbean Training School was operated by the Adventists from 1921 to 1931 in Las Cascadas, overlooking the Panama Canal. A coeducational boarding school on the senior high school level was opened in 1945 on a 154-acre farm in Pedregalito. This school, called the Panamanian Adventist Institute, is located at La Concepción, near Boquerón, in Chiriquí Province.

Several efforts were made by the Adventists to reach various Amerindian groups in Panama. In 1930, after several visits to the Guaymí Indians in Cerro Iglesia, Chiriquí Province, a church was organized with 33 members. An Adventist school was started there a year later. In 1963, there were 571 baptized members among the Guaymí in this region. Adventist work began in 1962 among Kuna Indians in the San Blas Islands; by 1964, there were 31 baptized Kuna believers and an Adventist school with 68 pupils. Currently, there are two Adventist congregations among the Kuna. Ministry among the Chocó Indians in the Darien region of eastern Panama began in 1964. Soon, 259 Chocoes were enrolled in the radio Bible school and a small Adventist church was established. In 1967, the number of Adventists among the various Amerindian groups totaled about 1,200 members.

In the mid-1930s, the Adventists were actively engaged in evangelistic work in the interior of Panama among the Hispanic population, while continuing to work among West Indians and North Americans in the Canal Zone, and among West Indians in the provinces of Colón, Bocas del Toro and Chiriquí. Adventist statistics for 1935 reveal

1,639 members and about 5,120 adherents, among 25 congregations and nine preaching points. These efforts were led by 26 missionaries and 18 national workers.

In 1960, the Adventist Church reported 3,898 members and almost 7,000 adherents. About half of their 44 congregations and 15 preaching points were located in Chiriquí Province, which accounted for 1,113 members and 2,145 adherents. Eleven foreign missionaries and 34 national workers provided leadership for this growing work nationwide. Adventists were also well represented in the provinces of Colón and Bocas del Toro, in addition to the Canal Zone.

Continued Adventist growth since 1960 produced a membership of 6,210 in 1967 and 11,735 in 1978. The period of most rapid growth was between 1960 and 1967 when Adventist membership increased 6.9% (AAGR). The proportion of Adventists who are Hispanic increased from 40% in 1967 to 60% in 1978, while West Indians decreased from 40% to 35%. The proportion of Amerindians also decreased, from 20% to about 4%. North Americans accounted for the remaining 1% of Adventist membership in 1978. Adventist work is strongest in the Inter-oceanic Region and in the Province of Chiriquí, although Adventists are also well represented, proportionately, in the Eastern Region. Adventist headquarters are located at Balboa in the old Canal Zone. There were 69 organized congregations in 1978. Today the Adventist Church is the second largest Protestant group in Panama.

Adventist Growth

(1935 = 1,635)	1935 to 1960=25 years	49.6 DGR 3.6 AAGR
(1960 = 3,898)	1960 to 1967= 7 years	94.5 DGR 6.9 AAGR
(1967 = 6,210)	1967 to 1978=11 years	78.4 DGR 5.9 AAGR
(1978 = 11,735)	1960 to 1978=18 years	84.5 DGR 6.4 AAGR

4.2.6 The Southern Baptist Convention, through its Home Mission Board, sent the Rev. J. L. Wise to minister among North Americans in the Canal Zone in 1905. Work among West Indians was added in 1908 when the **Jamaican Baptist Missionary Society** invited the Home Mission Board to assume responsibility for its work in Panama along the canal route. In the same year, the First Baptist Church of Balboa was established by North Americans in the Canal Zone. Five other Baptist churches were also formed in the Zone among American civilian and military personnel.

Pioneer Baptist missionaries first arrived in Panama in 1866 from Jamaica, where freedmen Baptist missionaries, such as George Lisle, had led evangelistic efforts among the former slaves of Jamaica after the Abolition of Slavery in the British West Indies in 1834. By the 1860s, a large Baptist constituency existed in Jamaica, which led to organized missionary activities from Jamaica to other lands in the Caribbean basin. In 1884, the Jamaican Baptists send missionary George Turner to the port of Colón to begin work among laborers recruited by the French to begin construction of the trans-isthmian Panama Canal. In 1892, the Beautiful Zion Baptist Church was organized by a Baptist layman, Gayle Brown, at the town of Bocas del Toro on the Caribbean coast of northwestern Panama, which had become a recruitment center of United Fruit Company for its expanding banana plantations in Panama and Costa Rica that relied on West Indian laborers (Afro-Caribbean). After 1894, the Jamaican Baptist Missionary Society

sent several missionaries to Panama to expand its work. In 1910, the Rev. J. H. Sobey, a Jamaican pastor who had previously served as a missionary on the Caribbean Coast of Costa Rica, founded the First Baptist Church of Colón, later renamed the First Isthmian Baptist Church of Cristobal. This church became the mother church for nearly all Baptist churches on the Caribbean coast of Panama among English-speaking immigrant workers from the British West Indies.

Prior to the 1940s, Southern Baptist work was largely limited to the Canal Zone and the port cities of Colón and Panamá, among North Americans and West Indians. Overall, Baptist growth was slow. Only 125 members were reported in 1925, but by 1935 membership totaled 1,250. However, only a slight gain was recorded during the next 20 years; in 1955, there were 1,845 members.

In the 1940s, increased efforts were made by the Home Mission Board to evangelize and plant churches in Spanish-speaking communities in Panama. Two Hispanic churches were soon organized: the First Baptist Church of Panama City (1943) and La Chorrera Baptist Church (1946). Independent mission work among the Kuna Indians on the San Blas Islands was incorporated into the Home Mission Board in the 1950s. The **Panamanian Baptist Convention** was organized in 1959 representing four different cultures: West Indian, North American, Kuna and Hispanic Panameños.

Protestant efforts among the Kuna Indians date to 1913 when Miss Anna Coope, a 52 year-old British national residing in Colón, obtained permission from the President of Panama to open an independent Protestant mission among the Kuna at their request. The faithful efforts of Miss Coope and her helper, Mrs. Purdy, produced a few converts among the Kuna and two schools with 150 students, operated until an Indian revolt against the Panamanian government in 1925 forced the missionary teachers to leave the San Blas Islands. However, a young Kuna lad, Alcibiades Iglesias, aided by Miss Coope, was able to travel to the USA and prepare himself for Christian ministry. After finishing his education and marrying an American woman, he and his wife, Marvel, returned to evangelize the Kuna people. Several schools were established by the Iglesias, backed by contributions from numerous individuals and groups in the Canal Zone and in North America. Many of Alcibiades' family members and friends joined in founding the first Kuna Protestant church on the Island of Ailigandi in 1955. Other churches were soon established on four islands, with the combined Sunday school attendance reaching 1,500. In the 1950s, the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention assumed responsibility for the San Blas Mission. Soon, a small mission hospital, now known as the Marvel Iglesias Clinic, was opened at Ailigandi; later an experimental farm was added.

After years of patient labor, Marvel Iglesias and a Kuna translator, Peter Miller, were able to produce Scripture portions and hymns to the Kuna in their own language (San Blas Kuna). Their efforts were rewarded in 1970 when the American Bible Society published the first Kuna New Testament. Both the Adventists and the Church of God (Anderson) have worked among the Kuna, but the Southern Baptists are apparently the strongest group on the San Blas Islands, with about a dozen congregations and 1,500 members in 1979.

Between 1960 and 1967, Baptist work increased from 4,464 to 5,568 members. The membership increase between 1955 and 1960 (from 1,845 to 4,464) was partially due to the addition of Kuna congregations and members to the work of the Home Mission Board. In the mid-1960s, one-third of the Baptist membership was West Indian,

one-third Amerindian (Kuna), and the remaining third was distributed among Amerindians in the Canal Zone and Hispanics in Panama.

In 1975, after 69 years of ministry in Panama, the work of the Home Mission Board was transferred to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. Since then, intensified efforts have been made to evangelize and plant new churches among Panama's Spanish-speaking population. Contributing to this emphasis are two important Baptist institutions: the Panamanian Baptist Theological Seminary in Arraiján and the Cresta del Mar campground in Santa Clara. The seminary offers a four-year residence program, as well as extension centers for training pastors and laymen. The Baptist Convention also sponsors five childcare centers and kindergartens, a film distribution service, and a book deposit of the Baptist Publishing House.

In 1979, Baptist membership by ethnic groups was 24% Kuna, 35% West Indian, 28% Hispanic and 13% North American. The total membership of the Baptist Convention of Panama reached 6,245 in 1979 among 57 churches and 66 missions. However, the membership has been somewhat static since 1971, when 6,114 members were reported. This is only a slight increase over the 5,568 members recorded in 1967. Part of the problem has to do with the decreasing population of Americans and West Indians in the old Canal Zone.

4.2.7 In 1952, the nondenominational **New Tribes Mission** initiated evangelistic work among the Amerindians of Panama. Fourth-six congregations have been organized under national leadership with a total membership of about 3,000. Thirty-five congregations are located among the Guaymí and one among the Bulgere in Bocas del Toro Province, whereas there are nine Chocó congregations and one Kuna congregation in eastern Panama.

When churches are formed, local leaders are free to evangelize on their own, and no membership records are normally kept. All local congregations are independent with no official ties between them, but each one has a nucleus of baptized believers and several ordained elders. This reflects the nondenominational character of the New Tribes Mission and something of its Baptist church policy. The stated strategy of the Mission is that "a rapid spreading of the Gospel is best done where there is the least outside effort to control and limit."

In December 1978, the New Tribes Mission had a staff of 54 U.S. missionaries, half of whom were working in church planting and discipleship training. Other ministries include Bible translation and literature, teaching, medicine, aviation and administration. The Mission operates a language school for teaching Spanish to missionaries, as well as a school for children of missionaries.

About 7,000 Chocó Indians are scattered throughout the jungles of Darien Province in eastern Panama. Since 1957, the **Mennonite Brethren, New Tribes Mission and the Foursquare Church** have combined efforts to learn the Chocó dialects (Waunana and Emberá) and to direct joint literacy work. Denominational differences have apparently been minimized and a scientific understanding of anthropology has been employed; a conscious waiting on guidance from the Holy Spirit has also been practiced.

The beginnings of a "people movement" have repeatedly occurred among the Chocoos, and Protestant church life has increasingly taken on noticeably indigenous forms. The first converts were reported in early 1958, when Glen Prunty of the New

Tribes Mission produced some Bible stories in the local dialect. The first Chocó congregation was established in July 1961, in El Mamey, under the leadership of Aureliano Sabúgara. Shortly thereafter, this church sent out their first Christian workers to the nearby village of San Lucas, where a second Chocó congregation was formed in May 1962.

From the beginning, the Chocoos themselves have carried the initiative for teaching and evangelizing among their people. A new work is usually started in a neighboring village only after receiving an invitation from their leaders. After the Gospel is explained, the new community leaders are given several months or even years to consider their response to the Gospel. If they decide to follow the Lord, the pastor of the visiting congregation baptizes the new believers and organizes a new congregation in that village.

4.2.8 The Chocó congregations were organized in 1964 as the **United Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church**, which became a legal entity in 1970. This church body, led by its president, Chindia Peña, receives help from other religious, governmental and private agencies. In 1977, ten congregations reported a membership of 700 and a Christian community of about 1,000, of which only 300 or so were active members. Many of those who have been baptized have migrated in search of more fertile farmland in isolated areas where they are outside the reach of local congregations. Nevertheless, new converts are continually being added to the congregations, and new villages are being reached with the Gospel through Chocó evangelists and teachers. A roving Bible school functions among the churches with the help of Mennonite Brethren missionaries as an extension of their work in Colombia. The translation of the New Testament into Waunana is in process.

This denomination is working with a program of basic bilingual education for adults and children, as well as on the secondary and university levels. Christian workers are also trained, with government assistance, to serve their own people through medicine and by teaching health, nutrition and hygiene. Problems of land ownership and security, together with the question of ethnic identity, are concerns that worry the Chocó Evangelical community. They are also concerned about their own non-Christian Indian brothers who perceive the Gospel as a threat to the traditional Chocó way of life. Hopefully, the emergence of a truly indigenous Chocó church will meet this felt need.

4.2.8 Laicos militares de las iglesias de Cristo (Movimiento de Restauración) de los EUA empezaron a trabajar en la Zona del Canal entre 1940 y 1945. In 1942, Gerald y Francis Fruzia iniciaron una obra en Cristóbal, y se organizaron la primera iglesia en la Zona del Canal en Balboa en 1945 bajo el liderazgo de Dean Rhods. Esa última congregación estaba mayormente formada por personal militar y civil del gobierno estadounidense y de la Compañía del Canal de Panamá. Se formaron congregaciones adicionales en Río Abajo (1950), Cristóbal (1959) y Chilibre (1961). Se formaron dos congregaciones en Bocas del Toro en 1962, en Changuinola y Admirante. Desde 1958, John Wright trabajó en la obra y después Burl Brockman reemplazó a Wright. Para 1963, había tres congregaciones en la Zona del Canal y cuatro en Panamá. In 1965, Carl James llegó a Panamá desde Guatemala para establecer una escuela de predicación para laicos.

4.2.9 The independent churches of Christ (Restoration Movement) began work in the Canal Zone in 1945 and organized their first church at Balboa that same year. That congregation has largely been composed of military personnel and civilian employees of the U.S. Government and the Panama Canal Company. Additional congregations were formed in Río Abajo (1950), Cristóbal (1959) and Chilibre (1961). Two congregations were formed in Bocas del Toro in 1962 at Changuinola and Admirante. By 1963, there were three congregations in the Canal Zone and four in the Republic of Panama.

Although progress was slow during the early years, by 1979 the work of the Churches of Christ in Panama had increased to 26 churches and 18 missions (a total of 44 congregations), with a total membership of about 3,000. The membership is largely Hispanic (37 congregations and 2,500 members), but there are also six congregations among the West Indians (about 400 members), and one among North Americans at Balboa.

4.2.110 Other small non-Pentecostal denominations in Panama include: the Central America Mission (1944); the Gospel Missionary Union (1952); the Free Will Baptist Church (1964); the Church of the Nazarene (1953); the National Baptist Church (1909); the Evangelical Mission of Panama (1961); the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod (1942); the United Gospel Church (1961); the Society of Bible Churches (1958); and the Christian Mission of Panamá (1914). None of these groups have more than 500 members. Other groups in Panama, but lacking in historical data, are the Salvation Army (1904) and the Church of God (Anderson, IN) (1908).

4.2.11 The rapid growth of the **International Church of the Foursquare Gospel** in Panama, prior to 1960, resulted in its becoming the largest Protestant denomination in the country, and it remains so to the present. The Foursquare Church, in 1960, accounted for approximately one-third of the total Protestant constituency in Panama and the Canal Zone, and more than 70% of all Spanish-speaking Protestant church members. Not surprisingly, the Foursquare Church in Panama has become synonymous with Protestantism as a whole--evangelicals are often referred to as "los salva cuatro" (meaning Foursquare church members) or the "alleluias" (due to frequent shouts of alleluia in their worship services).

The origins of the Foursquare Church go back to 1928, when the Rev. and Mrs. Arthur Edwards arrived in Panama from California, where the denomination was founded Los Angeles in 1923 by "Sister Aimee" Semple McPherson (born Aimee Elizabeth Kennedy in Ontario, Canada, in 1880). The Edwards were only the third Foursquare couple to be sent out as missionaries from the USA. The first preaching campaigns were held by Edwards in a tent at El Chorillo, and later in a rented chapel at Guapachalí, in addition to street preaching in Chepo, Juan Díaz, Pacora, Pueblo Nuevo and La Chorrera. However, all of these efforts brought somewhat discouraging results. It wasn't until a dynamic healing had taken place at a Foursquare chapel in Frijoles, located near the halfway point on the railroad between Colón and Panama City, that large crowds were drawn to these evangelistic meetings. News quickly spread concerning the Foursquare message, which not only included divine healing, but also the baptism of the Holy Spirit as evidenced by speaking in other tongues.

The Frijoles congregation grew rapidly and soon began to establish house churches in Colón and Panama City. Crowds attending the services in Frijoles were so

large that the Panama Railroad added railcars to the train each Sunday. The Pentecostal revival lasted for several years in Frijoles, where many workers were raised to spread the Foursquare message throughout Panama. Finally, when the town of Frijoles was officially closed by the Canal Company, the Foursquare temple there was eventually abandoned.

During these early years of Foursquare work in Panama, a heavy emphasis was placed on lay involvement. There was no formal training of workers until 1938, when the Foursquare Bible institute was founded by the Edwards. But active lay workers quickly carried the Pentecostal fire to outlying areas of Panama--to Caño Quebrado, Pajonal and Churuquita Grande in Coclé Province; to Río Tuira and El Chuncunaque in Darién Province; to Chitré, Los Santos, El Valle de Antón and David in Chiriquí Province. There were few Protestant churches in any of these Spanish-speaking areas, consequently the Foursquare work grew without much competition, especially in Chiriquí Province.

However, the center of the Foursquare movement in Panama became the Calle Q Foursquare Church in the Caledonia section of Panama City in 1937, after the decline of the work in Frijoles. In that year, Edwards purchased an abandoned Free Methodist chapel, near the center of Panama City, for \$6,000--a considerable sum during the Great Depression years. It was there that the Foursquare Bible Institute was established in 1938, and in that same year "Sister Aimie" made a surprise visit to the work in Panama and preached at the Calle Q Foursquare Church and to large crowds elsewhere. The building was enlarged during the early 1940s so that it could seat about 1,200 people.

In the 1940s, Foursquare work in Panama experienced rapid growth: from 1,000 members in 1940 to 7,000 in 1950 (21.6% AAGR). However, the growth rate slowed during the 1950s; by 1960, membership had increased only slightly to 9,173 (2.6% AAGR). Much of this expansion was encouraged by Calle Q Foursquare Church, which sent out lay evangelists supported by \$25 a month to plant new congregations in the interior of Panama. Some of these workers were extremely gifted and competent, and were able to establish 30 congregations or more in their respective fields of labor.

By 1950, scores of Foursquare congregations had been formed throughout Panama; by 1961, there were 128 churches and 65 preaching points with 10,276 members. Institutions included two Bible institutes with 65 students and 17 teachers, and one day school with 60 students and three teachers. There were 163 national workers, only 15 of whom were fully ordained; three missionary couples also supported Foursquare ministries. Ninety-five percent of the membership was Spanish-speaking. Foursquare work prior to 1960 grew with little administrative control, since it was largely a spontaneous expansion led by gifted lay workers without much formal education.

When the Foursquare Church in Panama became a legal entity in 1964, it established stronger administrative discipline over its local congregations and pastoral leadership. Moreover, due to inflation, neither the Calle Q Foursquare Church nor the national church body had the financial resources to continue sending out salaried workers. Therefore, since the early 1960s, the Foursquare Church in Panama had entered into a period of consolidation of previous efforts, construction of church buildings, and increased pastoral salaries. However, many Foursquare pastors are accustomed to working at least part-time in secular employment to support themselves in the pastoral ministry; only a few receive a full salary from the congregation they serve

as pastors. It is not surprising, then, that the period 1960 to 1970 was one of slow growth: only 4.3% AAGR.

Today, the Foursquare Church has congregations in all nine provinces of Panama with its largest work in Chiriquí (69), Panamá (35), and Colón (31). In 1979, there were 206 churches and 201 preaching points with a total membership of 21,700, up from 13,334 members in 1967 (4.1% AAGR). Foursquare membership today includes 97.6% Hispanics, 1.6% Amerindians (about 350 believers among the Guaymí, Chocó and Teribe), 0.5% West Indians and 0.3% North Americans. Church leadership consists of 40 ordained pastors, 160 licensed preachers, and only two North American missionary couples. Two Bible institutes were operated in Panama City and Colón, as well as two campgrounds or conference centers in Chiriquí and Coclé Provinces.

In 1955, the Vinton Johnsons began work among the Chocó Indians in Darién Province. Preaching campaigns were celebrated at Yaviza and Sambú, which resulted in many conversions and healings. Consequently, a Foursquare congregation was established at Sambú. Johnson began to translate the New Testament into one of the Chocó dialects, but his efforts were continued by Richard Scott. During the 1940s and 1950s, several Foursquare congregations were established among the Guaymí of Chiriquí, Bocas del Toro and Veraguas Provinces. Today, there are only about 350-400 Foursquare members among the Chocó, Guaymí and Teribe in Panama.

Although the Foursquare Church has not suffered a major division in Panama, several leaders have left the denomination because of doctrinal differences and have started their own movements. About 1940, José Mora left and started the **Evangelistic Doctrinal Church of El Pilón** in Colón Province. This group now has 11 organized churches and 17 missions in Panama with about 1,800 members. This movement believes strongly in visions, dreams and prophecy as a means of discerning the Lord's will, while maintaining a highly critical attitude toward other churches. Their extremism has caused some evangelical pastors to question the soundness of their doctrine, even to question whether this group should be considered "evangelical."

Owing to these and other reasons, several pastors of the Evangelistic Doctrinal Church of Puerto Pilón, led by Silverio Ruda, left the movement in 1970 to start another one under a similar name: **The Evangelistic Doctrinal Church**. With its mother church located in Puerto Armuelles, this group now has a total of 14 churches and 14 missions with 1,070 members. The new movement is considered to be less dogmatic and more evangelical than the former one.

The New Life Evangelical Church came into existence in 1967 under the leadership of a group of pastors who left the Foursquare Church in the Province of Chiriquí. It maintains a strong holiness emphasis and only members of their churches may take part in the Lord's Supper at their worship services. Ten churches and eight missions have been organized with about 460 members. With the exception of two churches in Panama City, all the churches are located in the Province of Chiriquí.

4.2.12 The Church of God (Cleveland, TN) initiated work in Panama in 1935, when missionary I. H. Ingram consolidated two existing Pentecostal groups, one in Colón and the other in Panama City. While the Colón group disbanded a few years later, the Panama City church gained remarkable strength. Bolivar De Souza, a naturalized Panamanian from Jamaica, initiated a period of missionary expansion into the towns and

villages in the interior. Soon, Church of God mission stations were established in San Juan, Santa Rosa and Taimatí.

The work in Panama was further strengthened and multiplied in 1940, when A. J. Angvick joined the Church of God, bringing along his own independent congregations. Seven Panamanian evangelists joined the Church of God with him, exactly doubling the number of workers for the Church of God in Panama.

While there were only seven established churches in 1946, four years later there were 16. The town of Concepción became headquarters for the Church of God; a temple large enough for conventions was erected there. De Souza organized additional churches in Puerto Armuelles, Pedregal and numerous smaller towns.

Angvick did effective work in the central region of the Republic and in the Canal Zone itself. Churches were established in La Chorrera, Colón and Paraíso. The church in Paraíso, organized in 1954 in the Canal Zone, was the first Pentecostal church to be authorized there by the U.S. Government.

A period of rapid growth took place between 1955 and 1964, resulting from a revival among the Church of God congregations in Panama. In 1964, there were 18 organized churches and 15 missions with 920 members. Fourteen of these were Spanish-speaking congregations with about 200 members (22%), 13 were Guaymí congregations with 460 members (50%), four were West Indian congregations with 175 members (19%), along with two churches among U.S. servicemen with 85 members (9%).

By 1979, the total membership had increased to 1,657 among 39 churches and 19 missions. Hispanics represented 40.4% (669 members) of the total membership, while West Indians totaled 39% (645 members), Guaymí 19.3% (320 members) and U.S. servicemen and their families numbered 1.4% (23 members). This comparison shows that the Spanish and West Indian membership had increased notably between 1964 and 1978, while the membership among Guaymí and U.S. servicemen had declined. The Church of God operates a Bible institute and theological seminary in Ciudad Radial near Panama City. A more informal Bible institute for laymen is maintained by the Church of God in Colón.

4.2.13 The work of the **Assemblies of God** in Panama is relatively new, this country being its most recent field in Central America. Beginning in 1967 with extended evangelistic crusades, the Assemblies of God have become well-known throughout most of Panama for their *Gran Campaña de Sanidad Divina* ("Grand Campaign of Divine Healing"). These large tent campaigns have drawn thousands, with hundreds of conversions. The 6-12 month crusades resulted in the planting of 16 organized churches with 2,763 baptized members by 1974. The largest congregation is the central church in Panama City, known as the Cathedral of Life (*Catedral de Vida*), located in Barrio Pueblo Nuevo. This church began with a highly publicized tent crusade during 1971-1972 that witnessed thousands of reported conversions.

Some of the early converts in this crusade were Hermenia Villarreal and Carmen and Anita González, who began to work with the Assemblies of God under the guidance of missionary Richard Larson. Carmen González, a few months after her conversion, traveled to the United States and was strongly influenced by the Catholic Charismatic Movement there. Upon her return to Panama, Carmen worked in an evangelistic ministry in the Province of Chiriquí in western Panama, where she met María Ramos. Some

time later, Carmen and María returned to Panama City and became leaders in the early Catholic Charismatic Movement there. They met with a large number of Charismatics in the Guadalupe Catholic Church until the group was forced to leave and find another meeting place. They began meeting in María's house and the group became known as the "House of Prayer" (*Casa de Oración*). It was organized as a church in 1977 with María Ramos as pastor and became affiliated with the Assemblies of God in 1979, under the pastoral leadership of Mario Vásquez.

Most of the 22 churches and 28 missions organized in Panama since 1967 by the Assemblies of God have been the result of extended evangelistic campaigns. As of February 1980, there were 13 such campaigns in process in many parts of Panama. The total membership of the Assemblies of God was estimated at 5,500 for late 1979. In addition to three Christian bookstores operated by the Assemblies of God, many of their pastors had local programs throughout the country. The Assemblies of God Bible Institute, with 231 full-time students and 25 professors (10 full-time and 15 part-time), trains pastors and lay leaders for service among the growing Assemblies of God work in Panama. Although national leaders are in charge of the work, ten North American missionaries were serving in Panama in 1979 as church planters, Bible institute teachers, literature workers and evangelists.

4.2.14 Other Pentecostal denominations that lack historical data for Panama are the following: Church of God of Prophecy (1946); International Evangelical Church "Soldiers of the Cross of Christ" (1950); Apostolic Assembly of Faith in Jesus Christ (1960); Church of God in Christ (1964); Pentecostal Christian Church of the Worldwide Missionary Movement of Puerto Rico (1970); Ebenezer Christian Association (1978); and Pentecostal Church of God, International Mission, of Puerto Rico (date unknown).

4.2.13 Otras denominaciones pentecostales de las cuales no se tienen datos para Panamá son: Iglesia de Dios de Profecía (1946); Iglesia Evangélica Internacional "Soldados de la Cruz de Cristo" (1950); Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús (1960); Iglesia de Dios en Cristo (1964); Iglesia Cristiana Pentecostal del Movimiento Misionero Mundial de Puerto Rico (1973); Asociación Cristiana Ebenezer (1978); y la Iglesia de Dios Pentecostal (19--).

V. MAJOR CHRISTIAN ACTIVITIES

5.1 ECUMENICAL ORGANIZATIONS

The earliest ecumenical or interdenominational efforts in Panama were those of Protestant chaplains provided for by the Panama Railroad Company and, later, by the Isthmian Canal Commission. Many of the early Protestant ministers and missionaries that came to Panama after the formation of the Panama Canal Zone in 1905, also served as chaplains in hospitals, jails and other institutions administered by the Panama Canal Company. After the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914, a series of Union Churches came into existence across the isthmus to provide a nondenominational church home for North Americans who worked for the Canal Company, the U.S. Government, shipping companies, military personnel and other foreign residents.

Segregated Protestant churches served the West Indian population that lived in the Canal Zone until the 1960s.

A notable event occurred in Panama in 1916 that had a distinct ecumenical character: the Congress on Christian Work in Latin America. This Congress, sponsored by the Committee on Co-operation in Latin America, brought together 300 Protestant delegates and scores of official visitors, representing 50 ecclesiastical and missionary organizations who were interested in achieving some measure of cooperative missionary effort in Latin America. The Panama Congress was held in the Hotel Tivoli at Ancon in the Canal Zone. A year later, in April 1917, some 40 Protestant missionaries met to establish a Committee on Co-operation for Panama and the Canal Zone, which was follow-up on the Panama Congress designed to work out comity agreements between major Protestant missionary organizations.

Religious workers from Canal Zone churches, the YMCA, servicemen's centers, military chapels and other Protestant service organizations have maintained close ties over the years, often cooperating in activities of mutual interest and concern. The Religious Workers Association has two chapters in the Canal Zone: one for the Pacific side and another for the Atlantic.

However, interdenominational relationships have remained quite weak among Protestant groups in the Republic of Panama. Except for comity arrangements among the mainline denominations made prior to 1920, most Protestant groups in Panama have evidenced few interdenominational concerns until quite recently--unless it was to condemn another denomination for some action that was considered to be a threat, or because another group's doctrine was considered to be impure or tainted. An unsuccessful attempt was made at forming a local committee to sponsor an Evangelism-in-Depth Campaign in Panama during the 1960s, but not enough interest or support was generated to launch cooperative efforts in evangelism or other activities among the major denominations. Such interests have apparently surfaced only among a few concerned Christian leaders in Panama over the years.

The efforts of the American Bible Society, Latin America Mission, Wycliffe Bible Translators, Alfalit and a few other evangelical service organizations have promoted united activities, especially in the areas of Bible translation and distribution, literacy, evangelism, radio broadcasting and social concern, but broad support for interdenominational activities has not emerged among the larger Protestant groups. There has never been an Evangelical Alliance in Panama, although temporary interdenominational committees have been formed at times. Examples of this are committees to promote the World Vision-sponsored pastor's conference held in the mid-1960s and the more recent Africa-Panama Crusade during 1976-1978.

But growing awareness of the need for cooperative efforts in areas of mutual concern has recently led to the creation of AEPAD (the Evangelical Association for Development) in 1980, with leadership mainly coming from Southern Baptist and Foursquare churches. HOXO and Radio Vida have also fostered interdenominational relationships since the early 1950s, together with representatives of the Bible Society. The Institute of In-Depth Evangelization, during the late 1970s, promoted interdenominational workshops, seminars and evangelistic crusades in Panama, and encouraged the development of AEPAD.

5.2 BASIC EDUCATION

Concern for Christian education in Panama is reflected in early missionary efforts by several groups: the Protestant Episcopal Church in Colón (1893) and Panama City (1919), the United Methodist Free Churches and the Wesleyan Methodists in Bocas del Toro among the Creoles (1880s) and the Guaymí (1910s), the Methodist Episcopal Church in Panama City (1905), the Adventists in the Canal Zone (1906) and the independent San Blas Mission among the Kuna (1913-1923). However, in 1935, the only Protestant schools reported to exist were operated by the Adventists (in the Canal Zone and Chiriquí Province) and the Methodist Episcopal Church (in Panama City). It is quite likely that the Episcopal schools in Colón and Panama City were also still functioning.

By 1960, greater progress had been made in education by a number of Protestant denominations in Panama. The Methodist Episcopal Church continued to offer primary and secondary education at their Pan American Institute (IPA) in Panama City; the Episcopal Church operated two primary schools, in Colón and Panama City; and the Foursquare Church had a new school in Darién Province. However, the Adventist Church, apparently placing a high priority on Christian education, operated eleven primary schools and one secondary school--three of which were located in Bocas del Toro, six in Chiriquí and one each in Colón and Panama City.

Today, Protestants in Panama are responsible for at least ten kindergartens (mainly the Southern Baptists, Salvation Army and Episcopal Church), 16 primary schools (the Adventists have 10), and four secondary schools (2 Episcopal, 1 Adventist and 1 United Methodist). The Salvation Army also operates a school for the blind in Panama City. New Tribes Mission has a school for missionary's children and a language school for teaching Spanish to missionaries.

5.3 BIBLE TRANSLATION AND DISTRIBUTION

Panama, known as the "Crossroads of the World," has hosted ships from all over the world, and for that reason the Scriptures are available in many languages, principally French, German and Russian, in addition to Spanish and English. The New Testament has been published in Kuna-San Blas and Scripture portions in Guaymí, Emberá and Waunana. Early translations of the Scriptures into Guaymí were done by the Rev. Efraim Alphonse of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, during the 1920s and 1930s.

In 1978, Wycliffe Bible Translators was working on translations of the Scriptures into the following languages in Panama: Bulgere, **Embera (Tilde o no???)**, Kuna-Paya, Ngobere (Guaymí), Teribe (Naso) and Waunana. Other Protestant missions that have worked with Wycliffe or have done their own translation work are New Tribes Mission, the Mennonite Brethren, Central American Mission, Southern Baptists, Foursquare Church, Adventist Church and the Wesleyan Methodists.

Since 1917, when the American Bible Society established its regional headquarters in the Canal Zone, the Bible House in Cristóbal has been the major distribution center for Bibles, New Testaments, portions and selections throughout Central America. Regional distribution prior to 1914 was handled from the Guatemala City office, where Francisco Penzotti was an agent of the American Bible Society from 1892-1913. With the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914, the British and Foreign

Bible Society turned over their interests in Central America to the American Bible Society, which transferred its operations to the U.S. controlled Canal Zone. A national office of the Bible Societies was established in Panama in 1974.

The latest distribution reports for Panama reveal the following:

Bibles		22,817
New Testaments		17,018
Portions		17,986
New Reader Portions		127,217
Selections		528,813
New Reader Selections		<u>65</u>
Totals	(1979)	713,916
	(1978)	1,672,627
	(1975)	1,124,742

5.4 **BROADCASTING**

Radio HOXO, "The Voice of the Isthmus," was founded in 1949 when a group of evangelicals in Panama and the Canal Zone purchased a small radio station in Panama City. The power of the station has increased from 500 to 5,000 watts over the years, so that the Gospel can be heard throughout Panama, in Spanish and English. Financial help and technical assistance have been provided by the Latin America Mission of Costa Rica (until 1963) and the World Radio Missionary Fellowship of Ecuador, thereby enabling HOXO to effectively serve the Christian public in Panama and to win many to faith in Christ. In 1971, HOXO added an FM/Stereo station, Radio Vida ("???"), to complement AM broadcasting, and in 1974 these two stations were incorporated as the Tropical Broadcasting Association, under a Panamanian board of directors.

Although many Protestant denominations and local pastors cooperate with and support the ministry of HOXO and Radio Vida, dozens of evangelical programs are also broadcast on local commercial stations throughout Panama. Recently, evangelical pastors who produce their own programs formed the Christian Association of Radio Pastors, with technical assistance from the HOXO staff.

Only a few Christian television programs have been produced by evangelicals in Panama, but the PTL Club and the 700 Club are both aired regularly in Spanish. The PTL Club has a regional office in Panama, which handles program distribution throughout Latin America as well as correspondence with viewers.

5.5 **EVANGELISM**

Although evangelistic activities have been an important part of organized Protestant church work in Panama since the 1850s, most evangelism prior to 1930 was concentrated in the West Indian population, and to a lesser extent among North American residents in the Canal Zone. However, these early efforts were aimed at immigrant groups of Protestant heritage, rather than towards the Spanish-speaking population. The exceptions were the Wesleyan Methodist work among the Guaymí

Indians in Bocas del Toro, the independent San Blas Mission among the Kuna Indians and the Methodist Episcopal and Adventist outreach among Hispanic Panamanians.

The founding of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel in Panama in 1928, was the first concentrated effort to evangelize and plant churches among the Hispanic population. By 1960, the Foursquare Church reported over 10,000 Spanish-speaking church members, whereas other Protestant denominations were noticeably less successful: Adventists (1,700); Southern Baptist (800); Church of God, Cleveland (800); Methodist Episcopal (500); and Pan American Mission (300). Since the 1960s, only a few Protestant groups have maintained strong evangelistic efforts among Hispanics: Assemblies of God (since 1967), Adventists, Southern Baptists and the Foursquare Church. The New Tribes Mission has had notable success among Amerindians (Guaymí and Chocó, also the Mennonites (Chocó) and the Southern Baptists (Kuna) have enjoyed some success.

In mass evangelism, the Assemblies of God stand out during the 1970s, in much the same way that the Foursquare Church did in an earlier period. The Edwards, founders of the Foursquare work, used extended evangelistic campaigns during the 1930s and 1940s to form scores of congregations; the Assemblies of God used a similar strategy during the 1970s. Divine healing campaigns sponsored by the Assemblies of God have drawn large crowds, especially in Panama City and along the Pan American Highway where a string of new congregations have now been organized.

Interdenominational evangelistic campaigns are relatively new to Panama. Evangelist T.L. Osborn of Tulsa, Oklahoma, held a campaign in Colón during the early 1950s, which had a great impact on the West Indian population; a similar campaign among the Spanish-speaking population in Panama City, led by an evangelist named Espinosa and supported by the Foursquare Church and the Church of God (Cleveland), resulted in hundreds of professions of faith, also during the early 1950s. Evangelists Leighton Ford and Grady Wilson held a crusade in Panama City in 1958, part of Billy Graham's Caribbean Crusade during the late 1950s. Graham, himself, spoke at the conclusion of the campaign in Panama, hampered by newspaper and bus strikes, but large crowds attended with a good response: an aggregate attendance of 59,680 and 1,877 professions of faith.

Earlier crusades were organized by the Latin America Mission of Costa Rica in 1951, with Wesleyan Methodist preacher Efraim Alphonse leading the meetings among Afro-Americans and LAM evangelist Víctor Monterroso among Spanish-speaking Panamanians. However, LAM-sponsored Evangelism-in-Depth Campaigns, held during the 1960s in many countries of Central and South America, by-passed Panama due to a lack of local support and cooperation. The Southern Baptist in Panama, participating in their denomination's Crusade of the Americas during the late 1960s, reported 1,200 professions of faith and 644 new church members during 1969.

Several Protestant organizations worked together during 1977 and 1978 to awaken believers, train laymen and mobilize local congregations in a series of activities leading to interdenominational evangelistic crusades in Panama City, Balboa (Canal Zone) and Colón. A local Panamanian committee, aided by missionaries of the Latin America Mission, coordinated efforts with Africa Enterprise to sponsor the Africa-Panama Crusade. African Enterprise team members, led by Bishop Festo Kivengere of Uganda and Michael Cassidy of South Africa, made several visits to Panama during the period 1976-1978 to help the local committee plan, promote and conduct pre-crusade

meetings in late 1977 and the crusade itself in January 1978. Most of the pre-crusade activities, however, were concentrated among West Indians and North Americans, with little participation from the Spanish-speaking churches. Consequently, the crusade meetings were attended largely by West Indians in Panama City and Colón, and by North Americans in Balboa. The results of the bilingual crusade, interestingly enough, showed that 55% of the inquirers were Spanish-speaking and 45% were English-speaking. However, of the 823 inquirers, only 111 were professions of faith, 89 were rededications, and the rest came for general counseling or to obtain booklets written by Kivengere and Cassidy.

Moreover, the crusade meetings had a poor turnout, with an aggregate attendance of 14,235--an average of only 1,080 nightly. The crusade was principally supported by traditional, mainline denominations and by small, independent churches. Pentecostal backing was obviously lacking, but the crusade had strong support from the Episcopal Church, no doubt reflecting the fact that both the chairman of the local committee and the leading evangelist--Festo Kivengere--are both Anglicans.

Many Pentecostal groups in Panama City joined forces during mid-1979 to support a local campaign by Domingo Pilarte, a noted evangelist of the Pentecostal Holiness Church from the Dominican Republic. Eyewitnesses report that this crusade drew larger crowds (about 4,000 nightly) than the Africa-Panama Crusade (about 1,000 nightly), and that Pilarte's meetings were conducted only in Spanish.

A city-wide crusade, held in David, Chiriquí, in late 1978, was sponsored by Alfa y Omega (Campus Crusade for Christ) and ten local congregations, representing both Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals. This crusade, which had a significant impact on the growing city of David, was similar in strategy to the "I Found It!" campaigns conducted by Campus Crusade in the United States. More than 550 laymen received special training in evangelism and discipleship during pre-campaign meetings. Many conversions were reported as churches of many denominations joined hands to seek to win the city of David for Christ. Attendance at the city-wide campaign averaged about 700-800 nightly.

Since the beginning of the Charismatic renewal in Panama during the mid-1970s, a new openness and receptivity to the Gospel has been apparent among the middle and upper strata of Panamanian society. Several new Charismatic churches have emerged in Panama City, predominantly among the upper classes, where barriers between Protestants and Catholics have become less important. This spirit of unity among Christians, regardless of church affiliation, has been evidenced in scores of small groups that have developed simultaneously to meet the need for fellowship, prayer and Bible study among new converts and revitalized older believers. Recently, chapters of the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship and Women's Aglow have been established in Panama City among the growing Charismatic community, especially among business and professional people.

5.6 LITERATURE

A variety of Christian literature is available in Panama and the Canal Zone through about a dozen Christian bookstores: four in Panama City, four in the Canal Zone, and one each in Colón, David and La Concepción de Boquerón. Literacy

materials are distributed by Alfalit of Panama. At least five evangelical groups offer the use of Christian films and other audio-visual aids.

5.7 SOCIAL CONCERN

Several agricultural and rural development projects are sponsored by the Wesleyan Methodists (Bocas del Toro), Episcopal Church (La Chorrera), Adventists (La Concepción de Boquerón) and the Lutheran Church of Panama (Coclé and Samaria). The Salvation Army is the only group known to be working in community development in urban areas (Colón and Panama City).

Medical assistance programs were developed by the Adventists and Wesleyan Methodists in Bocas del Toro among the Creoles and Guaymí and by the independent San Blas Mission among the Kuna during the 1910s, but no other programs are known to exist prior to the 1950s. The Gospel Missionary Union began medical work at El Amanecer soon after their arrival in Panama in 1952. More recently, medical and health assistance programs have been developed by the Mennonite Brethren among the Chocó in Darién, the New Tribes Mission among the Guaymí in Bocas del Toro, the Southern Baptists and the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana – began work in Panama in 1908) among the Kuna in the San Blas Islands, and the Gospel Missionary Union among the Guaymí in Veraguas.

The Salvation Army operates several social ministries in Colón and Panama City: childcare centers, a school for the blind, a home for the elderly and an orphanage. The Episcopal Church maintains a home for young girls in the Bellavista District of Panama City. Several denominations also provide spiritual care to patients of the Palo Seco Leper Colony, and to inmates in jails and prisons in Panama and the Canal Zone. The Christian Women's Temperance Union also has a chapter in Panama City.

Christian camping programs and facilities have been developed by at least eight Protestant denominations, mainly in western Panama along the Pacific coast. However, only a few of these facilities are improved campgrounds that could be utilized by other Protestant groups on a rental basis. The Southern Baptist camp at Santa Clara, known as "Cresta del Mar," is the best example of an improved campground.

Several evangelical groups have specialized programs for high school or university students. The United Methodists, Episcopalians and Adventists offer special activities for youth through their secondary schools. Youth for Christ has recently sent workers to Panama to develop high school ministries, particularly in the Canal Zone among North American Youth. University students are being served by Campus Crusade for Christ, the Episcopal Church, and MINAMUNDO (Ministry to the Student World), an international and interdenominational student ministry related to the Latin America Mission. The Mennonite Brethren have established a student center in Juan Díaz, near Panama City, where Chocó students can live and receive help while attending public schools in the capital.

In the Canal Zone, specialized ministries have been provided for many years by the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Overseas Christian Servicemen's Centers and Pentecostal Servicemen's Centers (sponsored by the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee). These ministries, as well as activities provided by many Canal Zone churches, have attempted to meet the spiritual and social needs of military servicemen and merchant seamen of many nations, particularly for North Americans.

Military chapels and chaplains also provide many services for U.S. military servicemen and their dependents in the Canal Zone.

5.8 THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Theological education had a slow development in Panama among Protestant denominations. The only known programs to be established prior to 1960 were by the Adventists in 1921 (the West Indian Caribbean Training School) and the Foursquare Church in 1938 (the Foursquare Bible Institute). Today, there are at least for TEE programs, eleven Bible Institutes (the Foursquare Church and the Church of God, Cleveland, each have two), and two formal seminary programs are operated by the Southern Baptists (the Baptist Theological Seminary) and the Church of God, Cleveland (the International Latin American Seminary). Some Protestant denominations in Panama send their ministerial candidates to other countries for theological education.

5.9 GENERAL SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

The Republic of Panama has never had a broad-based interdenominational service organization, like those in Nicaragua (CEPAD), Honduras (CEDEN), Guatemala (CEPA/CEDI) or Costa Rica (Goodwill Caravans). But, in recent years, concerned evangelicals in Panama have begun to discuss the need for such an organization. Then, in January 1980, after several years of interaction and planning among younger evangelical leaders, the Evangelical Association for Development (AEPAD), patterned after CEPAD in Nicaragua, was formally constituted under the laws of the Republic of Panama, as a non-profit benevolent organization. AEPAD is now developing its staff and expanding its departments to offer valuable new services to the evangelical public and to the people of Panama in several key areas: administration, community development, education and human development, social services, public health, housing, loans for developing small businesses, relief and emergency aid, communications and pastoral concerns.

Present support for AEPAD comes from individual pastors, churches, laymen and other service organizations rather than from denominational endorsements. Initially, AEPAD projects, as well as preparatory planning, training of leaders and promotion of the idea of AEPAD, were supported by contributions from World Vision, Church World Service, the Institute of In-Depth Evangelization, the Latin American Center for Pastoral Studies and the Evangelical Committee for Development (CEPAD) of Nicaragua.

The Institute of In-Depth Evangelization, based in Costa Rica and related to the Latin America Mission, has assisted evangelical leaders in Panama for a number of years. INDEPTH personnel residing in neighboring Costa Rica have made periodic visits to Panama; but now INDEPTH has resident advisors in Panama--one in Panama City and another in Chiriquí Province. Both are Panamanian pastors who help coordinate activities designed to promote evangelism, discipleship, integral church growth and unity among evangelical churches. INDEPTH advisors provide assistance to individual denominations, to interdenominational efforts and to local congregations and pastors. One of INDEPTH's recent projects in Panama has been to coordinate a church growth study of the Protestant Movement in Panama and the Canal Zone, and to publish a geographical directory of churches, as well as other reports on the status of

evangelical work in Panama. Several church growth seminars and workshops have been held in Panama during 1980-1981 sponsored jointly by INDEPTH and AEPAD.

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