

# A HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF GOD IN CHILE

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C. 1969

(but part of WCG Spanish Department, probably Victor Gutierrez)

The past few years have witnessed remarkable growth in all areas of God's Work. The Spanish branch of the Work is no exception.

The past few years have introduced "La Pura Verdad" magazine (the Spanish PLAIN TRUTH) to the Spanish-speaking world. Starting with an initial circulation of less than 4,000, the magazine's mailing list has blossomed i to almost 60,000 copies monthly in less than 18 months.

During the last two years Mr. Pablo Gonzales was added to the staff. His invaluable help has rejuvenated the Spanish broadcast; he has stirred great interest in thousands who, before his arrival, were hearing three, four and five-time re-runs of Dr. Benjamin Rea's old tapes. But perhaps the most remarkable fruit in the recent history of the Spanish Work has been the contact we have had with the Church in Chile.

## INTRODUCTION

This report is a chronological account of our relationship with the various groups comprising the Church in Chile. Included are translated excerpts from letters we have received from them as well as information communicated to us verbally. At the end of this report the reader will find a map focusing on the area of Chile where these people are most heavily concentrated.

## THE CHURCH OF GOD AND THE CHILEAN CHURCH

In Dugger and Dodd's *A History of the True Religion*, we find a very interesting section describing the activities of the Church, headquartered at Stanberry, Missouri, during the late 1800's. Notice this carefully:

"As time went on, work was opened up in foreign fields and the precious truth found its way into many countries, and islands of the sea. Hundreds of thousands of tracts were printed and distributed together with many books, and for a period of 72 years from 1861 to 1933 the church continued to send forth the true doctrine" (page 297, emphasis mine.)

To see just how extensive this propagation of the gospel was, as understood then, notice now this excerpt from *The Bible Advocate* published by the Church at Salem, Oregon, November 6, 1933.

"Several weeks prior to November 4th, a call was sent to many countries for prayer that God would again choose men to lead His church as in the former time. These countries were;

Jerusalem, South Africa, Australia, Egypt, England, Norway, Jamaica, Cuba, Trinidad, Guam, Canada, Nova Scotia, Liberia, Barbados, Venezuela, Syria, Madagascar, Burma, Newfoundland, and Mexico."

The countries I have underlined illustrate that the Church made several inroads into the Caribbean area, Central America, and, most importantly for this report, --South America!

For many years, while the Spanish Work was headquartered in England, we corresponded very frequently with an individual in Lima, Peru, named Jose Loje. In fact, to this day Sr. Loje is still on our mailing list. How Sr. Loje initially contacted us is not known at this late date. He probably first came to us via our Spanish broadcast on "La Cronica," a radio station in Lima. In any case, it turned out that Sr. Loje was the president of a small group of Peruvians who literally believed themselves to be of full-blooded Jewish descent. This group still exists in Peru, Mexico, and elsewhere. Sr. Loje's group practises circumcision (in fact, they also teach that you cannot be saved unless you are circumcised.) Every year the group observes the same Festivals the Jews do, on the same days and in much the same manner that orthodox Jews worship. The teachings of this group are a peculiar mixture of Old Testament ritual (they still practice sacrifices, although without the use of a temple) and New Testament phraseology. They claim Christ as their Saviour yet very much practice "salvation by works."

On occasion, newspaper articles have been written, somewhat mockingly, about this group of "Christ Believing Jews" who build huts during the Tabernacle season and dwell in them during a week long session of sermons, sacrifices, religious instructions, etc.

Sr. Loje often liked to point to similarities between his teaching and ours (ie. Sabbath observance, Festival observance, clean and unclean meats etc.) yet also enjoyed writing lengthy, sprawling treatises on why we were wrong on this or that doctrine. He did this on and off every few months for several years. Interestingly, it was through this man that God led the Chilean group to us. Following now is a translation of the first letter we received from a member of the group in Chile. It was sent to us in one of our return addressed envelopes which the writer got from Sr. Loje.

"Dear Brother in Christ'

I am very pleased to address this letter to you and all your fellow labourers in the Work of God. During a recent trip to Peru in order to study various doctrines and Bible prophecies with the members of the 'Asociacion Israelita Evangelica del Nuevo Pacto' (Evangelical Israelite Association of the New Covenant), I learned from Sr. Jose Alfredo Loje, the president of this group, that he had various booklets and Bible courses which you had sent him. During my stay I had the opportunity to read several of these.

I've found your literature to be remarkable. I'm very impressed by your full knowledge of the Bible, its doctrines and prophecies. Maybe I'm particularly impressed because I am a member of an old, although small, religious group in Chile called 'Iglesia Israelita del Nuevo Pacto' (Israelite Church of the New Covenant.) I was told by some of our elderly members that our group was started by a missionary named Zegers, at the turn of the century or thereabouts.

We number about 20 churches and several groups throughout the region encompassed by the port of Valparaiso in the north, and the city of Osorno in the south. (Note: this is a distance of approximately 500 miles.) We practice God's Laws, Commandments, and Statutes, just as God has promised in the New Covenant to write them in our hearts.

By prophecy we have understood that God would in the latter days begin a Work that has stamped it out by the feet of her false prophets. We believe that if we're faithful to the light God has already given us, He will give us more and more truth so that we can form a part of this world-wide Work foretold in Bible prophecy (Acts 3:21, Matt 24:12). Please send me the same literature you've been sending Sr. Loje. I'd like to take it back to our churches in Santiago, Chile.

Regards to all,  
Sergio Guerrero  
Dec 25 1967."

This particular individual visited the Big Sandy campus in Nov. 1968. In conversation he mentioned that when he noticed Sr. Loje did not appreciate his interest in our literature, he secretly copied our address and left Sr. Loje's home with our return addressed envelope.

After this initial contact with a member of the Chile group, names began to trickle in. For a time it appeared that the Chile organization was an off-shoot of Sr. Loje's group in Peru rather than distinct and separately organised. Happily, they are not a part of the Peruvian group.

In mid-June of 1968, after having sent quite a bit of our literature to the person on our file belonging to the Chile organization, we received the following letter from an individual named Manuel Carrido. It was the first fully descriptive letter we received from him regarding the Chilean people. Sr. Garrido eventually, and to this day, has proved to be a very valuable link to the Chile group. This is his letter, dated June 18 1968:

"Dear Friends,

Thank you very much for the literature I've just received! I'm just thrilled that God has brought me in contact with you. The booklets are a great blessing to my family. My wife and I read them over and over again, especially 'La PURA VERDAD. As I mentioned in my first letter to you, we have been practising all these things for several years. But, after reading your booklets on God's Holy Days, I find a few differences with your understanding. We had been using the Jewish Calendar and following their observances. Please continue sending us your literature so that one day we can become one body.

The church to which I belong in Chile has been here for about 80 years, although I don't know exactly the date of when it started. Some of the older members say that a gentleman named either Shegezel or Seguesel came here from a distant country (either England or North America- I forget) and started preaching among the Seventh Day Adventists. Only one person believed what he said. A man named Manuel Ovalos who then continued Seguesel's work after he returned to his homeland. Ovalos understood only about there being three festivals: Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. Several people then left the Adventists and other sects and started what came to be called the 'Israelite Church of the New Covenant.' Although we all assumed that elsewhere on earth there were others believing as we do, it was only recently that we have contacted other congregations in other countries with the same beliefs.

And now, miraculously, we have come in contact with you. We are not a very numerous body of people. There are about 1000 of us in Chile and a similar amount in Argentina. Please forgive me for writing such a long letter. It's just that I'm so happy God has led me to you."

It was about this time we became aware of Pope Paul VI's planned visit to Colombia to preside at a Eucharistic Conference. There was no doubt that our Latin American readership would be interested in reading about his visit in "La PURA VERDAD." And any coverage for La PURA VERDAD" could easily be adapted for the English and foreign language PT'S. At the same time we also knew that a trip to Colombia would place us in a position to visit Chile at comparatively

little additional cost. With these two objectives, covering the Pope's visit for the PLAIN TRUTH and its foreign language editions, and to visit the newly interested group in Chile, Dr. Charles Dorothy and Mr. Pablo Gonzalez left the United States en route for South America.

After him was a Sr. Pulgar Barriga (the father of the lady whose letter is quoted previously.) We have been told that Sr. Pulgar Barriga died in 1948. The only two other individuals we have record of are Sr. Julio Labrin and Sr. Jose Zambrano. Of all these persons, only Sr Zambrano is still alive. He is 97 years old.

Because of the enthusiastic response expressed by so many of the Chilean members of the Church, Dr. Dorothy invited two of their number to attend the 1968 Feast of Tabernacles in Big Sandy. The purpose was so that they could return to Chile with the visual impact of seeing so many people coming under the government of God's Church to observe the Festival.

Both Dr. Dorothy and Mr. Gonzales were struck by the obvious lack of Church government (or any real government, for that matter) in Chile's Church. Individual ministers have titles like "evangelist" and "pastor" but not the authority. What government there is seems to be dependent more on the individual's influence than his rank or title. The churches appear to be governed very much on a seniority basis -- those that have been around the longest tend to have the higher positions. Dr Dorothy chose Sr. Manuel Garrido to attend the Festival at Big Sandy. Sr. Zamora is a pastor in the Chilean Church, Sr Garrido a lay member. Both were very, very favourably impressed by the Festival, the government at the Festival, the College, etc. etc. Sr. Garrido seemed to be, at the outset of the Feast, the more dependable of the two because he seemed to be more "with us." He was already almost, if not actually, convinced that we are the true Church of God. Sr. Zamora, however, was more reticent about this and tended to give a more cautious appearance. We took this as perfectly understandable since he does have more responsibility than Sr. Garrido, having a church to pastor. By the time both men left on their return for Chile, Sr. Zamora had apparently come a long way. He seemed to be, and said he was, absolutely convinced. Both men were returning to Chile to declare throughout the churches that this was indeed the Church of God! Sr. Zamora mentioned that since it was their custom to have a ministerial conference every two years, he would present our literature to the ministers who would meet at Temuco, Chile, during January. We gave them a tape recorder and several tapes of the Spanish broadcast to play to the congregations they would contact. In his enthusiasm, Sr. Zamora visited a local radio station in Santiago and obtained information regarding the cost of obtaining radio time. The nominal cost of \$60 a month for four 15 minute broadcasts a month was quoted to us. We're still hopeful that eventually, in order to serve these people and others in Chile, we will be able to purchase radio time in this area.

At the Temuco ministerial conference, Sr. Zamora discussed our teachings, played several of our broadcast tapes, and brought up the subject of unification. Naturally we do not expect a wholesale union of the "Israel Pact Church" with our Church

Here is a section from Sr. Zamora's report dated January 16, 1969:

"During the ministerial conference which began January third and ended the seventh, there were about 35 ministers and delegates present. There was a very favourable feeling for the unity we need. There were a few against the idea at first, but after they came to understand, there was no opposition."

We had received from Sr. Rosamel Zuniga and Sr. Emisael Palma, President and Secretary of the group, a formal invitation to attend their conference. However, as we were not sure at the time just how many of these individuals did recognize us as the true church, we decided to let them conduct their conference as they had originally planned it, without any of us being present.

Above everything else, we did not want any "confrontation" at so early a stage in our dealings with this group. And if there were to be outright opposition to us, the presence of one of our people could have resulted in an immediate split in the group, with the majority of the people naturally siding with their ministers. After all, the people were used to their ministers, had known them for years and had built up a measure of confidence in them. We were "new" and untried. For all these reasons, we did not participate in their Temuco conference.

During the conference we received an urgent phone call from Sr. Garrido. He told us that several of the ministers had held a meeting, to which he had not been invited, in which the ministers decided that Sr. Garrido was not a suitable representative of their group. (Both Sr. Zamora and Sr. Garrido had planned to take news of the Festival here in Big Sandy and the existence of God's Church in general to various groups in Argentina...we offered to help with some of their expenses.) The ministers at this somewhat clandestine meeting held that Sr. Garrido should not go to Argentina with Sr. Zamora. They held that a more suitable person would be an individual known as Santiago Garcia. We had no objection to Sr. Santiago Garcia going along; our immediate objection was regarding why they were taking it upon themselves to drop Sr. Garrido from the trip when we were helping them pay for the trip. Sr. Garrido then told us the reason. Self-righteously, the ministry in the church had taken it upon itself to proclaim a problem of his to virtually all its membership in both Argentina and Chile. Consequently, Sr. Garrido's standing in the Church, no matter where he went, was very low. Certainly he had personal friends in the church who liked and admired him - but church-wise he held, and to this day still holds, a very poor reputation among the people in these areas. That Sr. Garrido had long since repented, was ignored.

Because Sr. Garrido had been very loyal to us, and was an eye-witness of the Festival in Big Sandy, we definitely wanted him to go along on the trip. We were eventually able to contact Sr. Zamora about this. He held with their decision that Sr. Garrido should not go. In time and with some coaxing from us, we were however, able to convince him that to reconcile both our positions, we felt it best to send both Sr. Garrido and Sr. Garcia to Argentina with Sr. Zamora. This they eventually agreed to do.

While Sr. Zamora and Sr. Garrido were with us in Texas during the Festival, we had given Sr. Garrido sufficient money to help with their expenses in touring several of the Churches in Chile and Argentina. After they had toured the Chilean churches, they realized that they did not have sufficient time for their planned visit to Argentina. Neither did they have enough time to visit Argentina prior to the January conference, at which time we would send enough money for the trip. However, after the ministers decided not to let Sr. Garrido visit Argentina and instead wanted Sr. Garcia in his place, we told Sres. Zamora and Garrido to postpone the trip until a later date. Finally we agreed, as mentioned above, to have all three men go to Argentina.

It was at this time that Sr. Garrido reported that the money he had left after the Chile excursion, approximately \$70, was stolen from him. As he had been in disfavour in the ministers' sight for so long, many accused him of stealing the money. For the sake of the journey, Sr. Garrido decided it would be best if he did not go to Argentina after all.

The trip did finally materialise this past June. Here are excerpts from Sr. Garcia's letter thanking Dr. Dorothy for the opportunity to visit Argentina.

"In our estimation the trip was an undeniable success. Let me take this opportunity to thank you for having the confidence in me to permit me to take this trip with Sr. Zamora. Thank you Dr. Dorothy! The trip itself took 21 days. We left Chile on the fourth of June and returned on the 24th. Here are a few details of our meeting with the brethren in Argentina.

Starting with Buenos Aires: There are two groups in the vicinity of Ezeiza. One is pastored by Sr. Ruperto Cordova. This group consists of about 80 persons. Sr. Cordova is very zealous towards the Law of God. He well remembers you. He said he'll pray for you and asks that you pass through Argentina while in South America. Another congregation nearby is pastored by Sr. Armando Soto. Here the membership is about 35. A little south of Buenos Aires in the small town of Monte Grande is a group directed by Sr. Atolin Cuevas. These brethren number about 40.

In Monte Grande there is another group of about 35 members. I have my doubts about whether they'll come along with us because of certain actions by their pastor, Sr. Manuel Molina. In Bahia Blanca there is a group of 40 persons led by Sr. Adrian Sanchez. Further south, in the area of Neuquen (practically on the Chile-Argentina border), there is another group of about 40 persons directed by Sr. Juan Diaz.

There is another group in Huergo. We did not pass by there since Sr. Cordova had told us that we would meet the pastor anyway in the city of Centenario within a few days. These churches that we visited received us as true brethren in Christ. This is in spite of the fact that several letters had been sent in advance from Chile warning the people of our arrival. These were sent by "negative elements"... "negative" to the Work of God. Dr. Dorothy, you will soon meet them.

Everyone was thrilled by the news of the archaeological dig in Jerusalem. We have to thank God for the privilege of letting Ambassador College participate in this historic effort."

Santiago Garcia

Santiago, Chile. June 25 1969.

About the time this letter was received, we learned of Sr. Zamora's return from Argentina. We are now awaiting his full report as well as listing of all the people in Argentina he met so they may be added onto the PURA VERDAD mailing list.

While the trip was in progress, we received several letters from persons whom Sres. Zamora and Garcia had contacted. One of these was Sr. Rumilio Godoy, whom Dr. Dorothy had contacted during his trip last year. Sr. Godoy sent us an excerpt from a letter he had received from Sr. Rupert Cordova, the minister of the group in Buenos Aires. This is what Sr. Cordova wrote Sr. Godoy:

"Brother Godoy, the message which our brethren bring us, that of unity with the Worldwide Church of God, should really be listened to. We know that they speak the truth and our teachings are the same on virtually everything. So that the Church of God may be one in all the world we should with joy accept unification. These three groups in Ezeiza (near Buenos Aires) are in complete accord with this. All we need to discuss are certain small details, which I hope can be done when brother Dorothy visits in August."

Sr. Godoy goes on to write: "Referring to unification; I've discussed this with Brother Zamora. We know some are going to be opposed; but these are those who don't want God's ways. They will be crucifying Christ anew."

Well over 100 letters have been received in the course of the past year from the Chilean group. Many are emotion-packed, virtually tear-filled. One man sprawled an S.O.S. on his letter, asking us to be sure to visit him. Sr. Garrido wrote to us just a few days ago a very inspiring letter. Here's a particularly interesting analogy included in it.

"Oh how I wish you people were here ! Believe me, some of us here are so anxious for your visit we can hardly eat ! The "Iglesia Israelita del Nuevo Pacto" no longer satisfies me. It's as if you were to go to the bakery you normally go to and be sold stale, distasteful bread: And you have to eat this bread even though you are fully aware of a bakery a little further away where you can eat real good bread. You just have no way of physically getting to the second bakery. The Church of God is that second bakery !"

We have received, as it were, a "Macedonian Call," from these people. Knowing that God is definitely calling some persons into the Worldwide Church of God from this group in Chile, we have endeavoured to be extremely careful to consider all circumstances and possible consequences.

Our dealings with these people are still at a very early stage.

In order to help them, we have distributed among their number thousands of pieces of literature. All of them are taking the *Bible Correspondence Course*. As mentioned earlier in this report, we have over 550 names from this group receiving "LA PURA VERDAD'.

So that Dr. Dorothy's and Mr. Flores' trip this summer might have maximum benefit among the people, we sent them all copies of the Correspondence Course lessons 19-22. These lessons deal principally with the power of God's Spirit, the experience of repentance, and "this present evil world."

We bear no false optimism about the fruits of our labor in Chile. We expect the majority of the people to not fully repent and to not enter the Philadelphia era of God's Church. Yet at the same time, we know some will be converted and eventually become a nucleus around which there may be real eventual growth for God's Church in Chile.

Fortunately the people are accessible. As will be seen by the map on the following page, most of the congregations are either on or very near the main highway in Chile, indicated by the darkest line running north to south. Additional information of the local congregations, their pastors and some of the leading personalities follows in subsequent pages.

The following information should be of assistance in dealing with the leadership of the Chilean churches.

<u>Church</u>	<u>Minister in Charge</u>
Quillota	Vincente General
Valparaiso	Fernando Reynoso
Santiago	
San Ramon	Sr. Iturra
Santa Rosa	Federico Martinez II
Castrina	Manuel, Zamora, Sr. Garcia
Cumpeo	Roberto Oyarzun

San Carlos  
Chillan  
Concepcion  
Talcahuano  
Renaico  
Curacauton  
Cherquenco  
Temuco  
Padres Las Casas  
Cunco  
Huichahue  
Melipueco  
Santa Maria de Llaima  
Lastarria  
Quitratue  
Tolten  
Boroa Sur  
Queule  
Puren  
Trovohue

Jose Alfaro  
Juan Garay  
Pedro Barrientos  
Sr. Salazar  
Guillermo Ynostroza  
Emisael Palma  
Sr. Chavez  
Luis Segura  
Gonzalo Toledo  
Rosamel Zuniga  
Rosamel Zuniga  
Humberto Soto  
Humberto Soto  
Sr. Aguero  
Santos Carrasco  
Santos Carrasco  
Santos Carrasco  
Santos Carrasco  
Santos Carrasco  
Nazareno Urrutia

LINE OF ORDINATION:

Shegerse (minister from U.S. who visited Chile in 1896)  
Avalos  
Pulgar  
Labrin  
Zambrano (Elderly man - 97 years old)

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