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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SOUTHERN BAPTIST  
HISPANIC CHURCH-PLANTING STRATEGIES  
IN NORTH AMERICA, 1970-1994

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
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by  
Gustavo Vicente Suárez  
December 2013

**APPROVAL SHEET**

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SOUTHERN BAPTIST  
HISPANIC CHURCH-PLANTING STRATEGIES  
IN NORTH AMERICA, 1970-1994

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To Diana,  
who faithfully and lovingly  
walked the church-planting journey with me,  
to Phillip, Megan, and Matthew,  
who bring exceeding joy to my life,  
and to our grandchildren, Cooper and Camryn,  
may God's Word be a lamp to your feet  
and a light to your path.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BCNM	Baptist Convention of New Mexico
BGCT	Baptist General Convention of Texas
CLD	Contextualized Leadership Development
ELD	Ethnic Leadership Development
FMB	Foreign Mission Board
GCRTF	Great Commission Resurgence Task Force
GCRTF	Great Commission Resurgence Task Force
GGBTS	Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary
HMB	Home Mission Board
IMB	International Mission Board
MBTS	Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
M.E.T.A.	Multi Ethnic Theological Association
NAMB	North American Mission Board
NOBTS	New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
PIB	Primera Iglesia Bautista
SBC	Southern Baptist Convention
SBTS	Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
SEBTS	Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary
SWBTS	Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

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## PREFACE

This dissertation grows out of more than thirty years of experience in ministry among language cultural people in the United States. As I reflect on these years, the influence relationships and organizations played in shaping my life and ministry is evident. The experience with different cultural groups helped enrich my understanding of different belief systems and also to solidify my biblical worldview. A work of this magnitude is impossible to write without the assistance of friends, family, and organizations.

I would like to express my profound gratitude of debt to these people:

Robert “Bob” Langel and Charles A. Chilton from Berwyn Baptist Church in Berwyn, Maryland, for holding my hand as I took the first steps in my Christian walk. Bob welcomed me to Berwyn Baptist Church a few days after I came to know Christ. Bob worked as a scientist for Goddard Space Flight Center (NASA) but spent a considerable amount of hours teaching and discipling young college students. Bob discipled me for eighteen months until I left for seminary. Charles A. Chilton, pastor of Berwyn Baptist Church, was my first pastor. He taught me a passion to preach the Word of God and for evangelism.

Gray Allison and Elías Dávila Pantoja for setting strong foundations and standards that shaped my life. In 1971, Gray Allison, in the midst of a dangerous theological shift among Southern Baptists, founded Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tennessee. As a new believer, without any theological training, I was able to receive sound conservative theological training. I am thankful for his faithfulness to obey Christ. Elías Pantoja taught me about doing ministry in an

ethnolinguistic context. He gave me the first opportunities to teach, preach, and learn about church planting.

The Home Mission Board and state conventions for the opportunities you gave me to serve with some incredible people in ministry. My wife, Diana, and I were appointed as home missionary in 1985. Since that time, we have been blessed to serve with the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware, the Baptist Convention of New Mexico, the Northwest Baptist Convention, and, most recently, as Professor of Church Planting at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Oscar Ishmael Romo for the vision and passion you gave me to take the gospel “to the ends of the earth” and start new churches. Your vision to reach the “American Mosaic” was compelling and contagious. You taught me to have urgency for the gospel, the need to plan ahead, respect for denominational structures, and the value of good relationships in ministry. No other person on this earth has influenced my missiology more than you.

Fermín A. Whittaker, Daniel R. Sánchez, and Merry Romo for the friendship and magnificent support all three of you gave me during the years of ministry. Fermín Whittaker processed my wife and me as we were going through the process of missionary appointment with the Home Mission Board. He has been a very good friend for more than thirty years. Daniel Sánchez helped with quality information as I was working with the Doctor of Ministry at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, and also with the Doctor of Philosophy at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. I have known Sánchez for more than twenty years. Merry Romo was the administrative secretary for Oscar Romo. I first met Merry as I was starting ministry in 1983. Merry Romo has provided excellent information on this subject since 2010 when I first became interested in the possibility of writing about Hispanic Church Planting Strategies in North America.

Adam Greenway for the friendship and helpful direction you gave me during these years of study. Your comments, constructive criticism, and encouragement helped

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Gustavo Vicente Suárez

Kansas City, Missouri  
December 2013

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **A Nation of Immigrants**

The Statue of Liberty stands on Liberty Island in New York Harbor as a symbol of liberty and freedom. Since the early nineteenth century, however, it has been a symbol of freedom from political oppression for immigrants fleeing persecution in their homeland. Global events such as the Vietnam War, famines and political unrest in African countries, unstable political environments in Latin America, and the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965<sup>1</sup> brought people from Canada, Western Europe, Latin America, and Asia to the United States. Michael Pocock and Joseph Henriques note that “the promise of freedom, security, and prosperity all serve as magnets to draw people to America and the West.”<sup>2</sup>

The land that received the world’s tired, poor, and huddled masses that yearn to be free was becoming the “American Mosaic,” a mosaic reflected in the diversity of cultural and linguistic values.<sup>3</sup> The landscape of North America has rapidly changed from

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<sup>1</sup>The Immigration Act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Cellar Act, changed the method by which immigrants are admitted into the United States. The bill abolished the national origin quota and established a new immigration policy based on reuniting immigrant families and attracting skilled labor to the United States. Under the Act, 170,000 immigrants from the Eastern Hemisphere are granted residency, with no more than 20,000 per country. One hundred and twenty thousand immigrants from the Western Hemisphere, with no “national limitations,” are also to be admitted into the country. Over the next decades, the policies put into effect in 1965 would greatly change the demographic makeup of the American population, as immigrants entering the United States under the new legislation came increasingly from countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, as opposed to Europe. President Lyndon B. Johnson signed this bill into law on 3 October 1965.

<sup>2</sup>Michael Pocock and Joseph Henriques, *Cultural Change and Your Church: Helping Your Church Thrive in a Diverse Society* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002), 16.

<sup>3</sup>Oscar I. Romo, “Ethnic Missions in America” (Atlanta: Language Missions Department, Home Mission Board, SBC, n.d.), 1.

a primarily homogeneous culture to a more multicultural society. These changes have implications for both the local church and mission agencies. Strategically, it is important to understand these changes in order to determine the most effective and appropriate strategies to reach the growing diverse ethnic population.

Manuel Ortíz recognized the complexity of the massive cultural transitions in the United States. On one hand, there are the immigrant populations who once lived in areas where now gentrification is occurring, and these people groups have been relocated to the outskirts of American cities. On the other hand, neighborhoods once filled with first-generation immigrants are now bilingual and increasingly more English speaking.<sup>4</sup>

This cultural transition is not new to the Hispanic church, but it is much more complex and intergenerational in nature today than twenty years ago. Yet, the need to evangelize the lost, start new congregations, train leaders, and send them forth to the harvest has not changed. Understanding the dynamics of cultural transitions is necessary to churches and mission agencies in developing effective strategies to reach the different ethna in their communities.

North American Christians have a remarkable mission opportunity right at our own doorsteps. It appears that God is bringing the world to the United States. Pocock and Henriques react strongly to the response of some Christians and local churches to these ethnic transitions in their neighborhoods. They observe that “they [the churches] have faithfully responded to Christ’s Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20, sending missionaries around the globe, but they have not always been so diligent or even friendly when the peoples of the world have come to their neighborhood!”<sup>5</sup>

Oscar I. Romo, who led the Language Missions Division of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Home Mission Board from 1971-1994, understood the cultural

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<sup>4</sup>Daniel A. Rodriguez, *A Future for the Latino Church: Models for Multilingual, Multigenerational Hispanic Congregation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 4.

<sup>5</sup>Pocock and Henriques, *Cultural Change*, 16-17.

challenge of his days. David Terry, who served with Romo for nine years, describes him as “quite a visionary who understood the changing nature of the United States and North America and had an awareness of not only the Hispanic culture, but the cultures of Eastern Europe, Asia and the Caribbean countries. He believed you had to strategically prepare and plan ahead, and cultivate relationships.”<sup>6</sup> Romo had an intentional strategy not only to reach the lost, but to develop leaders and involve other Southern Baptist agency leadership for effective ministry to language groups in North America.<sup>7</sup> The question one must continually ask is: What is the most effective way to reach the world at my doorsteps?

### **Thesis**

I personally witnessed the ministry of Oscar Romo for fifteen years. Beginning in 1983, I served as a language pastor in Buffalo, New York, and later I was a Language Catalytic Missionary with the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware. Romo later recommended me to the Baptist Convention of New Mexico where I served for thirteen years, first as Language Missions Director and the last seven years as State Director of Missions. After numerous interactions with and observations of Romo, his ministry, people who served alongside him, and initial research I have done of the twenty-five-year period that this dissertation covers, I hypothesize that a detailed analysis of the development of Hispanic church-planting strategies in North America between 1970 and 1994 shows that those were both important and influential days

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<sup>6</sup>Mickey Noah, “Oscar Romo, Ethnic Ministry Pioneer, Dies,” *Baptist Press*, 19 January 2009 [on-line]; accessed 17 April 2012; available from <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=29692>; Internet.

<sup>7</sup>Oscar Romo developed the Ethnic Leadership Development (now called Contextualized Leadership Development) in partnership with Bill Pinson and the Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary. He led Southern Baptists to provide contextual language materials in more than sixteen languages and involved many of the Southern Baptist agencies, such as the Annuity Board (now GuideStone Financial Resources), the Baptist Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources), and the Woman’s Missionary Union. Romo was also intentional to provide equipping opportunities to the missionaries and agency leaders. Romo’s administrative skills helped the expansion of language missions with the development of a five-year national strategy plan to assist in strategy implementation in the local field.



for language missions among Southern Baptists. While there were many people who contributed to this greatness, Oscar Romo's leadership, in particular, was a defining moment for Southern Baptists' intentional, strategic, and effective outreach to a diverse North America.

The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze, critique, and evaluate Hispanic church-planting strategies in North America from 1970 to 1994. I have developed this subject by introducing the reader to the historical context that outlines the rise and development of language missions, influential people, and the strategies developed for language missions in North America. This dissertation seeks to apply lessons learned from the period 1970-1994 to contemporary church-planting activities among Southern Baptists in North America.

I have explored six areas<sup>8</sup> and answered at least six primary questions: How did Oscar Romo's theology influence his methodology? What leadership principles did Oscar Romo demonstrate? Who were the influential people during this period? What are the missiological, ecclesiological, and sociological principles that are applicable to contemporary church planting? What historical lessons are applicable to contemporary church planting? Finally, what are some key church-planting concepts that contributed to language missions effectiveness?

The Southern Baptist Convention, from its beginnings, has been involved in reaching out to the "Negroes, Indians, and Foreigners."<sup>9</sup> The United States' growing diversity, changes in technology, and changes in the political systems of various countries

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<sup>8</sup>This dissertation explores six areas of interest: a brief historical overview of the development of language missions, within the limitations stated later in this prospectus under Limitations and Delimitations; people who were influential during the twenty-five-year period; Oscar Romo's theology, missiology, and leadership principles; and, finally, the Church Growth Concepts used during this period.

<sup>9</sup>These are the terms used in the *Proceedings of the Southern Baptist Convention of 1845-1912*. These three terms are not proper to use in the twentieth-first century due to the changing times, vocabularies, and the history of race relations in the United States. Acceptable terms are Black, African-Americans, Native Americans or First Nation people, and immigrants. The terms "Indian," "American Indian," and "Native American" appear in different sections of this dissertation because I chose to keep the terms that were used in that particular period of time.

required different methodologies as well as more appropriate descriptive terminology. Nonetheless, Southern Baptists have remained true to the mandate given to the Domestic Board of Missions, later renamed the Home Mission Board.<sup>10</sup>

To explore the development of Hispanic church-planting strategies in North America is difficult without first understanding the background of the dominant Hispanic group in the United States, the Mexicans. Joshua Grijalva best describes the plight of the people he calls the “new Mexican American.”

The year was 1848. The treaty had been signed between Mexico and the United States. Under the terms of the treaty the southwestern part of the country, including Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, and parts of other states, was ceded to the United States by Mexico. The war ended, and Mexico received \$15,000,000 for the Mexican borderland territory. Seventy-five thousand Mexicans living in the territory were given the option of returning to Mexico. Only 1,500 “returned,” for most of the Mexicans had never lived elsewhere; the Southwest was their home. Overnight, they became strangers and “foreigners” in the land of their birth. Because they spoke Spanish and not English, they were viewed with suspicion. Legally they were now Americans; culturally they were isolated from Mexico. The new Mexican American was born.<sup>11</sup>

The following snapshots are only glimpses of a developing language mission field in North America.

### **Missionary Expansion, 1845-1940**

The first century of Home Missions was marked by geographical and linguistic expansion. The most extensive work was among the Indians in the West of the United States. Although Indian work began among the eastern tribes, the “Indian Removal Act”

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<sup>10</sup>The Southern Baptist Convention established the Domestic Board of Missions at the organizational meeting in Augusta, Georgia, in 1845 to be headquartered in Marion, Alabama. Ten years later, in 1855, the work of the Board was enlarged when the Convention voted to accept transfer of the work of the American Indian Mission Association. The agency was renamed the Domestic and Indian Mission Board. In 1873, the Southern Baptist Convention consolidated the Sunday School Board with the Domestic and Indian Mission Board and renamed the agency Domestic and Indian Mission Board and Sunday School Board. In 1874, the title was changed to the Home Mission Board. In 1997, the Home Mission Board became the North American Mission Board.

<sup>11</sup>Joshua Grijalva, “The Story of Hispanic Southern Baptists,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 18, no. 3 (July 1983): 40.

relocated Native American tribes living east of the Mississippi River to land west of the river.<sup>12</sup> New geographical expansion was influenced by territorial expansion occurring between 1845 and 1860. The flow of population moved from the states of the initial colonies along the Atlantic seaboard, dependent upon the waterways for transportation, to the vast territory in the West obtained from France by the Louisiana Purchase in 1808.<sup>13</sup> James W. Marshall's fortuitous discovery of gold in California was a significant event "almost depleting some sections of the Eastern states."<sup>14</sup>

The geographical expansion was not only an opportunity for the Domestic Board of Missions to reach out to the different tribes of Indians in the West,<sup>15</sup> but also to explore new mission opportunities. Additionally, language mission opportunities took place among the Germans, French, Italians, and Slavic people living in New York, Baltimore, New Orleans, and St. Louis.<sup>16</sup>

Asian outreach occurred among the Chinese in Sacramento, California. John Lewis Shuck, who had returned from Shanghai in 1854, organized the first Chinese church in America.<sup>17</sup> While Southern Baptists expanded to the West, "it is to be noted that the major immigrant work has been carried on by the American Baptist Home Mission Society, and quite understandably so, for the greatest numbers of foreign-speaking peoples have settled in the northern and western states."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Indian removal was a nineteenth-century policy of the government of the United States to relocate Native American tribes living east of the Mississippi River to lands west of the river. The Indian Removal Act was signed into law by President Andrew Jackson on May 26, 1830.

<sup>13</sup>J. B. Lawrence, *History of the Home Mission Board* (Nashville: Broadman, 1958), 30.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup>For example, Joshua Grijalva, comp., *Ethnic Baptist History*, pt. 2 (Miami: Meta Publications, 1992). In this book, Grijalva relates the expansion of language work to the various tribes in the West. See p. 4, n. 9, of this dissertation for an explanation of the use of the term "Indian."

<sup>16</sup>Arthur B. Rutledge and William G. Tanner, *Mission to America: A History of Southern Baptist Home Missions* (Nashville: Broadman, 1969), 153-56.

<sup>17</sup>Robert G. Torbert, *A History of the Baptists*, 3rd ed. (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1963), 381.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 382.

As early as 1879, Cuban Baptists were asking for help. The Florida Baptist Convention determined that they needed to take immediate action and started a mission in Cuba in 1885.<sup>19</sup> The next year, during the 1886 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Foreign Mission Board presented this matter to the Convention:

In 1879 and in 1881 the Board reported this subject to the Convention. In the latter year the Convention decided that the time had not come for our Board to enter that field. Recently new religious interest has sprung up in the island. Through the courtesy of the Home Board the attention of our Board was called to the subject; and by the invitation of prominent brethren of Florida, deeply interested in a Cuban mission, our Corresponding Secretary visited the Baptist Convention of that State, last November, in order to obtain further information which might aid the Board to decide wisely whether it should undertake this new mission. From the action of the Florida Convention we extract the following: “We conceive that this Convention is able to undertake this work at once, i.e., the preliminary or provisional work—to go and prepare the way, to lay foundations, to throw up breast-works, and hold the fort till the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention can come to the rescue, which we hope will be not later than the next meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention.” The means of doing all that the Providence of God indicates should be done, are in the hands of God’s duty, and the question of duty in the premises is respectfully submitted to the wisdom of the Convention.<sup>20</sup>

The Home Mission Board enthusiastically accepted the responsibility for Cuba. Isaac Taylor Tichenor, the Executive Secretary of the Home Mission Board from 1882 to 1899, “became so personally involved that he was called the ‘father of Cuban Mission.’”<sup>21</sup> The work in Cuba progressed until 1895 when Cuba demanded independence from Spain resulting in the War of Independence (1895-1898). The effect of the war years resulted in many pastors fleeing to Florida, leaving the churches without pastoral leadership, the mission work in Cuba almost destroyed, and little left than the property owned by the Home Mission Board.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 88.

<sup>20</sup>H. A. Tupper Jr., “Annual Foreign Mission Board Report,” in *Southern Baptist Convention—Thirty-First Session*, held in Montgomery, May 7-11, 1886 (Atlanta: Jas. P. Harrison and Co. Printers, 1886), xxiii.

<sup>21</sup>Lawrence, *History of the Home Mission Board*, 78.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

The construction of the Panama Canal, started on January 1, 1882, brought people from many nations to Panama. In fact, “it was claimed in 1908 that fifty different languages were spoken in the Canal Zone.”<sup>23</sup> The Home Mission Board responded by commissioning J. L. Wise as general missionary to the Canal Zone.<sup>24</sup> The first fifteen years of the twentieth century brought many social, economic, and political changes that positively opened many doors to Christian missions.<sup>25</sup>

The political situations of the 1960s to the 1980s present a second glimpse of a developing language mission field in North America.

### **Political Unrest, 1960-1980**

The decade of the 1960s brought many changes to Cuba, resulting in at least four gradual exoduses of Cubans to Florida. Fidel Castro declared himself to be a Marxist-Communist in 1959, producing a political migration of Cubans to the United States “harboring distinct waves of immigrants as well as distinct refugee, ‘vintages,’ alike only in their final rejection of Cuba.”<sup>26</sup> Each of the major waves of migration has been characterized by a very different social composition. Silvia Pedraza identifies the first wave as the Elite, the second wave as Cuba’s petite bourgeoisie or the middle class, the third wave as the Marielitos, and the fourth wave as the Balseros or Cuban raft people. Many of these Cubans transported Cuban churches initially to South Florida and then spread throughout the United States.

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<sup>23</sup>Rutledge and Tanner, *Mission to America*, 165.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.* France’s attempt to build the Panama Canal connecting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans failed due to finances and the death of more than 20,000 workers from tropical diseases. The United States bought the right to build the canal in 1903. The canal was completed in 1914, but not before the additional loss of 5,600 lives.

<sup>25</sup>Lawrence, *History of the Home Mission Board*, 85.

<sup>26</sup>Silvia Pedraza, “Cuba’s Refugees: Manifold Migration” (Washington, DC: Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy, 1995), 311 [on-line]; accessed 10 May 2012; available from <http://www.ascecuba.org/publications/proceedings/volume5/pdfs/FILE26.pdf>; Internet.

In the United States, Americans demonstrated against the Vietnam War, African Americans demonstrated for civil rights, and women demonstrated for equal treatment. Three national leaders were assassinated within five years—President John Kennedy in 1963, his brother Robert Kennedy in 1968, and Martin Luther King in 1968.

The Vietnam War agitated the political instability in Southeast Asia causing many Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians in the 1970s to seek refuge in the United States. Immigrants from Central American countries arrived in the United States in large numbers in the 1980s, fleeing political unrest. Some of these came as refugees and others were undocumented.<sup>27</sup> Additional refugees arriving in the United States in the 1980s, as the result of political unrest, were people from Egypt, Syria, Iran, Armenia, and India.

Within this national cultural context, the Home Mission Board called Oscar Romo to serve as Director of the Language Missions Division in 1970. This appointment was an historical step in that he was the first Hispanic person to hold a national position among Southern Baptists.

### **Oscar I. Romo**

Oscar Romo was born of Mexican-American parents in Lockhart, Texas, on January 29, 1929. His parents attended the Methodist church in Austin, and they were the only Hispanic Evangelical family in town. At that time, the U.S. was experiencing the effect of a worldwide financial crisis, the Great Depression. Romo remembers walking to his schools, past the schools for Anglos, and wondering why he could not go there. The word “Mexican” was a slur and children would “get switched” for speaking Spanish.<sup>28</sup> The “fundamental and permeating Christianity” of Romo’s parents nurtured in him a powerful sense of identity.<sup>29</sup> Certainly, these events helped shaped his life and ministry.

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<sup>27</sup>Martin N. Marger, *Race and Ethnic Relations: American and Global Perspectives*, 8th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009), 220.

<sup>28</sup>Oscar I. Romo, “Heirs of the Faith,” *MissionsUSA* 63, Supp. 92 (July-August 1992): 2-3.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*

Romo brought a new philosophy to language missions, one that went against the practice of that day and one that would ultimately transform Southern Baptists' language missions. Possibly due to the cultural, religious, and political struggles experienced by immigrants and Americans, many denominations believed in integration and assimilation. Like most Americans, many denominational leaders believed that immigrants needed to learn the culture and the language of the new country. Others suggested that they should renounce their culture and adopt the new ways. Romo, on the other hand, rejected the idea of the "melting pot" and frequently spoke of the American Mosaic.<sup>30</sup> He saw that "America, a cultural mosaic of mankind, has the world at its doorstep."<sup>31</sup> He proposed that America's diversity called for strategies that are contextualized to a particular language group.

Romo often reminded his leadership that "America's pluralism calls for the 'development of approaches compatible with the New Testament concept of the church; yet they must permit the sharing of the gospel contextually.'"<sup>32</sup> He also made a shift from Anglo leadership to deploying more indigenous workers.

The perceived emphasis of some Anglo churches was on Americanization and not evangelization. He knew, early in life, that the idea of the "melting-pot" was a myth.<sup>33</sup> Yet, he believed that the gospel was for all people everywhere regardless

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<sup>30</sup>Daniel R. Sánchez, telephone interview by author, 20 July 2010. Oscar Romo understood the concept of the "melting pot," as used during these days, as communicating the idea that many will assimilate to the American culture once they come to the United States. He rejected this view and championed the idea of the "American Mosaic." Romo often presented the idea that the United States was more like a "stew" or a "salad bowl." Each of the ingredients add their unique flavor without losing their characteristic.

<sup>31</sup>Oscar I. Romo, *American Mosaic: Church Planting in Ethnic America* (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 41-42.

<sup>32</sup>Oscar I. Romo, "The Turn of the Century," in *From Sea to Shining Sea: Challenges to Reach Our Nation for Christ*, ed. William G. Tanner (Nashville: Broadman, 1986), 127.

<sup>33</sup>Romo, *American Mosaic*, 106.

of language usage and cultural heritage. People need not negate “a rich language and cultural heritage to become a Christian.”<sup>34</sup>

Romo introduced Southern Baptists to new missiological terminologies and concepts such as Laser Church Growth Thrust, the Catalytic Church Growth, and Kaleidoscopic Church Growth. He also helped establish churches among seventy-six ethnic groups in seventeen years, for a total of 102 ethnic groups who used ninety-eight languages weekly and among ninety-five Native American tribes.<sup>35</sup>

Oscar Romo’s ministry was a critical turning point for Southern Baptists’ intentional, strategic, and effective outreach to an increasingly diverse North America. Romo served as a catalyst for the growth of language missions among Southern Baptists. His emphasis on indigenous churches, church planting, leadership development, and strategies to reach language groups helped strengthen language congregations.

The story of Southern Baptist Hispanic Church-planting Strategies in North America has not been fully told. There are Doctor of Ministry projects that treat some aspects of language missions and strategies, both regionally and among Baptist state conventions. For example, Eduardo DoCampo’s Doctor of Ministry project explores the development of a language mission strategy design for Southern Baptist state conventions.<sup>36</sup> In 1993, Richard Alford’s Doctor of Ministry project treated the development and implementation of Laser Thrust project directors for the Language Missions Division of the Home Mission Board.<sup>37</sup> James B. Boswell’s Doctor of Ministry project shows “the urgent need for training of Hispanics with meager educational

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Merry P. Romo, “Oscar’s Bio,” e-mail to author, 4 September 2010.

<sup>36</sup>Eduardo DoCampo, “Development of a Language Missions Strategy Design for a Southern Baptist State Convention” (D.Min. diss., Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993).

<sup>37</sup>Richard Alford, “The Development and Implementation of Training for Laser Thrust Project Directors for the Language Church Extension Division, Home Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention” (D.Min. diss., Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993).



opportunities to minister to the overwhelming immigration of Latinos who lack in education also.”<sup>38</sup> Twyla Hernandez’ doctoral dissertation, “A Missiological Response to the Emergent Latino Population in the United States,” examines the need for a three-pronged missiological response to the emergent Latino population in the United States.<sup>39</sup> Hernández’ three-pronged missiological response includes church planting, social ministries, and theological education. Eric J. Tucker’s Ph.D. dissertation explores and analyzes the unique competencies required for effective church planting among the Hispanics of Miami from the perspectives of pastors and church planters in Miami.<sup>40</sup>

The particular story of these twenty-five years of effective language missions among Southern Baptists has yet to be told. This dissertation is original work from which others in the future could make additional scholarly contributions.

### **Definitions**

Understanding the terminologies used by the leadership of the Home Mission Board is helpful in order to be properly conversant with key words, concepts, and expressions commonly used with those serving language/cultural people in the U.S.

### **Hispanics or Latinos**

A significant challenge for many people confounded by properly labeling others’ ethnic identities is how to refer to people born in Spanish-speaking countries.<sup>41</sup> Is it proper to call them “Hispanic” or “Latino?” In a recent article by the Pew Hispanic

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<sup>38</sup>James B. Boswell, “A Strategy of Training Latino Laymen to Minister in the U.S.A.” (Ph.D. diss., Liberty Theological Seminary, 2010), iii.

<sup>39</sup>Twyla Hernandez, “A Missiological Response to the Emergent Latino Population in the United States” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005).

<sup>40</sup>Eric J. Tucker, “Competencies of Effective Hispanic Church Planters in Miami, Florida as Perceived by Reformed Hispanic Church Planters and Pastors” (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2006).

<sup>41</sup>The U.S. Census Bureau collects racial data in accordance with guidelines provided by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and these data are based on self-identification. The racial categories included in the census questionnaire generally reflect a social definition of race recognized in

Research, “When Labels Don’t Fit: Hispanics and Their Views of Identity,” the authors wrestle with the complexity of labeling Hispanics. The study shows that 24 percent of adult Hispanics prefer the name Hispanic or Latino. Conversely, 51 percent identify themselves by their family’s place of origin.<sup>42</sup> Personally, if I am asked by someone, “are you Hispanic?” my response is, “I am Cuban.” If I need to fill out a document, however, then I would put “Hispanic.”

The Pew Research survey also shows that 51 percent do not have a preference for either Hispanic or Latino, 33 percent prefer Hispanic, and 14 percent prefer the term Latino.<sup>43</sup> In this dissertation, I use the term Hispanic primarily because it is the more inclusive term.

## Anglo

The term “Anglo” normally refers to an English-speaking person, especially a white North American.

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this country and not an attempt to define race biologically, anthropologically, or genetically. In addition, it is recognized that the categories of the race item include racial and national origin or sociocultural groups. People may choose to report more than one race to indicate their racial mixture, such as “American Indian” and “White.” People who identify their origin as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish may be of any race. OMB requires five minimum categories: White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

Brian M. Howell and Jenell Williams Paris, *Introducing Cultural Anthropology: A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 79. Howell and Paris state that “Hispanics” refers to people that come from Spanish-speaking countries of Central or South America, and may be of any racial group. The Hispanic or Latino category is not based on a shared history or identity. Although all Hispanics speak Spanish, they have very different cultures and histories.

In explaining these two terms, the *American Heritage Dictionary* said that “though often used interchangeably in American English, Hispanic and Latino are not identical terms, and in certain contexts the choice between them can be significant. Hispanic, from the Latin word for ‘Spain,’ has the broader reference, potentially encompassing all Spanish-speaking peoples in both hemispheres and emphasizing the common denominator of language among communities that sometimes have little else in common. Latino—which in Spanish means ‘Latin’ but which as an English word is probably a shortening of the Spanish word *latinoamericano*—refers more exclusively to persons or communities of Latin American origin. Of the two, only Hispanic can be used in referring to Spain and its history and culture; a native of Spain residing in the United States is a Hispanic, not a Latino.

<sup>42</sup>Paul Taylor et al., “When Labels Don’t Fit: Hispanics and Their Views of Identity” (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2012), 10 [on-line]; accessed 10 May 2012; available from <http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/2012/04/PHC-Hispanic-Identity.pdf>; Internet.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

## **Race or Ethnicity**

The federal government, in its classification system, “recognizes just one ethnic group, Hispanic/Latino, which is defined as follows: A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. The term, ‘Spanish origin,’ can be used in addition to ‘Hispanic or Latino.’”<sup>44</sup> The five racial groups’ classifications used by the government are white; black; American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Race is based on people’s origin from a particular region of the world.<sup>45</sup>

## **Ethnic**

According to Paul G. Hiebert in *Transforming Worldviews*, this term normally refers to a larger group of people in a society who shares a distinctive race, nationality, culture, and religion. The term “ethnic” can be very ambiguous and often meaningless as an analytical term.<sup>46</sup>

## **Language/Cultural**

When referring to people, the term “Language/Cultural” describes a particular group whose language might be English yet they are bound together by the

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 11. Jeffrey Passel, Senior Demographer for the Pew Research Center in Washington, DC, clarified the confusion that exists with the U.S. Census classification in an e-mail to me. Passel explained that the Office of Management and Budget mandates collection of data on “race” and “Hispanic origin.” Currently, in the decennial census and its surveys, the federal government uses two questions to collect this data. One question uses categories of white, black, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (NHPI), and American Indian or Alaska Native (AIAN). These groups are designated as “race” groups. Various subcategories (particularly of “Asian” and “NHPI”) could be treated as nationalities or “ethnic” groups—for example, Chinese, Japanese, or Hawaiian. The other question asks people if they are “Hispanic,” “Latino,” or “Spanish origin.” In the definition of this concept, these groups are treated as “nationalities” or “ethnic groups.” These two questions have appeared on the full decennial census since 1980. The American Community Survey (ACS) and various other government surveys collect additional information on ancestry or ethnic origin. This information is collected on an additional question. The so-called “ancestry” question was not on the 2010 census and has not appeared in the “complete count” (i.e., non-sample) portion of the census.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 253-54.

unique cultural characteristics of the group. When referring to a church, it describes a congregation that worships in English, yet it is deeply rooted in the culture of the people. The Filipino congregations in North America are examples of English speaking-Filipino culture churches.

### **Catalytic Church Growth Concept**

The Catalytic Church Growth Concept grew out of a desire to move from paternalism to fraternalism. It allows for the “twofold approach of language mission philosophy—the planting and development of the ethnic church into a self-reliant, self-governing, and self-multiplying church in an ethno-linguistic context.”<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, it allows churches to develop crosscultural outreach using language and/or culture as a strategy to minister to language/cultural groups.

### **Kaleidoscope Church Growth Concept**

The Kaleidoscope Church Growth Concept allows the church to serve a “mobile, transitional, and/or ethnic-linguistic setting.”<sup>48</sup> The concept is very effective in transitional areas with different ethnic groups. Language congregations share facilities with a church in the area. Each congregation shares costs and the use of facilities. The Kaleidoscope concept is indigenous in nature. As such, the leadership identifies with the people in the community since the leaders come from among that ethnic group. The concept also helps break down language and cultural barriers because it communicates in the language and culture of the people. Therefore, the kaleidoscopic church will express itself “in a variety of life styles, economic variances, education levels, racial tensions, linguistic channels, cultural uniqueness, geographical barriers, and living conditions.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 145.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>49</sup>Joshua Grijalva, “Grijalva Manuscript—Ethnic Baptist History” (Nashville: Home Mission Board Ethnic Ministries Collection, AR 631-12, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, 1987), 676.

In the 1980s, some churches that used the Kaleidoscopic Church Growth Concept included Highland Baptist Church, New York City; South Main Baptist Church, Houston; First Chinese Baptist Church, Los Angeles; and Flagler Street Baptist Church, Miami.<sup>50</sup>

### **Laser Church Growth Concept**

Laser Thrusts are conducted during a weeklong period of time. People with knowledge of the language and culture of the target group are placed in geographical areas. During that week, the missionary targets and seeks out leaders from among the target group, establishes communication with them, shares their testimonies, attempts to lead people to Christ, and establishes new units of work.

### **North America**

North America is the world's third largest continent. In this dissertation, North America refers to Canada, the United States, Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean islands. Languages spoken are primarily English, Spanish, French, and Creole. The term "North America" is used when referring to a larger territory than the United States.

### **SEND NA**

The SEND North America church-planting strategy is a coordinated national strategy of mobilizing both individuals and churches into all regions of North America to start new congregations.

## **Background**

As I reflect on my spiritual and academic journey, I believe the initial seed that created a desire for this topic was first planted in 1979 during my first year at Mid-

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

America Baptist Theological Seminary. Professor John Floyd taught a church growth course that used as the principle text, *Understanding Church Growth*,<sup>51</sup> written by Donald A. McGavran.

The initial seed was nurtured over the next thirty years of ministry, serving among Southern Baptist churches, associations, and state conventions. An overarching concern for me during this time was: how can we do effective evangelism in the midst of such diversity? Each place of ministry helped answer this question by providing practical experiences among diverse language/cultural groups and using a wide variety of strategies and methodologies.

During my seminary years at Mid-America, I served as the Associate Pastor of Templo Bautista in Memphis. In this position, I was privileged to work primarily with first-generation Mexicans. My pastor, Elías Pantoja, a Mexican born in Texas, was serving with the Home Mission Board as Catalytic Missionary for the Shelby Baptist Association. During these early formative years of my ministry, I first attempted to apply the concepts of the Homogeneous Unit Principle, championed by McGavran, in our Hispanic ministry.

As I served as the Hispanic Catalytic Missionary with the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware (1985-1992), two things further shaped my interest in this topic. First, although my initial role was only among Hispanics, I also became involved with the growing numbers of the immigrant population such as Vietnamese, Laotians, Hmong, and Filipinos. This experience forced me to think of the need for contextualized materials, training, and strategies to effectively reach ethnic populations. Second, I was exposed to Oscar Romo's philosophy of Language Missions through his writings, materials from the Language Missions Division, and the annual Catalytic Conferences.

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<sup>51</sup>Donald Anderson McGavran, known as the "Father of the Church Growth Movement," first published this book in 1970. *Understanding Church Growth* skillfully combines theological convictions, empirical research, sociological principles, and spiritual insights that shaped an effective evangelism strategy for both the United States and also abroad. Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980).

The years I served with the Baptist Convention of New Mexico (1992-2005) demonstrated clearly to me the uniqueness of each ethnic group represented among “111 ethnic congregations speaking twelve languages and as many dialects, representing forty-one different cultures.”<sup>52</sup> Native Americans alone included nineteen Indian pueblos (Spanish for “village”) and the Navajo nation. How does one begin to put his arms, much less his thinking, around such complexity? These years further solidified my belief in the Homogeneous Unit Principle. I was convinced that if the growing diversity of cultures is to be reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ, it will only happen by removing as many barriers to the gospel as possible.<sup>53</sup> I learned about the importance of indigenous leadership, the need for spiritual conversion rather than merely adopting a new culture, and people group conversion.<sup>54</sup> During these years, I began to strategize and use the church growth concepts of “Catalytic Missions,” “Laser,” and “Kaleidoscope.”

The two years I was the Executive Director of the Northwest Baptist Convention (2005-2007) further highlighted the challenge of the growing population of immigrants and the presence of second generations in urban areas such as Portland, Oregon and Seattle, Washington. I believe that Seattle is a Gateway to the East. Reaching the immigrants in Seattle is not only important in reaching the city, but also in reaching the Asian world. Seattle’s demographics in 2004 revealed a racial makeup of: White

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<sup>52</sup>Daniel R. Carnett, *Contending for the Faith: Southern Baptists in New Mexico, 1938-1995* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 44.

<sup>53</sup>McGavran believed that “people like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers.” Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 163.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, 227. For example, McGavran describes people movement as “a multi-individual, mutually independent conversion process.” He further defines multi-individual to mean “many people participating in the act of making a decision for Christ.” He defines mutually interdependent to mean that “all those making the decision are intimately known to each other and take the step in view of what the other is going to do.”

67.9 percent, Asians 13.5 percent, Blacks 8.3 percent, Hispanics 5.3 percent, Native Americans 1 percent, and other minorities 4 percent.<sup>55</sup>

The “ethnic minority population in Washington state increased from 13 percent in 1990 to 21 percent in 2000,” to 24 percent in 2010.<sup>56</sup> Overall, the ethnic minority population in Washington increased by 45.8 percent during this twenty-year period. One large practical lesson learned is the difficulty of communicating a vision to reach a growing minority population at our doorsteps.

Finally, in the fall of 2010, during my doctoral studies at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, a History of Missions seminar taught by Professor George Martin allowed me to reflect, research, and write on Oscar I. Romo. Suddenly, I was able to see all the disconnected church growth principles I have learned and practiced for the previous thirty years coming together as an effective tool to reach the growing diversity of people in the United States.

During the same semester, I took Colloquium on Evangelism and Church Growth, taught by Professor Chuck Lawless. One of the books for the seminar was *Building a Multi-Ethnic Church* by Mark DeYmaz.<sup>57</sup> Although I believe that DeYmaz’ methodology is needed to reach a segment of the ethnic population in North America, it grossly ignores those characteristics that are ethnically unique, such as language, ideas, beliefs, values, and behavioral patterns. In order to reach this nation for Christ, both methodologies, the multiethnic and homogeneous strategies, are needed. This book ignited my motivation to tell the story of an earlier and different methodology to reach

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<sup>55</sup>Tom Boyer, Justin Mayo, and Stuart Eskenazi, “Race, Ethnic and National Origin Population in Seattle,” *The Seattle Times* [on-line]; accessed 12 May 2012; available from [http://www.prolades.com/urban\\_usa/Seattle/ethnic\\_and\\_religious\\_diversity\\_in\\_seattle.htm](http://www.prolades.com/urban_usa/Seattle/ethnic_and_religious_diversity_in_seattle.htm); Internet.

<sup>56</sup>Washington Education Association, “Ethnic Minority/Persons of Color” [on-line]; accessed 12 May 2012; available from [http://www.washingtonea.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=195/](http://www.washingtonea.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=195/); Internet.

<sup>57</sup>Mark DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church: Mandate, Commitments and Practices of a Diverse Congregation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007).



ethnic North America with the gospel. It is a story that allowed Southern Baptists, for more than twenty years, to experience its greatest days in language missions.

### **Research Methodology**

The research methodology commenced with a study of Home Mission Board materials stored at the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives in Nashville, Tennessee. Second, Merry Purvis Romo, widow of Oscar Romo, has helped me with her impressions, materials, and remembrances. Third, I interviewed a selected number of people who served in language missions during the period of 1970-1994. Fourth, I examined materials from an extensive body of written data that was published by the Language Missions Division, including books, manuals, and pamphlets.

### **Primary Sources**

A first step in the research methodology includes materials written by Oscar Romo and the staff of the Language Missions Division. These include *American Mosaic* and *Ethnic Baptist History*, as well as other written articles related to language missions, strategies, and historical background.

A second important step in the research methodology involves Merry Purvis Romo. Merry was Oscar Romo's secretary. She was instrumental in many of the publications of the Language Missions Division. Oscar Romo and Merry Purvis were later married after the death of Romo's first wife, Zoe.

A third step in the research methodology is an extensive review of Home Mission Board material at the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives in Nashville, Tennessee. The library contains 176.5 linear feet of material related to my research topic contained in 212 boxes.

I have identified seven sources of information from the archives. First, AR 631-4 covers a date span from 1950-1989. Included are records from Loyd Corder who "served as the first Secretary of Language Missions from 1950-1965 and later became

Associate Director, Missions Division, of the Home Mission Board.”<sup>58</sup> Also included are materials from Corder’s successor, Gerald Palmer, who was

Secretary from 1966-1970, and later became Eastern Regional Coordinator for the Home Mission Board. Oscar I. Romo was the director of the Language Missions Division from 1971 until [1994], and oversaw the creation of the Language Church Extension Division that replaced the Language Missions Division in 1989. During Romo’s tenure, the division produced *America’s Ethnicity of the Eighties* with multiple revised editions that compiled census data on American ethnic groups and reports about missions activities with them.<sup>59</sup>

Second, AR 631–7 covers the years 1948-1977. The collection includes language missions clippings, correspondence, cost analysis of language groups’ ministries, minutes of conferences, Cuban missions, and Cuban refugees.

Third, AR 631–10 covers the years 1927-1990 and includes materials documenting Wendell Belew’s career with the Home Mission Board. The collection also includes files related to language missions.

Fourth, AR 631–12 includes the Home Mission Board’s ethnic ministries collection covering the years 1961-1987. These materials include articles, clippings, correspondence, histories, and manuscripts. One valuable jewel is the collection of papers by Joshua Grijalva, a missionary for the Language Missions Division of the Home Mission Board from 1941-1983.

Fifth, AR 631–20 covers the years from 1866-2000. This collection is arranged into four administrative areas: evangelism, missions, planning, and service. Some of the subjects covered that are of interest to me are church planting, Cuba missions, ethnic missions, language missions, and migrant missions.

Sixth, AR 631–22 covers primarily two areas: recordings and productions from 1953-1997. Recordings are from live events from the Home Mission Board such

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<sup>58</sup>“Home Mission Board Ethnic Ministries Collection, AR 631–4,” Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, prepared by Dorothy A. Davis, March 2009, 2 [on-line]; accessed 30 March 2012; available from <http://www.sbhla.org>; Internet.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 2-3.

as annual meetings and Home Mission week in both Ridgecrest, North Carolina, and Glorieta, New Mexico. Material of interest to me in this collection relates to Larry Lewis, last president of the Home Mission Board, as well as material explaining language missions concepts of Catalytic Missions and Ethnic Leadership Development.

Seventh, the archives have a collection of all the Southern Baptist Convention annuals from 1845 to the present. These annuals provide additional historical perspective, particularly on the development of language missions in the Southern Baptist Convention.

### **Secondary Sources**

Larry Lewis is a valuable source of information related to leadership emphasis and language missions strategies from his perspective as President of the Home Mission Board from 1987-1996. Charles L. Chaney, Vice President for Church Extension from 1988-1996, is also a secondary source in providing his personal views, conversations, and emphasis of language missions development and strategies.

Another important source of secondary information is provided through interviews of people who served in different areas of the country and different position of responsibilities. For example, I interviewed people who served on staff with Oscar Romo. Daniel Sánchez and Fermín Whittaker both served at the Home Mission Board and state conventions. Additional people I interviewed served as Language Mission Program leaders, State Directors of Missions, Catalytic Missionaries, and language pastors.

Additionally, other secondary sources are people who had important parts in language missions during these years. For example, Don Kammerdiener was instrumental in the transfer of Cuba from the Home Mission Board to the Foreign Mission Board in 1989. Others who contributed primary information related to Cuba are Leoncio Veguilla, pastor and former President of the Cuban Convention, and Heberto Becerra, pastor in Plantation, Florida, and also a former President of the Cuban Convention.

## **Limitations and Delimitations**

I recognize that this dissertation is limited by several factors. First, while there is extensive information to support this dissertation, it is difficult to interview and/or visit persons who live in other countries. Second, some of the people I interviewed are advanced in age and are in frail health, which possibly limited their memory or mental acumen. Third, this study is limited in that respondents have a natural bias in favor of language mission strategies, and/or Oscar Romo, and/or the Home Mission Board.

In terms of delimitation, this study did not attempt to be a comprehensive study of church growth thought or the history of language-based church planting beyond a survey. The purpose of the historical survey of language missions serves as necessary foundational information. In addition, the study is delimited to church-planting strategies in North America during the years 1970 to 1994 to present the reader with concise but essential background information on language missions during the period of Loyd Corder and Gerald Palmer, 1950-1970. This information is crucial because Oscar Romo not only worked with these two men, but also built his ministry upon their work in language missions.

## CHAPTER 2

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE EMERGENCE OF SOUTHERN BAPTIST LANGUAGE MISSIONS

People from all over the world come to the United States for different reasons and under different circumstances. Some, for instance, come for economic reasons, while others come to give their children a better future. Others, as with my family, come fleeing the oppression of communism, and still others come to receive an education in North American institutions. The United States is rapidly becoming a nation of immigrants as many people from the world come in search of the American dream.

The last four hundred years of Spanish history left a lasting mark upon many generations of Hispanics living in what is known today as the Southwest. Don Juan de Oñate, under contract by King Phillip II of Spain to settle New Mexico, crossed the Rio Grande after making a formal declaration of possession of New Mexico on April 30, 1598.<sup>1</sup> In 1848, the United States annexed the Southwest after the Mexican-American War. This war did what most wars do—it began with a bullet, it took lives, it took territories, and it ended with a treaty, making its mark in the life of generations of Mexicans. One consequence of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was surrendering Upper California and New Mexico to the United States under the terms of the treaty. The “Mexican Cession” refers to lands surrendered, which included present-day Arizona and New Mexico, as well as parts of Utah, Nevada, and Colorado. Mexico relinquished all claims to Texas and recognized the Rio Grande as the southern boundary of the

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<sup>1</sup>“Juan de Oñate,” *New Mexico Office of the State Historian* [on-line]; accessed 28 July 2012; available from <http://www.newmexico history.org/filedetails.php?fileID=312/>; Internet.

United States.<sup>2</sup> Language missions in North America have been shaped by the marks left by Oñate upon the Indians and by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo upon Mexicans. Language missions have also been marked by communism in Europe and Cuba, corrupt and unstable governments in Central and South America, war and famine in Africa, and the dismal economy of Mexico.

While many contemporary books speak of reaching the world for Christ, few seldom address reaching the diverse people groups in the United States. The missiological philosophies of many denominations usually ignore the massive movement

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<sup>2</sup>Article V of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: The boundary line between the two Republics shall commence in the Gulf of Mexico, three leagues from land, opposite the mouth of the Rio Grande, otherwise called Rio Bravo del Norte, or Opposite the mouth of its deepest branch, if it should have more than one branch emptying directly into the sea; from thence up the middle of that river, following the deepest channel, where it has more than one, to the point where it strikes the southern boundary of New Mexico; thence, westwardly, along the whole southern boundary of New Mexico (which runs north of the town called Paso) to its western termination; thence, northward, along the western line of New Mexico, until it intersects the first branch of the river Gila; (or if it should not intersect any branch of that river, then to the point on the said line nearest to such branch, and thence in a direct line to the same); thence down the middle of the said branch and of the said river, until it empties into the Rio Colorado; thence across the Rio Colorado, following the division line between Upper and Lower California, to the Pacific Ocean.

The southern and western limits of New Mexico, mentioned in the article, are those laid down in the map entitled "Map of the United Mexican States, as organized and defined by various acts of the Congress of said republic, and constructed according to the best authorities. Revised edition. Published at New York, in 1847, by J. Disturnell," of which map a copy is added to this treaty, bearing the signatures and seals of the undersigned Plenipotentiaries. And, in order to preclude all difficulty in tracing upon the ground the limit separating Upper from Lower California, it is agreed that the said limit shall consist of a straight line drawn from the middle of the Rio Gila, where it unites with the Colorado, to a point on the coast of the Pacific Ocean, distant one marine league due south of the southernmost point of the port of San Diego, according to the plan of said port made in the year 1782 by Don Juan Pantoja, second sailing-master of the Spanish fleet, and published at Madrid in the year 1802, in the atlas to the voyage of the schooners Sutil and Mexicana; of which plan a copy is hereunto added, signed and sealed by the respective Plenipotentiaries.

In order to designate the boundary line with due precision, upon authoritative maps, and to establish upon the ground land-marks which shall show the limits of both republics, as described in the present article, the two Governments shall each appoint a commissioner and a surveyor, who, before the expiration of one year from the date of the exchange of ratifications of this treaty, shall meet at the port of San Diego, and proceed to run and mark the said boundary in its whole course to the mouth of the Rio Bravo del Norte. They shall keep journals and make out plans of their operations; and the result agreed upon by them shall be deemed a part of this treaty, and shall have the same force as if it were inserted therein. The two Governments will amicably agree regarding what may be necessary to these persons, and also as to their respective escorts, should such be necessary.

The boundary line established by this article shall be religiously respected by each of the two republics, and no change shall ever be made therein, except by the express and free consent of both nations, lawfully given by the General Government of each, in conformity with its own constitution.

"Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo; February 2, 1848" (New Haven, CT: Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library, 2008) [on-line]; accessed 28 July 2012; available from [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/guadhida.asp#art5](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/guadhida.asp#art5); Internet.

of refugees and the influence it brings upon the culture of the host country. Enoch Wan's article, "Global People and Diaspora Missiology," brings out the reality that

our obedience in making disciples of all peoples requires the inclusion of diasporic groups in "Christian mission;" especially among victims of war, famine and human trafficking. When facing the challenge and opportunities of diaspora missions, it is imperative to practice "strategic stewardship" and to employ a "relational approach." The depth of our obedience in reaching all the world's peoples includes motivating the Church to practice "diaspora missions" and mobilizing diasporic groups to evangelize their kinsmen on the move, and through them the nationals in their homeland and beyond.<sup>3</sup>

Today, it is clear that a study of missions in the United States is not complete without looking at ethnic America.

### **Makers of Ethnic Histories**

This chapter explores the historical context that shaped Southern Baptist language missions in North America since 1940. Examining key people instrumental in reaching language/cultural groups, starting new churches, and developing indigenous leadership among different ethnic groups helps paint the overall language missions landscape. The chapter segues to identifying who Hispanics are, as well as highlighting three important periods in the development of language missions. Influential language missions trailblazers are identified in answering the third of the six primary questions. This section also introduces some influential people from this period.

While this dissertation's period of study is 1970-1994, the reader should remember the previous thirty years and the impact that two men, Lloyd Corder and Gerald Palmer, had on the development of language missions in North America among Southern Baptists. A third significant person, Oscar Romo, is the subject of chapter 3. Many new missiological concepts, philosophies, and ministries can be attributed to these three men. Each profited from the wisdom and experience of his predecessor.

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<sup>3</sup>Enoch Wan, "Global People and Diaspora Missiology," Tokyo 2010 Global Mission Consultation, 2010 [on-line]; accessed 28 July 2012; available from [http://www.tokyo2010.org/resources/Tokyo2010\\_Plenary\\_Enoch\\_Wan.pdf](http://www.tokyo2010.org/resources/Tokyo2010_Plenary_Enoch_Wan.pdf); Internet.

## Lloyd Corder

Lloyd Corder was born in Lingo, New Mexico, on March 4, 1916. His father, James, was a bivocational pastor for forty years. Corder attended Wayland Baptist Academy and Junior College in Plainview, Texas.<sup>4</sup> He married Gertrude Lavada Hiner (Trudy) in 1940, and they had a son, Norman Edward, and a daughter, Mary Edith; both who later married.<sup>5</sup> Corder began his career as a Spanish-speaking missionary in Texas in the 1940s. He served as the superintendent of city missions in Houston from 1941 to 1943.

Corder became the superintendent of Spanish missions in the Southwest upon the death of J. L. Moyer in 1945. In 1950, Corder became the secretary of direct missions at the Home Mission Board.<sup>6</sup> He became the secretary of the Home Mission Board's Language Missions Department in 1959.<sup>7</sup>

Corder's influences upon language missions were many, but probably his greatest contribution was laying a foundation for language mission work that would mobilize churches to reach out to the growing international population in North America. He exercised this influence through his responsibilities as Spanish-speaking missionary, superintendent of city missions in Houston, superintendent of Spanish missions in the Southwest, and secretary of direct missions at the Home Mission Board.

In February 1941, Lloyd Corder helped put in place a new cooperative mission approach that called for new partnerships in Houston. In June of the same year, Solomon F. Dowis "assumed a similar position in Atlanta."<sup>8</sup> These initial partnerships were created to work cooperatively among the local churches in the associations. Language missions

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<sup>4</sup>Joshua Grijalva, "Makers of Ethnic History" (Nashville: Home Mission Board, Language Ministries Collection, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, 1987), 2.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Everett Hellum, "Corder Receives Language Award," *Baptist Press*, 23 February 1981.

<sup>7</sup>Arthur B. Rutledge and William G. Tanner, *Mission to America: A History of Southern Baptist Home Missions* (Nashville: Broadman, 1969), 148.

<sup>8</sup>Rutledge and Tanner, *Mission to America*, 111.



shared in the great expansion of work that followed the payment of the home mission board's debts.<sup>9</sup> In 1942, the expansion of Southern Baptist work to the West doubled the number of language populations for which the Home Mission Board had responsibility.<sup>10</sup> Further expansion of Southern Baptists into the Midwest, Mid-Atlantic, and the New England states "with their large and different immigrant populations" again doubled the population.<sup>11</sup>

As superintendent of city missions, Corder's responsibilities involved primarily, although not exclusively, helping people of other languages and cultures know Jesus Christ. City missions, or as it was called, the "Houston Experience," was a philosophical change in the way that the Home Mission Board partnered with churches, associations, and state conventions. The new philosophical change called for the Home Mission Board to work in partnership with the local churches "to enlist and lead the churches in doing their own mission work."<sup>12</sup>

Until this time, the Home Mission Board did mission work in what was known as direct missions. The philosophical approach of direct missions brought some spirit of separatism between the Home Mission Board, associations, and state conventions. Churches believed that the Home Mission Board's responsibilities were starting new churches and growing existing churches. On the other hand, the churches had a responsibility to pray and give to missions. A painful consequence of the "praying and

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<sup>9</sup>In August 1928, Clinton S. Carnes, the Home Mission Board's trusted treasurer, fled to Canada and a shortage of \$909,461 was discovered. The debt increased to \$2,527,453, making it the greatest calamity among the Southern Baptist family. This defalcation occurred in part due to the unwise decisions of the Board to authorize the treasurer to make loans as needed without a cosigner and without specific authorization from the Board. The Convention president in 1928, George W. Truett, stated that the convention would stand by the Board. Others, however, called for the dissolution of the Board or to combine it with the Foreign Mission Board. The final payment was made on May 12, 1943. Rutledge and Tanner, *Mission to America*, 56.

<sup>10</sup>Lloyd Corder, "New Frontiers in Language Missions," M. Wendell Belew Collection (Nashville: Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, 1964).

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Grijalva, "Makers of Ethnic History," 11.

giving” philosophy is that some churches with “language mission work around the corner did not know the people, the pastor, or the activities of the group.”<sup>13</sup>

Not everything was trouble-free in the implementation of city missions, however. In state conventions where there was no city mission board in the associations, relational problems developed between the Home Mission Board and some executive secretaries of state conventions.<sup>14</sup> At issue was territorial control and responsibilities. State conventions argued that the city mission concept was an intrusion by the Home Mission Board. The primary criticism of some state conventions was “that as long as the Board ministered to Hispanics, Indians, Italians, and Blacks it was fine, but the work in the churches in the cities was solely the state’s responsibility.”<sup>15</sup> In fact, there seemed to have been an attitude, on the part of state conventions, that lessened the importance of the language people living in the area, as well as heightened the disconnect between the Board and state conventions.

Corder served as superintendent of Spanish work in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona from 1945-1950. In that position, he continued to expand the work of language missions. For example, new Spanish works were started in Arizona in 1944 through the ministry of I.B. Williams of Texas. Additionally, new works were started in San José and East Los Angeles in 1947. Corder made several observations related to the Mexican people. First, many were completing college and some were attending seminary. Second, Corder believed that he had a real connection with Mexicans because of his ability to speak Spanish. Third, he keenly observed the spectrum of assimilation on the part of the Mexicans from monocultural and monolingual to those who were comfortable in both cultures and languages.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 17.

In 1950, Corder was asked to serve as Secretary of Direct Missions, a position he held until 1959. The Direct Missions department included “missions to language peoples, work in Cuba and Panama, good will centers, and rescue missions.”<sup>17</sup> Corder’s network of influence in starting new works extended to Puerto Rico and Alaska. He also helped start new works among Italians in Alabama and Louisiana; Russians in California; Slavic groups in Florida; and Chinese people in San Antonio, Houston, El Paso, Phoenix, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

In 1959, the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a report with far-reaching consequences for the Home Mission Board. Eight of the twenty-one recommendations specifically dealt with the Board. Two of these recommendations, in particular, were to transform the Home Mission Board in at least two ways:

Recommendation #3—Cooperation in mission work by the Home Mission Board and state conventions should be continued and accelerated and a single uniform mission program should be developed

Recommendation #8—The Home Mission Board should take steps to strengthen its internal organization and operation<sup>18</sup>

These recommendations dealt with the unified mission work and the internal restructuring between the Home Mission Board and the state conventions.

Lloyd Corder became secretary of the Language Mission Department, as part of the internal restructure of the Home Mission Board, in 1959. Arthur Rutledge and William Tanner explained the impact on language missions resulting from the internal restructuring of the Home Mission Board as practically making “all language mission work a cooperative effort with the state conventions and the Home Board jointly planning, financing, and supervising the work.”<sup>19</sup> In 1966, Corder became associate

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<sup>17</sup>Rutledge and Tanner, *Mission to America*, 68.

<sup>18</sup>“Recommendations Concerning the Home Mission Board,” in *Southern Baptist Convention, Held in Louisville, May 19-22* (Nashville: Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1959), 61 and 68.

<sup>19</sup>Rutledge and Tanner, *Mission to America*, 149.

director of the Division of Missions and was succeeded by his associate, Gerald B. Palmer.<sup>20</sup>

### **Gerald B. Palmer**

Gerald Palmer was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on March 31, 1921. Palmer grew up in a farm in northern Wisconsin. He grew up attending a Methodist church with his parents. The Methodist church he attended, however, closed its Sunday school for the summer. His parents attended the Baptist church that summer and never returned to the Methodist church. Palmer accepted Christ and was baptized at the age of ten years in that Baptist church.<sup>21</sup> Palmer met and got acquainted with his future wife, Mary Elizabeth Black, while they were both summer missionaries in Texas and the following year in New Mexico. They married in 1949.

God began preparing Gerald Palmer very early for a ministry that would have great influence first among the Navajos, Pueblo Indians, and Hispanics of New Mexico and later to many language groups in the United States. Both Minnesota and Wisconsin were cultural and educational training grounds for Palmer. His cultural preparation started during his early years while growing up in the Scandinavian immigrant community, mainly among Norwegians. Palmer attended Northwestern Theological Seminary and then transferred to Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas, where he received his liberal arts training in 1946.<sup>22</sup>

Upon graduation from college, Palmer served as Associational Missionary for the Northwestern Baptist Association in New Mexico. While serving in New Mexico, Palmer was instrumental in organizing three Spanish-language and two English-language

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Joshua Grijalva, comp., *Ethnic Baptist History* (Miami: Meta Publications, 1992), 111.

<sup>22</sup>Joshua Grijalva, "Grijalva Manuscript—Ethnic Baptist History" (Nashville: Home Mission Board Ethnic Ministries Collection, AR 631-12, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, 1987), 680.

congregations. In 1957, the Home Mission Board elected Gerald Palmer to serve as Director of Spanish and Indian Missions for New Mexico. A year later, he became the State Director of Missions for the Baptist Convention of New Mexico.<sup>23</sup> In 1960, Palmer moved to Atlanta and became Lloyd Corder's associate. Five years later, Palmer became the Director of the Language Missions Department. In 1970, he became a regional coordinator for the Home Mission Board. Palmer held this position until he was elected as the Director of the Mission Section of the Home Mission Board in Atlanta.<sup>24</sup>

Palmer's missiological thinking was not only challenged but shaped by his crosscultural experience during his years of ministry in New Mexico. His missiological thinking shaped the future of language missions in New Mexico, but also influenced denominational language missions at the national level. He observed that many of the Navajos were indifferent to "white men on Indian reservations."<sup>25</sup> Palmer's survey of Navajo works surfaced two primary problems. First, there was the difficulty of "reaching people across the reservations with the gospel."<sup>26</sup> Second, there was the difficulty of "placing leadership of Baptist work in the hands of Navajo Christians."<sup>27</sup> In essence, Palmer's struggles were not different than the struggles most missionaries face on the mission field—contextualization of the gospel and training indigenous leadership.

Palmer acknowledges the impact that Donald McGavran and Melvin Hodges had on his missiological thinking. Reflecting on the growth of language missions, he credits the indigenous principle as the agent that probably "did more to change the direction of Language Missions than anything else that came to us from the outside."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Grijalva, "Makers of Ethnic History," 4.

<sup>24</sup>Gerald Palmer, transcripts of recordings, Language Missions Collection (Nashville: Home Mission Board, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, April 10, 1985).

<sup>25</sup>Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 112.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Palmer, transcripts of recordings.

Palmer describes the impact of Hodge's indigenous principle upon the new generation of language leaders: "I think probably one of the [largest] impacts during the time of my relationship to the Board and carrying on into my administration and on into Oscar's [Romo] is the matter of the indigenous church principle."<sup>29</sup>

Palmer articulated four language missions principles that guided his methodologies.<sup>30</sup> First, the gospel is for everyone and "everyone without Christ is Southern Baptists' responsibility."<sup>31</sup> Second, language mission work ought to be the responsibility of the church. In other words, the local church ought to take responsibility for reaching out to a particular language group. Third, language congregations should be self-supporting as quickly as possible. Fourth, a new sense of cooperation was established between the state conventions and the Home Mission Board.<sup>32</sup>

The new unified mission effort allowed both the state convention and the Board to share "in the support and administration in a number of areas of mission work, including language mission."<sup>33</sup> The cooperative efforts were very significant because the "entire staff of a state convention is now directly responsible for serving every language congregation just as they are for serving any other congregation."<sup>34</sup> Gerald Palmer credited the strong cooperation between the state convention and the Home Mission

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>The following four principles are taken from Gerald Palmer's *Winds of Change* (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, SBC, 1964), 54-56.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 54.

<sup>32</sup>Melvin Hodges believes that for a church to be truly indigenous, it must have all three elements—self-government, self-propagating, and self-supporting. See Melvin L. Hodges, *The Indigenous Church* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing, 2009).

<sup>33</sup>Palmer, *Winds of Change*, 56-57.

<sup>34</sup>The cooperative effort certainly was a step in the right direction. Oscar Romo further refined the concept of cooperation between the state conventions and the Home Mission Board when he implemented the national strategic plan. Each state convention and/or Language Mission Director was given a notebook that guided them to take specific steps to gather, research, plan, and implement a state language strategy. More is covered in chap. 4 of this dissertation about this topic. Ibid., 57.

Board for the accomplishments in language missions. He stated, “Many state leaders came the way of pioneer work and started new churches with responsibility of developing a financial base. It took patience to get them where they saw language mission as a need. Looking back at my own 40 years, I know that we never could have accomplished what we did without state cooperation.”<sup>35</sup>

### **Emergence of Language Missions in North America**

The contributions of Lloyd Corder, Gerald Palmer, and later Oscar Romo catapulted language missions to new heights. Their influences accelerated, over the next fifty years, the expansion of language missions and the creation of strong partnerships with the United Nations, the U.S. government, and Southern Baptist agencies such as state conventions, colleges, and seminaries. The readers should appreciate the most salient points of the emergence of what Oscar Romo often called the “American Mosaic.” A major portion of the historical overview is dedicated to Hispanics since they are the subject of this dissertation. The historical overview is not intended, however, to be a comprehensive account of the emergence of language mission work in the United States.<sup>36</sup>

### **The American Mosaic**

Oscar Romo defined the American Mosaic as “a mosaic that reflects a diversity of cultural and linguistic values. In a sense, our nation is a modern Tower of Babel, a pluralistic society dispersed across an entire continent.”<sup>37</sup> Romo developed an art for

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<sup>35</sup>Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 114.

<sup>36</sup>While I am not aware of any complete history of language missions in North America, there are some who have written language missions history of selected states. See, for example, Luis F. Gómez, *Historia de la Obra Bautista Hispana en Nuevo México* (El Paso: Casa Bautista de Publicaciones, 1981), and Daniel R. Carnett, *Contending for the Faith: Southern Baptists in New Mexico, 1938-1995* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002). Joshua Grijalva has probably done the most extensive work on the history of language missions in North America.

<sup>37</sup>Oscar I. Romo, “The Turn of the Century,” in *From Sea to Shining Sea: Challenges to Reach Our Nation for Christ*, ed. William G. Tanner (Nashville: Broadman, 1986), 127.

identifying, training, and deploying people for ministry within this mosaic. Leaders within constituent segments of the mosaic impacted Southern Baptist ministry growth during the development of the American Mosaic. Many of the people highlighted in this section helped shape and lay the foundation for language missions during these twenty-five years. Many of these were people whose lives had been impacted by Romo's ministry.

### **American Indians**

Frank Belvin, a Choctaw Indian, was born in Oklahoma in 1914. He accepted Christ at the age of fourteen while in a Presbyterian boarding school. He graduated from Bacone College, an Indian Baptist institution. Belvin was missionary to the Creek and Seminole, a territory that covered 20 percent of all Southern Baptist churches.<sup>38</sup>

In 1971, Belvin became the national consultant for the Home Mission Board work among the Indians. He was active in Indian affairs with the Inter-Tribal Council of the "five civilized tribes of the Creeks, Seminoles, Choctaws, Cherokees and Chickasaws."<sup>39</sup> Belvin also was involved at the national level providing leadership during difficult times in the struggle for Native Americans' equal rights. An example of this is the *American Indian Voice*, a newspaper that served as "a voice of reason and vision" among the American Indian Baptists.<sup>40</sup>

Belvin's life was characterized by the investment he made in the lives of others. His relational side allowed him to identify with other Indian cultures with ease. Belvin was very influential in the life of Jimmy Anderson, a Creek Indian who later would become a national Indian leader among Southern Baptists. Frank Belvin retired in 1980 after serving forty years in language missions.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Frank Belvin, "Work with American Indians," *MissionsUSA*, 63, Supp. 92 (1992): 6.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid. Also, see n. 9 on p. 4 of this dissertation.

<sup>41</sup>Everett Hullum, "Four Receive Language Missions Recognition," *Baptist Press*, February 28, 1980 [on-line]; accessed 18 September 2010; available from <http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/5014,28-Feb-1980.pdf>; Internet.



The largest Indian concentration is found among the Navajo nations located in New Mexico and Arizona. Russell Begaye, the son of a medicine man, came to know Christ at age twelve. Both of his parents felt convicted to be part of the Southern Baptist denomination. One influential person in his life was James Nelson, a white missionary. Nelson helped Begaye preach his first sermon, start his first church at age sixteen, and select a seminary.<sup>42</sup> Russell Begaye is the first Navajo from New Mexico to graduate from a Southern Baptist seminary.

In 1981, Oscar Romo asked Begaye to serve as the director of “the Office of Native American Ministries, which worked with all tribal groups in the U.S. and Canada. He worked in this position for fifteen years and was able to start 320 new churches during that time.”<sup>43</sup>

Romo’s new philosophy of contextualization was seen early among Indian work. Begaye acknowledged this indigenous mind-set, saying, “we have realized it will take American Indians sharing the gospel with other American Indians before we ever reach our people. We are no longer waiting for the Home Mission Board to send us missionaries, so we are going ourselves. That’s simply a New Testament principle of church growth.”<sup>44</sup> Begaye understood the challenges of reaching the Indian population of the United States. He reported that, in 1985, Native American churches were only reaching 2 percent of the Native American population and predicted that “Southern Baptist work among Native Americans will increase by 190 percent by the turn of the century.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Russell Begaye, interview by author, July 1992, personal conversations during the Language Missions Conference, Albuquerque, New Mexico. The medicine man is well respected among the Navajo people. He is a healer but also understands the culture and heritage of the Navajo. Thus, he is significant because he is a healer, has knowledge of herbal medicine, and preserves the traditions and belief of the Navajo people.

<sup>43</sup>“Five Minutes for Missions: Russell Begaye” [on-line]; accessed 17 October 2010; available from [http://filemanager.silaspartners.com/dox/columbiabc/FIVE\\_MINUTES\\_FOR\\_MISSIONS\\_March\\_Russell\\_Begaye.pdf](http://filemanager.silaspartners.com/dox/columbiabc/FIVE_MINUTES_FOR_MISSIONS_March_Russell_Begaye.pdf); Internet.

<sup>44</sup>Joe Westbury, “Ethnic Fellowships Target Locations for New Growth,” *Baptist Press*, 1 October 1987, 5.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

## Middle-Easterners

Khalil (Charlie) Hanna was born in “Fayouman, Egypt, 35 miles south of the Cairo pyramids.”<sup>46</sup> He came to California in 1976 and began ministering to the Middle-Easterners. In fourteen years, he had started forty congregations, discovered natural leaders, written Bible study materials, secured meeting places, and directed the Ethnic Leadership Development Center in Riverside, California.<sup>47</sup>

Many Arabic congregations were founded in California, but Hanna’s ministry and influence were both national and international. It was not unusual for Arabic people to travel in excess of fifty miles to worship and hear the gospel in their own language. Many congregations were a cultural mix of Egyptian, Jordanian, Iraqis, Syrians, Palestinians, Saudis, and Sudanese.

Despite living in the “land of opportunity,” many Arabs in the United States faced political, religious, cultural, and social struggles. The persistent political struggles between the United States and the Middle East were transferred to the local church. Because Middle Easterners see all Christians as pro-Israel, when they were invited to a Christian church they thought they were being invited to change their political stance.<sup>48</sup> Religion was also a struggle. Most people in the Middle East were Muslims, and Islam taught against Christianity. Struggles among different Middle Eastern groups existed because of different cultures. For example, the Lebanese were prejudiced toward color more so than were Anglos.<sup>49</sup> Makarios Dibo, pastor of an Arabic congregation in Southern California, expresses it this way: “We are not accepted by the Arabs because we are Christians, not Moslems. Among Anglo Christians, we are not accepted because we are Arab. Even among evangelical Christians, there seems to be some anti-Arab feelings.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Wayne Grinstead, “Khalil Hanna: Work with Middle-East Americans,” *MissionsUSA* 63, Supp. 92 (1992): 13.

<sup>47</sup>Romo, *American Mosaic*, 113.

<sup>48</sup>Grinstead, “Khalil Hanna,” 13.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Dan Martin, “American Arabs,” *MissionsUSA* (May-June 1991): 72.

Socially, Arab congregations faced marginalization from Americans. Such was the experience of Emile Louka, pastor of Middle Eastern Southern Baptist Church of Riverside, California, whose church was asked to leave their building “because they didn’t like our children.”<sup>51</sup> Another Anglo congregation asked a struggling Middle Eastern church to pay high rent for the two hours’ use of their facilities.<sup>52</sup>

The joy of new churches lessened the sadness of the struggles. Broadway Baptist Church in Escondido, California, started a Middle Easterner congregation when a sixteen-year-old Arabic teen started coming to Sunday school. The day he was baptized, thirty Middle Eastern people came to the church. The pastor said, “This Arabic congregation just fell into our hands.”<sup>53</sup>

Oscar Romo reported that despite “widespread prejudice against Arabs as a result of the Iranian hostage crisis and U.S. energy problems, he said 23 Arabic units began in 1980.”<sup>54</sup> In 1993, Romo reported that, “Today there are seventy Arabic speaking congregations in the Southern Baptist Convention. . . . These congregations meet wherever they can—homes, rented facilities, and in the buildings of other churches.”<sup>55</sup>

## European

Alexa Popovici was born in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in 1916. He grew up in Romania after his parents returned in 1921 when Alexa was five years old.<sup>56</sup> He served as president and professor of the Baptist seminary in Bucharest. Subsequent to

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Everett Hullum, “SBC Will Lose Diversity Unless Materials Printed,” *Baptist Press*, 23 February 1981, 4 [on-line]; accessed 18 September 2010; available from <http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/5212,23-Feb-1981.pdf>; Internet.

<sup>55</sup>Romo, *American Mosaic*, 113.

<sup>56</sup>Kenen Heise, “Alexa Popovici, Romanian Pastor,” *Chicago Tribune*, 8 July 1997 [on-line]; accessed 1 September 2012; available from [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1997-07-08/news/9707080127\\_1\\_bucharest-romanian-baptist-church-radio-pastor](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1997-07-08/news/9707080127_1_bucharest-romanian-baptist-church-radio-pastor); Internet.

the communist takeover of the country, in 1949, Popovici was asked by the government to add a course in Marxist/Leninism to the seminary curriculum. Popovici refused, and he was demoted from seminary president to archivist.<sup>57</sup> What the government meant for evil, God used for his glory. From banishment to a basement office, he wrote a systematic theology, a history of the Anabaptists, and the first history of the Romanian Baptists.<sup>58</sup> Popovici came to Chicago in 1966. One year later, he founded the Romanian Baptist Church with twenty-two people. Now experiencing political freedom, Popovici was thinking of ways by which he could help Romanians find freedom in Christ. He started a radio ministry that was beamed into Romania. In December 1989, as Nicolae Ceausescu's dictatorship came to an end, protestors were peacefully singing, "He lives! He lives!" which they had heard after years of listening to Popovici's radio broadcast from his Chicago studio.<sup>59</sup> That small church that was started in 1967 reported a membership of seven hundred in 1993.<sup>60</sup>

This church has been a catalyst for the beginning, and the development of, "Romanian work in Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Houston, Akron, Atlanta, Philadelphia and other cities."<sup>61</sup> In 1987, Alexa Popovici reported that the Romanian fellowship had pledged "to start fifteen new congregations in the next two years."<sup>62</sup> Besides evangelizing their own people, Popovici noted that Hungarian members of his church had also begun a mission among their language group.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Rachel Gill, "Alexa Popovici: Work with European Americans," *MissionsUSA* 63, Supp. 92 (July-August 1992): 14.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Romo, *American Mosaic*, 112.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 114.

<sup>62</sup>Westbury, "Ethnic Fellowships," 4.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

Popovici's work was among Southern Baptists' first efforts with European-American. In 1992, there were "over 207 European language churches in North America."<sup>64</sup> That same year, Alexa's son Valentin was pastoring the Romanian Church his father started and Angela, his daughter, served as a catalytic missionary with the Home Mission Board.<sup>65</sup>

### **Asian Church Growth and the American Mosaic**

The following selected Asian profiles isolate cultural factors that help explain how these groups' expansion contributed to the growth of the American Mosaic. While culture is not the only factor for growth, it is an important factor influencing church growth.

#### **Cambodians**

Cambodians, originally known as Khmers, are a mixture of the country's native peoples with Chinese, Vietnamese, and Indonesian ethnics.<sup>66</sup> Cambodians differ both physically and linguistically from other Asian groups. Most of the immigrants to the United States came from the working class.<sup>67</sup>

The Home Mission Board appointed Sok Doeung, an immigrant pastor, in December 1982. He served as a catalytic missionary in Texas and he was also instrumental in developing Cambodian congregations across the United States.<sup>68</sup> The

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<sup>64</sup>Gill, "Alexa Popovici," 14.

<sup>65</sup>A catalytic missionary is a person who seeks to bring ethnic/language culture persons into a right relationship with Christ and to develop indigenous churches among the culture of the people. This is one of Oscar Romo's church-planting concepts that is introduced in the next section of this dissertation.

<sup>66</sup>"Cambodian Church Planting," *ChurchPlantingVillage.net*, 2010 [on-line]; accessed 20 October 2010; available from <http://www.churchchurchplantingvillage.net/churchplantingvillagepbpeople.aspx?pageid=8589992610>; Internet.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Patti Stephenson, "HMB Approves 52 for Mission Posts," *Baptist Press*, 10 December 1982, 4 [on-line]; accessed 16 September 2010; available from <http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/5561,10-Dec-1982.pdf>; Internet.

national fellowship, founded in 1985, was instrumental in accomplishing church-planting efforts in the United States. Doeung, president of the Cambodian fellowship in 1988, announced plans for the Cambodian fellowship to start a new congregation in conjunction with the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Las Vegas in June 1989.<sup>69</sup> These churches were mostly growing through conversion growth.<sup>70</sup> The Cambodian congregations doubled in size from 1984 to 1990. Most of the growing congregations were within six miles of the main Cambodian community. The first Cambodian Southern Baptist outreach in the United States began in San Antonio, Texas, in 1972.<sup>71</sup>

## Chinese

The pattern observed within Southern Baptist work is that Chinese churches that grow faster have a full-time, long-tenured, and theologically-educated pastor. Also noted as important was the fact that the Chinese people enjoy regular fellowship activities. The primary language for the work was Chinese, although English Bible studies were provided for youth. Most people in the Chinese community had a good education with 85 percent having completed high school. Consequently, many were professionals and 15 percent were self-employed. The first Chinese Southern Baptist church in the United States began in Sacramento, California, in 1854.<sup>72</sup>

Most Chinese units of work were started in the 1970s. In 1982, Chinese Southern Baptist ministries spread over twenty-six state conventions, including

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<sup>69</sup>Joe Westbury, "Ethnics to Start 3 Churches in Las Vegas by June 1989," *Baptist Press*, 29 September 1988, 1 [on-line]; accessed 16 September 2010; available from <http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/6669,29-Sep-1988.pdf>; Internet.

<sup>70</sup>Sok Doeung, *Cambodian Church Growth Profile*, comp. Language Church Extension Division Staff (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, SBC, 1990), 66.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>72</sup>Craig Bird, "After 130 Years, SBC Work with Chinese Growing Rapidly," *Baptist Press*, 18 May 1983, 1 [on-line]; accessed 16 September 2010; available from <http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/5646,18-May-1983.pdf>; Internet.

western Canada and Puerto Rico.<sup>73</sup> Although Peter Kung does not give reasons for this expansion, Fermín Whittaker attributes the growth to “intentional training for catalytic missionaries.”<sup>74</sup> Whittaker also notes that each Ethnic Fellowship was challenged to start new churches among their own culture. A survey of the 1981 state convention annual showed that thirty-five churches, mostly in California, had a membership of 5,705.<sup>75</sup>

## **Filipino**

Congregations were growing as a result of conversion growth. The churches that were growing had effective emphasis on the family and family outreach. Other effective methodologies that contributed to growth were home Bible studies, Backyard Bible Clubs, kindergarten, and day care.<sup>76</sup> Membership figures for the Filipino church were similar to congregational attendance figures. Many Filipinos had completed high school but only 38 percent were professionals. However, English was not a problem for most Filipinos since 97 percent read English.<sup>77</sup>

Peol Eduardo, the host of the “Baptist Hour” in the Philippines, came to the United States in 1970. He started various Bible studies in Los Angeles and later began services in the Filipino-American Civic Center in the morning and a local restaurant in the evening. Two years later, Peol was appointed as a home missionary. The congregation later bought the property of the First Southern Baptist Church of Los Angeles and founded the first Filipino Southern Baptist Church in the United States in 1974.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Peter Kung, “The Story of Asian Southern Baptists,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 18, no. 3 (July 1983), 54 (address presented to the Historical Commission and Southern Baptist Historical Society held in Nashville, Tennessee, in April 1983).

<sup>74</sup>Fermín A. Whittaker, telephone interview by author, 16 October 2010. Whittaker served on Romo’s staff in 1982.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Jaime Prieto, “Filipino Church Growth Profile,” in *America’s Asian*, ed. Language Church Extension Division staff (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, SBC, 1990), 70.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 69.

<sup>78</sup>Kung, “The Story of Asian Southern Baptists,” 54.

Jaime Prieto was influential in providing key leadership to Filipino congregations in the “United States, Philippines, and Southeast Asian countries as a Pastor-Missionary and Evangelist.”<sup>79</sup> He served as National Filipino consultant on Oscar Romo’s language staff from the mid-1980s until 1994. Prieto wrote the “Filipino Church Planting Guide for the Home Mission Board.” Prieto’s wife, Polly, was a Christian recording artist soloist.<sup>80</sup>

## **Koreans**

Koreans provided strong financial support to local congregations. This may have been influenced by the fact that 90 percent had a high school education, 70 percent were professionals, and 40 percent were self-employed. Most Korean churches had a pastor with a seminary education. Very few churches had a lay pastor. Koreans, more than any other ethnic group in North America, were further ahead in reaching their second generation.<sup>81</sup> Many of the Korean churches established English-speaking congregations to reach out to their second generation. Dan Moon was the Korean national consultant for the Home Mission Board during those twenty-five years. As consultant, he helped develop Korean Southern Baptist churches across the United States.<sup>82</sup>

The Korean churches grew not only in numbers, but also geographically, expanding to thirty state conventions, including American Samoa. There were three congregations in 1971, 50 in 1976, 203 in 1982, and 253 in 1983.<sup>83</sup> Moon reported that

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<sup>79</sup>I served with Jaime Prieto during the years 1985-1994. Prieto was helpful to the writer and the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware in the development of Filipino work in Maryland during 1985. Pacitas C. Saludes, comp., *Dr. Jaime Guerrero Prieto* (Laoag City: Philippines, 1982), 19-20.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Dan Moon, “Korean Church Growth Profile,” in *America’s Asians*, ed. Language Church Extension Division staff (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, SBC, 1990), 72.

<sup>82</sup>Chul Tim Chang, “A History of the Korean Immigrant Baptist Church Movement in the United States: The Growth of Ethnic Minority Churches Related to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Is Exploding,” *Baptist History and Heritage Society*, 14 July 2006, The Free Library [on-line]; accessed 20 September 2010; available from <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/A+history+of+the+Korean+immigrant+Baptist+church+movement+in+the...-a0130777643>; Internet.

<sup>83</sup>Kung, “The Story of Asian Southern Baptists,” 45.



“65 new works have been launched by the Korean fellowship since January 1987 and projected Korean congregations will mushroom from the current 600 to 4,035 by the turn of the century.”<sup>84</sup> Recognizing the impact of immigration on Korean ministry, he said, “Every year the Korean population in the United States increases by 20 percent due to births and immigration.”<sup>85</sup> While it is true that Koreans start many churches, several of the Korean church starts were the result of church splits.<sup>86</sup> The first Korean Southern Baptist church in the United States began in Los Angeles, California, in 1957.

### **Laotians**

The Laotian people had the lowest educational and professional percentage of the Asian groups. Ten percent completed high school, and 5 percent were professionals. Most congregational growth was the result of conversion growth, which was typical of language groups. Joshua Vang arrived in the United States in 1976. That same year, he established the first Laotian church in Des Moines, Iowa. Vang, a Hmong,<sup>87</sup> was asked by Romo to serve as the national consultant for Laotian, Hmong, and Thai ministries in North America in 1979.<sup>88</sup> There were some cultural conflicts, however, between Vang and some Laotian congregations. Since Laotians saw the Hmong as a primitive group, it resulted in some misunderstandings. Vang invested time and effort to produce a Laotian hymnal, but the Laotians chose to purchase the Christian Missionary Alliance (CMA) hymnal. Vang was surprised and upset at the Laotians’ lack of interest in a new hymnal.

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<sup>84</sup>Westbury, “Ethnic Fellowships,” 5.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>The Hmong are hill tribe people from Laos who migrated from China in the 1800s to escape oppression and persecution. During the Vietnam War, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) recruited Hmong people to fight the North Vietnamese. They fought to defend their homeland and to cut off the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

<sup>88</sup>Joshua Vang, *Laotian Church Planting Guide* (repr., Atlanta: North American Mission Board, SBC, 2001), 1.

The Laotian leadership explained to Vang that the Hmong produced the Baptist Laotian hymnal without any consultation from Laotians. The notes and tunes were different and not familiar to the Laotians.<sup>89</sup> The Laotian congregations also struggled with Romo's selection of Joshua Vang as consultant and could not understand why he did not choose the person they considered their leader.<sup>90</sup> Anecdotal evidence criticizes Vang for a Presbyterian ecclesiology reflected in the newly planted churches.<sup>91</sup>

Despite the early cultural struggles, God used Joshua Vang to reach out to these three groups. In 1982, there were sixty-three Lao Baptist congregations, which included the ethnic Hmong and Yaomienh<sup>92</sup> groups.<sup>93</sup> That same year, twenty Laotian churches reported nearly 1,700 members and 280 baptisms.<sup>94</sup> More than one hundred churches and mission congregations were part of the Southern Baptist Convention.<sup>95</sup>

## Vietnamese

Many Vietnamese congregations grew as a result of age-graded Sunday schools, long-tenured pastors, conversions, stewardship promotion, separate budgets from the sponsoring church, English Bible studies for youth and children, and work primarily in the Vietnamese language.<sup>96</sup> Like most of the other groups, Vietnamese enjoy

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<sup>89</sup>Thira Siengsukon, interview by author, Kansas City, Missouri, 13 September 2010.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Alternate names for these two groups are: Ban Yao, Highland Yao, Mian, Mien, Myen, Pan Yao, Yao, Yiu Mien, and Youmian. The language name is "lu Mien" and the population in 2000 was 20,300 people in Laos. Almost all refugees in the West have come from Laos. Daoist is the traditional religion. M. Paul Lewis, ed., *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 16th ed. (Dallas: SIL International, 2009).

<sup>93</sup>Kung, "The Story of Asian Southern Baptists," 46.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>Joshua Vang, "Laotian Church Growth Profile," in *America's Asian*, ed. Language Church Extension Division staff (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, SBC, 1990), 73.

<sup>96</sup>Thang Nguyen, "Vietnamese Church Growth Profile," in *America's Asian*, ed. Language Church Extension Division staff (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, SBC, 1990), 76.

fellowship. The first Vietnamese Southern Baptist church in the United States began in Fort Walton, Florida, in 1975.<sup>97</sup> Other Vietnamese congregations that also started in 1975 were in Lacey, Washington, and in St. Petersburg, Florida. In 1976, New Hope Baptist Church in Santa Ana, California, and Casa View Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, organized as churches.<sup>98</sup> Peter Kung, in “The Story of Asian Southern Baptists,” reported that “in 1982 there were sixty-seven Vietnamese units of work. Seventeen reported 756 members and . . . fourteen reported 110 baptisms, and six reported gifts of \$1,169 through the Cooperative Program.”<sup>99</sup>

Salvador Negrín, a Cuban pastor in Rochester, New York, started a church among the Vietnamese of that city. He spoke very little English and did not speak Vietnamese. He shared with me two common things he had with the Vietnamese community: “We are both refugees and we both have a love for freedom.”<sup>100</sup> Salvador Negrín worked hard and for many years ministered to the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the Vietnamese community. This was one example of the passion of immigrants who were reaching out to other immigrants in the United States through personal evangelism that led to new churches.

## Summary

Oscar Romo saw language missions as accepting and appreciating race, language, and culture. It was presenting God’s plan of redemption in the language and cultural context of the people.<sup>101</sup> Most persons represented in the “American Mosaic” section demonstrated Romo’s understanding of language missions.

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<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 75.

<sup>98</sup>Kung, “The Story of Asian Southern Baptists,” 46.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

<sup>100</sup>Salvador Negrín and I served together in New York between 1983 and 1985. An Van Pham, a Vietnamese missionary, learned Spanish in order to start Hispanic congregations.

<sup>101</sup>Oscar I. Romo, “Heirs of the Faith,” *MissionsUSA* 63 Supp. 92 (July-August 1992): 22.

They also were influenced by the compassion and example of Oscar Romo. During these twenty-five years of ministry, he spent time with missionaries and visited missionaries living in remote places.<sup>102</sup> His priority was training leaders and expecting results for their efforts.

Between 1970 and 1991, the “number of ethnic Southern Baptist churches increased by 794 percent from 674 churches, missions, and preaching points to 6,023.”<sup>103</sup> These brief snapshots show some highlights of the people and language groups responsible for the growth of language missions in the United States.

### **Hispanics and the American Mosaic**

Hispanics are an integral part of the history of the United States. How does one even begin to discuss all the key people and events that led to the expansion of Hispanic missions in North America? Certainly, this is not only a daunting task, but also beyond the scope of this dissertation. Much of the growth and migration of Hispanics has been concentrated primarily in the South and West with some considerable presence in the Northeast. Therefore, a better approach for engaging the topic of Hispanics and the American Mosaic is twofold: First, a more recent historical background of language missions from 1970 to 2000 is presented. Second, seven Baptist state conventions where language missions made considerable advancement during this time period are highlighted.<sup>104</sup>

### **The West**

California, the state with the largest Hispanic population, and New Mexico, the state with the largest percentage of Hispanics, played an important role in the expansion

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<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 24.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid.

<sup>104</sup>One weakness of this approach is that undoubtedly names, considered important by a reader, may be left out. The intent of this section on “Hispanics and the American Mosaic” is to cover a broad period of recent history (1970-2000) in seven state conventions. The seven state conventions

of the American Mosaic. Many of the early trailblazers were committed to reaching people by starting new congregations. The foundational work of Jesús Ríos in California and Luis Gómez in New Mexico continues to bear fruit today.

## **California**

California, the “Golden State,” is the most populous state in the country with more than thirty-seven million people, according to the 2010 Census.<sup>105</sup> The Hispanic population of 38 percent, or 14.3 million people, would make California, if it were a country, the ninth largest Hispanic country in the world.<sup>106</sup>

Hispanic Southern Baptist work started with the arrival of Jesús Ríos in San Jose in 1947. He and fourteen others organized the Primera Iglesia Bautista del Sur.<sup>107</sup> A year later, Ríos moved to Los Angeles to start the Primera Iglesia Bautista del Sur in East Los Angeles. This church was instrumental in starting many other churches in the surrounding areas such as El Monte, Pico Rivera, and Compton. The Spanish church that probably had the greatest visible missionary impact is the church in Pico Rivera. That church, started as a mission of Primera de Los Angeles, called as their first pastor Homero Adiel Urbina. In 1960, the church called Daniel Sotelo as pastor. Fermín Whittaker

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are representative of areas where migration and growth of Hispanics resulted in expansion of language missions. The names and historical data were obtained through historical records and personal discussion with people familiar with both the historical context and how key people helped in the development of language missions in that particular ministry context. In some cases, some key people and events are outside the time period (1970-2000). A reason for this is that, in some cases, such as with Jesús Ríos, James Godsoe, and necessary historical data from Texas, the results of these early influences are still producing many fruits in 2012.

<sup>105</sup>“State and County QuickFacts: California,” U.S. Department of Commerce, Last Revision 18 September 2012 [on-line]; accessed 22 September 2012; available from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06000.html>; Internet.

<sup>106</sup>“The World Factbook,” Central Intelligence Agency [on-line]; accessed 22 September 2012; available from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2119rank.html>; Internet.

<sup>107</sup>Much of this information was gathered from an unpublished history, “Los Hispanos Bautistas del Sur en California 1947-2011,” by Daniel Sotelo. The historical notes recount Southern Baptist Spanish work in California 1947-2011. Daniel Sotelo was discipled by Jesús Ríos. He was instrumental in much of the growth and development of Hispanic language missions in the state. He was a pastor, church planter, and most recently retired from the California Baptist State Convention.

was pastor from 1964 until he went to the Home Mission Board in 1977. Joe De Leon became pastor in 1977 and served until he and his wife were appointed by the Foreign Mission Board (now International Mission Board) in 1992 to serve in Russia. Pico Rivera has been one of the top givers to the Cooperative Program, home missions, and international missions. In fact, this church has produced missionaries serving with both the Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board) and the International Mission Board, as well as the first Hispanic director of Multiethnic Evangelism and the first Hispanic Executive Director for the Southern Baptist Convention. Others who have pioneered in mission work in California are Fermín Whittaker, Cristobal Doña, Lonnie Chávez, Anthony Ahaev, and Leobardo Estrada.

Reflecting upon the impact of Hispanic language missions in California, Grijalva observes:

Eugene Wolfe was missionary to the Hispanics in Los Angeles. One of his outstanding ministries was providing theological training to laymen. He realized that the “laborers were few” and if the millions of Hispanics living in Los Angeles were to be won, laymen needed to be trained. Personal evangelism was a successful way of winning many Hispanics to Christ. From the beginning of the work in California, the Home Mission Board has provided resources not only in the support of missionaries and pastors, but also in the purchase of property and the construction of church buildings. More recently, in a cooperative agreement between Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary and the board’s Language Missions Division, the Multi Ethnic Theological Association (M.E.T.A.) has been instituted to provide ethnic leadership development centers with accredited diploma and certificate programs. Preachers and laymen are receiving theological training to help in the growth of Hispanic Baptists.<sup>108</sup>

Today, the United State’s Hispanic population growth presents an important mission challenge to Southern Baptists.

## **New Mexico**

Nestled in the midst of the beauty of the Sandia Mountains of Albuquerque and the rich history of New Mexico culture, one finds the stories of Hispanic trailblazers

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<sup>108</sup>Joshua Grijalva, “The Story of Hispanic Southern Baptists,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 18, no. 3 (July 1983): 40-47.

of the faith. Hispanic work in New Mexico started with the arrival of Hiram W. Read to Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 1849.<sup>109</sup> While this work continued into the twentieth century, Luis F. Gómez reports that the decade of the 1970s stood out as a time of new beginnings. There were three primary emphases among the Hispanics during this decade. First, the regional clinics were started to promote the different ministries of the Spanish Convention. These regional clinics continue to the present. Second, the annual evangelism Congress started in 1977 and continues also to this today. Third, Bob Sena started the annual pastor retreat when he was president of the Spanish Convention in 1977.

Behind the development of the Spanish Baptist work in New Mexico were some godly people who deserve to be mentioned. Luis F. Gómez, his wife Tina Castro de Gómez, and their family came to the state from Texas in 1964. Gómez continues today to serve among the Hispanics in New Mexico. Gómez's greatest contribution, among the many, was probably the writing of the Spanish history of New Mexico. Pedro Escobar, a Salvadorian pastor, who has served in New Mexico with his wife Dionisia for many years, makes the following observation about Luis F. Gómez:

Luis always, during his years of ministry, demonstrated objectivity and clarity in his vision. His work was steady, tireless, and full of passion. His leadership was enthusiastic; his presence was not only inspiring but also contagious. Luis is a passionate speaker and a visionary with a deep desire to take the message of the gospel to a different level. In his years as Pastor; Luis trained leaders, sent them out to plant new churches, and the results of his ministry are visible today throughout New Mexico.<sup>110</sup>

Thomas and Betty Eason adopted the Spanish culture and made Las Cruces their home for more than thirty years. Both Tom and Betty, who is a nurse, developed and contextualized training for Hispanics in New Mexico. Tom was director of the CLD (Contextualized Leadership Development) centers in partnership with Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary. As catalytic missionaries and instructors of the

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<sup>109</sup>Gómez, *Historia de la obra Bautista Hispana en Nuevo México*, 13.

<sup>110</sup>Pedro Escobar, e-mail to author, 7 September 2012.

CLD centers, they modeled a Christlike spirit to New Mexico Baptists. Even after their retirement from the Baptist Convention of New Mexico and the North American Mission Board, they started a new Hispanic church in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

José Sánchez, a tailor in his native country of Cuba, came to know Christ as Lord. He was called to the ministry of the gospel and with his wife faithfully served the Lord. Sánchez was very active in the Spanish Convention of New Mexico where he served as its president at various times. He not only served as pastor, but also as a church planter in the areas of Albuquerque and Socorro.

Another person who faithfully contributed to the expansion of Spanish work in New Mexico was Andrés B. Viera. He was born in Chimaltenango, Guatemala. Presently, his son Andy Viera is pastor of the Primera Iglesia Bautista de Albuquerque. Viera and his wife Raquel Armendáriz have served in New Mexico in different churches from Roswell, New Mexico, to Albuquerque for more than sixty years.

Two lay people who made a significant impact in the state Hispanic work were Favian Sena and Richard Gómez. Sena's two greatest contributions probably were his clear commitment to Scripture and how each of his children was involved in serving God. One of his sons, Bobby Sena, served as missionary in New Mexico in the 1970s and later served on Oscar Romo's staff and as Hispanic Leader with the North American Mission Board for more than twenty-five years. Richard Gómez retired as a pharmacist at the University of New Mexico. At my invitation (as Director of the Missions Division), Richard and his wife Mary now serve as the Director of Volunteer Mobilization for New Mexico Baptists. Richard and Mary have developed a strong organization of volunteers reaching into the various cultures represented in the state convention.

The decade of the 1990s probably can best be described as the decade for creating an environment for reaching out to the diverse population in New Mexico, as well as the decade of the greatest strides in starting new congregations. In *Contending*



*for the Faith*, Daniel Carnett gives a picture of the ethnic landscape as described by the Language Missions program leader Gus Suárez in 1992:

[T]he BCNM had 111 ethnic congregations speaking twelve languages and as many dialects, representing forty-one different cultures. In order to reach the ethnic population in New Mexico—which accounted for 48 percent of the states’ population—Suárez argued that the Anglos and language persons must learn how to cross the culture barrier.<sup>111</sup>

Carnett adds that the greatest change in the last five years of the decade of the 1990s “has been a renewed emphasis on Church Planting.”<sup>112</sup> He adds that,

The Missions Division, under the directive, “every church and mission a missionary congregation,” became the driving force behind new church start. Building on the work of former missions director, M. V. Summers, and Church Planting specialist, John Embery (the developers of Mission New Mexico), the new director, Gus Suárez, galvanized the convention to “catch the vision.”<sup>113</sup>

The church-planting efforts of 1996-2000 resulted “in the starting of ninety-one churches, missions, preaching points, and Bible study groups.”<sup>114</sup>

### **The Midwest**

Chicago, the largest city in Illinois, was a catalyst in the expansion of Language Missions not only in the state of Illinois, but also to other parts of the country. James Godsoe, Paul Hart, and Pete Rivera made great contributions to the development of Language missions in the state of Illinois.

### **Illinois**

James Godsoe served for twenty years as the Language Missions Director for the Illinois Baptist State Association. Godsoe’s greatest contribution to language missions was to develop a structure that facilitated the growth of churches not only

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<sup>111</sup>Carnett, *Contending for the Faith*, 146.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., 178.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., 179.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid.

among Hispanics but also with other ethnic groups in the state convention. Although Godsoe's responsibilities were among all language groups, he spoke fluent Spanish and was a pioneer in the development of Spanish work in Illinois. Godsoe had two hobbies, photography and carpentry, which he successfully used to build relationships and minister to people.<sup>115</sup> It would not be unusual to find Godsoe using his carpentry skills while building or repairing an existing church in the inner city.

Pablo Hart was another pioneer worker who made considerable contributions to the development of Hispanic work primarily in the inner city of Chicago. "Hermano Pablo," as I used to call him, was an Anglo who had adopted the Spanish culture as his own culture. He not only communicated well in the Spanish language, but he also understood the cultural nuances among the various Hispanic cultures of Chicago. Hart was a Catalytic Missionary jointly employed by the Home Mission Board and the Illinois Baptist State Association. While he started new churches among many ethnic groups in Chicago, he primarily was involved in starting new Hispanic works in the inner city of Chicago.

Pete Rivera served from 1978 until 1986 as the associational Director of Missions for the Metro Peoria Baptist Association. Upon Godsoe's retirement in 1986, the Illinois Baptist State Association called Rivera to serve as the Language Missions Director, a position he held until his retirement in 1998. Anyone who knows Pete Rivera can testify of his contagious laugh, the love he shares, and the hope he brings to a crowd of people. Rivera's enthusiasm and relational abilities are his greatest contributions to Hispanic work, not only in Illinois, but nationally. When asked to describe his success in ministering to the Hispanic population in Illinois, Rivera responded by saying, "it is all about relationships."<sup>116</sup> He added that knowing each person genuinely as an individual is what allowed him to impact the lives of so many in the churches.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup>Pete Rivera, telephone conversation with author, 26 September 2012.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid.

After retirement from the Illinois Baptist State Association, Rivera continued to stay involved in Language Missions. He moved to Florida where soon the Florida Baptist Convention asked him to serve as a Regional Missionary for the Central/Southwest region of the state. Once more, Rivera retired in 2006 to move closer to his daughters. The Riveras moved to Kentucky. The Kentucky Baptist Convention seized the opportunity to use an experienced missionary to serve as the Central Region Hispanic missionary. Today, Pete Rivera continues to serve as the pastor of the Iglesia Bautista Getsemaní in Louisville, Kentucky.

Jorge Melendez, a Guatemalan, coordinates Hispanic ministries for the Illinois State Baptist Association. Melendez was a medical student in his country until the Great Physician called Jorge Melendez to His service. Melendez' greatest contributions to Spanish ministries in Chicago are probably his strong emphasis on training, discipling leaders, and starting new congregations.

### **The South**

Two main forces that influenced the expansion and growth in the south was communism in Cuba and the economic conditions in Mexico, Central America, and South America. People in search of the “American Dream” continue to come to the United States today. Florida and Texas are two states in the South that benefited by the influx of immigrants. New churches were planted and indigenous leadership was developed during these years.

### **Florida**

Florida, like Texas, was very instrumental in the expansion of Spanish work and the development of indigenous leadership. In contrast with Texas, however, the expansion in Florida was primarily fueled by an influx of Cubans and people from Latin America, as opposed to Mexicans. In addition, many of the Cuban Baptists coming to Florida were theologically shaped by Home Mission Board missionaries Herbert

Caudill and his son-in-law David Fite. Many of the immigrants who were coming from Cuba were born-again, evangelical Christians looking for political freedom in the United States. Many of the exiles were pastors and church leaders who started new congregations that worshiped in Spanish and “followed the familiar religious pattern from the Island.”<sup>118</sup>

Several important events happened in the decade of the 1970s. The Hispanic work in Florida grew, as was also the case nationally, because of immigration. While this migration was helpful for church growth, it also brought the issue of racial tensions to the attention of Florida Baptists. As the Hispanic population grew in Miami, dwarfing White and Black populations, the racial tensions “were coming to violent proportions as riots erupted on the streets.”<sup>119</sup> Another important event was the election of Daniel Rodríguez, the first Hispanic pastor to serve on the State Board of Missions. The Florida Baptist Convention, over the years, has had a good record of appointing Hispanics, as well as other ethnics to committees and boards.

Perhaps the event that produced the most long-term results was the partnership formed between the Florida Baptist Convention, the Home Mission Board, and the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. The Ethnic Branch of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary started in Miami on September 30, 1977.<sup>120</sup> The multiagency partnership allows ethnic students to receive theological education in their native language. Many of the students have contributed to the start and development of churches throughout the state of Florida.

The decades of the 1980s and the 1990s can best be characterized by change. The face of the population of South Florida changed dramatically in the early 1980s

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<sup>118</sup>David Raúl Lema Jr., “Southern Baptist Hispanic Missions in the State of Florida, 1960-2005” (Ph.D. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), 86-87.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., 108.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., 110.

with a series of tidal waves of Cuban immigrants. The population of Miami grew at the rate of 64.1 percent during the decade of the 1980s, making it the third largest Hispanic metropolitan area in the United States.

Change also became a lifestyle for the new immigrant. Hispanics coming to the United States experienced change in “geography, climate, language, culture, religion, society, market, and worldview.”<sup>121</sup> The new generation of Hispanics, those born here in the United States, faces the challenge of having to cope with two worlds. They need to understand the world of their parents at the same time they discover and succeed in their world today.

The “Marielitos” brought a very distinct type of Cuban to Florida.<sup>122</sup> The Marielitos presented the South Florida population with a social and demographic change. They were socially different than the established Cuban community. Many of these were not professionals, did not have an education, and were not white.<sup>123</sup> Additionally, the established Cuban population called the newcomers “Marielitos” in a derisive manner and identified themselves as the “el Exilio Histórico,” or historical exiles.

The decades between 1980 and 2000 can also be characterized as history-making. Ramón Martínez was elected to serve in the Education Division as the coordinator of the newly created Office of Ethnic Education Coordination on March 15, 1983.<sup>124</sup> Martínez’ election marked a number of historical firsts for the Florida Baptist Convention. He was the first board-elected Hispanic to serve on the staff of the state convention. He was also the first Hispanic to direct a department of the state convention. He was the first Cuban to serve full-time on the staff of the state convention.

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<sup>121</sup>Ibid., 117.

<sup>122</sup>Marielitos is the name given to the group of 125,000 Cubans who left by boats from Mariel in search of freedom in the United States.

<sup>123</sup>Alex Antón and Roger E. Hernández, *Cubans in America: A Vibrant History of a People in Exile* (New York: Kensington, 2003), 208.

<sup>124</sup>*Annual of the Florida Baptist State Convention, 1983* (Jacksonville, FL: Florida Baptist State Convention), 67.

John Sullivan, Executive Director-Treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention, took the historic step to establish the Language Missions Division in 1993. This division was staffed mostly by ethnic personnel from various cultural backgrounds. James Goodson, Director of the Missions Division, reported that “the Language Missions department, including all field personnel related to the department, was elevated to a division status and separated from the Missions Division effective January 1, 1993.”<sup>125</sup>

The Florida Baptist State Convention began a three-year partnership with Cuba. The new partnership was the practical outcome of the new Language Missions Division and the existence of many language pastors with strong connections to Cuba. An agreement of cooperation between the Florida Baptist Convention, the Foreign Mission Board, and the Western Cuba Baptist Convention was adopted.<sup>126</sup>

Early leaders of Language Missions such as Hubert Hurt, Milton Leach, Ramón Martínez, Reinaldo Carvajal, Julio Díaz, Hermán Ríos, and many others provided a strong structural framework upon which much of language missions would stand. A new and contemporary generation of leaders has faithfully continued the ministry and strategies of these makers of history. Leaders such as Raúl Vázquez, David R. Lema, Emanuel Roque, Al Fernández, Frank Moreno, and others continue to creatively discover biblical ways to penetrate a rapidly changing and growing culture in Florida.

## **Texas**

Texas probably contributed more than any other state to the development of Hispanic work. Certainly, its long period of rich history has had a powerful impact, not only in Texas, but also in the West, in Florida and Cuba in the South, and in New York in the East. The brief historical review is limited to the years of the Convención Bautista

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<sup>125</sup>*Annual of the Florida Baptist State Convention, 1993* (Jacksonville, FL: Florida Baptist State Convention), 179.

<sup>126</sup>*Annual of the Florida Baptist State Convention, 1996*, (Jacksonville, FL: Florida Baptist State Convention), 86.

Mexicana, the unification plan, highlights of the last five decades of the twentieth century, and heroes of the faith from this time period. To think of this expansion as solely done by Hispanics, however, would be a mistake. While the Hispanic influence started in Texas and later grew among Mexican Baptists, many Anglos were part of the expansion. Names such as Paul C. Bell, Lloyd Corder, J. L. Moye, William Pinson, William Powell, Paul J. Siebenmanh, and Perry F. Webb, and others contributed greatly to Hispanic work in Texas and beyond.

The Convención Bautista Mexicana began in 1910 when twenty-four churches with thirty-six messengers decided to constitute as a convention.<sup>127</sup> Josué Grijalva makes this observation from that first meeting. He states that, on the part of the new Hispanic leadership, there was a “genuine concern for educational institutions that would prepare men for Christian service.”<sup>128</sup> The first universities that provided opportunities for Mexican students were Howard Payne, Baylor, Hardin Simmons, and Wayland. In addition, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, helped shape the lives of many Hispanics, many who continue to faithfully teach God’s Word in churches today.

The Convención Bautista Mexicana from its inception had a distinguishing desire to educate future Hispanic leaders. A few years after the establishment of the Mexican convention, C. D. Daniel led a Bible Institute to train Hispanic pastors. The training involved bringing pastors and laypersons to San Antonio or Bastrop, usually for two weeks, to teach them Bible. In 1925, Paul Bell led his church, Primera Iglesia de Bastrop, to start a Bible institute. The death of Bell’s wife Ida in 1940 overwhelmingly

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<sup>127</sup>Josué Grijalva, *Dos Milenios de Historia Bautista: Un Prontuario del Pueblo Bautista de T́exas*, 2nd ed. (San Antonio: Universidad de las Aḿericas, 2007), 53.

<sup>128</sup>Joshua Grijalva, *A History of Mexican Baptists in Texas 1881-1981* (Dallas: Office of Language Missions, Baptist General Convention of Texas, 1982), 26.

discouraged him. He closed the institute and went to serve in Panama with the Home Mission Board. Yet, Paul Bell's dream of a Bible institute did not die.<sup>129</sup>

Lloyd Corder and J. L. Moyer also saw the great need to educate future Hispanic leaders. They started the "School of Prophets" to train Hispanics from Texas and other states as well. The objective of the school primarily was to provide practical training for ministry. In time, Corder and Moyer saw the need and a greater opportunity for a more complete formal education in order to train those whom God was calling into full-time ministry.

In 1947, the Instituto Bíblico Bautista Mexicano was established in San Antonio. C. G. Carter became its first president and served for thirteen years. Initial growth was fast and very productive.<sup>130</sup> H. B. Ramsour was elected as the second president in 1960 and served for sixteen years. During his tenure, a new twelve-acre piece of property was bought south of the city. The name of the institution was later changed to Seminario Teológico Bautista Hispano. Under the leadership of Albert Reyes, the school changed to its current name "Baptist University of the Americas." Others who have served as president of this institution are Joshua Grijalva, Omar Pachecano, and now René Maciel.

Another reason for the expansion of Hispanic ministries across Texas and beyond can be attributed to initial key churches. Primera Iglesia Mexicana de Laredo, the first Hispanic Baptist Congregation in Texas, was established in 1883.<sup>131</sup> One person that came out of this church was Roberto García who later was Coordinator of

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<sup>129</sup>Lloyd Corder and J. L. Moyer continue to educate Hispanic leaders through their "Escuela de Profetas" or School of the Prophets for most of the 1940s. They both saw the need for a more formal and comprehensive education. In 1947, under the auspices of the San Antonio Baptist Association, the Mexican Baptist Bible Institute was started. The last sixty-five years has seen the Institute develop from a humble beginning to granting accredited college degrees, while maintaining the focus on training ministers for Hispanic churches. This university is fruit of the vision of Paul Bell and the Primera Iglesia Bautista de Bastrop.

<sup>130</sup>Grijalva, *Dos Milenios de Historia Bautista*, 63.

<sup>131</sup>Grijalva, *A History of Mexican Baptists*, 13.



the Spanish Convention. The second Spanish church in the state of Texas and the first in San Antonio was the Primera Iglesia Bautista de San Antonio in 1888 founded by Guillermo Powell. Two ladies who made a significant contribution to the new Spanish church in San Antonio were Mina Everett and Eliza McCoy. Everett raised funds as she traveled throughout the state. Particularly, she was instrumental in raising funds for the construction of a new church building. McCoy, on the other hand, helped pay the salary of Manuel Treviño, the church's first pastor. She also helped with the Bible institutes and other missionary projects.<sup>132</sup>

Other churches also contributed to the richness of Texas Hispanic history. Primera de San Marcos produced Ignacio Gonzalez and José Flores who were to later be leaders of the Mexican Convention. Primera Iglesia Bautista Mexicana de El Paso, organized in 1892, began as a Methodist mission. The pastor, Alexander Marshand, an ex-Catholic priest, had become convicted of the truth of Baptist doctrines as he listened to the Bible study teaching of the African-American pastor of Second Baptist Church. The next week, Marshand and twenty-eight others were baptized. The following week, the group was organized into the Primera Iglesia Bautista Mexicana.<sup>133</sup> Primera Iglesia Bautista de Bastrop, organized in 1903, was interwoven with the life of Paul Bell and the Bible Institute, which he began in that city in 1925. The students would study in the morning and work in the cotton fields in the afternoon. Bell would take the students and drop them in Mexican communities for the weekend. Grijalva observed that “many of the churches today owe their existence to Bell and his preacher boys!”<sup>134</sup> The contributions of the First Spanish Church of Bastrop to “the total work of Mexican Baptists will always be remembered with prayerful gratitude in the history of the denomination.”<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>132</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid., 21.

The decade of the 1950s was known as “the Quiet Decade.” Some critically called this period the “nonachieving generation and a nonachieving minority.”<sup>136</sup> Yet for Mexican Baptists in Texas it was neither quiet nor unproductive. The term Mexican-American started to be used as this population was coming to the forefront. The Convención Mexicana was led by very competent leadership. Grijalva best described this historical period as

a time of church growth in membership and evangelism. There were more jobs, more education, and more homes; and this offered great opportunity for advancement. Because of the leadership of the Lord Jesus, and such capable leaders as Carlos Paredes, Ignacio E. González, Eulogio L. Garza, Leobardo Estrada, Rudy A. Hernandez, Lloyd Corder, Carlos Hernandez Ríos, José Rivas, Esther B. Moye, Paul Siebenmann, L.D. Wood and many more, the fifties continued to be growing years for Mexican American Baptists.<sup>137</sup>

The latter part of the decade was turbulent years for the Convención Mexicana. Uncertainties about future directions of the organization combined with a spirit of nationalism on the part of some brethren whose origin was from Mexico and had strong opinions as to how the work ought to be done. On the other hand, Mexican Baptists from Texas had been working with and shaping the Convención Mexicana according to the plans and programs of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. This apparent trouble in paradise led to the plans for *unificación* or unification. A committee of seven people worked on the unification plan from 1958-1960.

The decade of the 1960s made the “Unification Plan” a reality. On May 12, 1960, letters were sent to all churches of the Mexican convention reporting on the unification plans and asking each church to vote for or against the unification plan of President Ignacio E. González.

The unification plan made the following recommendations:

1. As part of the General Convention of Texas the Convención Mexicana will not function as an administrative body but like a department such as Sunday School Department, Training Union and Brotherhood.

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<sup>136</sup>Ibid., 90.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid.

2. The President of the Mexican Baptist Convention of Texas be an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee of the General Baptist Convention of Texas.
3. The Mexican Baptist Convention of Texas is to continue with its annual meetings as well as the regional conferences.
4. The monthly publication called “El Bautista Mexicano” or “The Mexican Baptist” is to continue its publication until such a time as there is another publication that fills the needs of the Spanish-speaking people in Texas.
5. All offerings from the Mexican Convention will be forwarded to Dallas to the offices of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. The money that will be needed for promotion and the work of each department will be provided by the General Baptist Convention of Texas.<sup>138</sup>

The decade of the 1970s brought more clarity to the administrative role of the Ethnic Missions Coordinator for the Commission of Mission of the General Baptist Convention of Texas. This was the period when the term Hispanic became more widely used as the result of the immigration of people from Central and South America. Many churches were dropping the name Mexican from their name to be more inclusive of many other nationalities coming into the churches. The seventies also produced a healthy expansion of “all that Mexican-American and Anglo-American Baptists had planted and grown through the years.”<sup>139</sup>

The decade of the 1980s began with a new leader, Roberto García. The Convención reported in 1984 a total of “789 Spanish Baptist congregations with 75,000 members. The total gift to the Cooperative Program by these churches was \$341,193.02.”<sup>140</sup> A key factor for Hispanic growth during this time was the mobilization of volunteers from local Hispanic churches. “Volunteer” became a popular word during this time. People of all ages were volunteering for service with both the Home Mission Board and the Foreign Mission Board. One significant partnership that would impact and shape the life of many even today was a partnership between Golden Gate Baptist

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<sup>138</sup>Ibid., 115-17.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid., 170.

<sup>140</sup>Grijalva, *Dos Milenios de Historia Bautista*, 78.

Theological Seminary and the Home Mission Board to create the Ethnic Leadership Development Centers (ELD). The two key persons in the creation of this partnership were William Pinson and Oscar Romo.

The decade of the 1990s saw significant changes primarily in the names of churches. Many began to drop the name Baptist and became “Centro Familiar” or Family Center, Iglesia Los Pinos, or Pines Church. But the name changes were not restricted to our churches only. Our Baptist Sunday School Board became LifeWay Christian Resource Center, the Home Mission Board became the North American Mission Board, and the Foreign Mission Board became known as the International Mission Board. Today, what was known as the Convención Bautista Mexicana de Texas is the Convención Bautista Hispana de Texas.

The decade of the 2000s found the Convención asking helpful questions about future direction and opportunities to reach a very diverse Hispanic population. Jimmy García, who was the Ethnic Mission Coordinator for the Baptist General Convention of Texas during this period, best expresses the challenge of Hispanics in the new millennium. Speaking of three distinct groups of Hispanics, he says,

We have a group of Hispanics among our churches that came to this country specifically to establish their life in this country. However, they still maintain their roots in their countries of origin. Another group of believers are the sons and grandsons of the first group. These freely function in a bilingual and bicultural world. They can readily identify with the country and cultural roots of their Grandparents. They speak fluent Spanish and English. A third group of Hispanics in Texas is made up of people that have completely assimilated to the culture of this country. They are neither bilingual nor bicultural, and generally they do not identify with the Spanish culture.<sup>141</sup>

The different generations are, indeed, the challenge not only for the Hispanic, but also for the North American church. Texas, without a doubt, has played an important part in reaching, teaching, planting, revitalizing, and deploying Hispanics for service to the world.

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<sup>141</sup>Ibid., 85-86.

## The Northeast

Maryland and New York are two states with growing Hispanic populations and little financial resources. Nevertheless, in the midst of many hardships, the commitment of many in the past continues to bear fruit even today. Heroes of the faith include pioneers such as Leobardo Estrada, Paul James, Quinn Pugh, Ken Lyle, Glen Igleheart, and Daniel Sánchez.

### Maryland/Delaware

The state of Maryland is located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States, bordering Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia to its south and west; Pennsylvania to its north; and Delaware to its east. Although there were some Hispanic congregations in the metropolitan Washington area in 1985, language missions was still in its infancy at a time when the Hispanic population along the Washington-Baltimore corridor was exploding,<sup>142</sup> particularly in the Metropolitan Washington area.<sup>143</sup> Lisa Sturtevant makes the following observation concerning the international population growth in the area:

The Washington DC metropolitan area population increased by 1.6 million people between 1985 and 2007 but none of the growth is attributable to domestic migration.

Washington DC region did not gain population through domestic migration over the past two decades. The region's population would have remained relatively

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<sup>142</sup>Soon after my arrival in Maryland, I worked with the search committee of both Primera Iglesia Bautista de Silver Spring and Iglesia Bautista Emanuel, also in Silver Spring, Maryland, to help them with their pastor searches. Humberto Pérez came to Primera and Gonzalo Graupera to Emanuel. Juan Rivera, the Minister of Education at First Baptist Church of Laurel, called me to express the desire of the church to start a Hispanic congregation in Laurel, Maryland. In 1987, my wife and I started the Iglesia Bautista de Laurel. Jorge Fonseca, a major in the U.S. Army and the hospital administrator at Ft. Meade, Maryland, was one of the initial people who helped me establish the Spanish work in Laurel. During these two years, I developed leaders and directed the outreach as pastor of the new congregation. We also started a weekly radio program in "Radio Borinquen." In August 1989, the church called Segundo Mir, a veteran Cuban pastor who had recently immigrated to the United States. Twenty-three years later, Mir continues to faithfully pastor the growing Hispanic congregation in the midst of the Washington-Baltimore corridor and continues to host the weekly radio program started in 1987.

<sup>143</sup>The Metropolitan Washington area includes all of the federal district and parts of the states of Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia.

flat over the last two decades without international immigration. Between 1985 and 2007, the flows of people coming to the Washington DC metropolitan area from other parts of the country (in-flows) were offset by the flows of people leaving the region for other parts of the U.S. (out-flows). At the same time, the Washington DC region became a magnet for foreign immigrants from Latin America, Asia and Africa.<sup>144</sup>

During those early years, there were several factors contributing to the Hispanic ministry growth in Maryland. First, seasoned pastors were called to established churches. Second, key youths from Hispanic congregations planned events and mobilized the young missionary forces among the areas Hispanic churches. This helped in developing young indigenous leadership. Incidentally, many of these youth are involved in ministry in different parts of the country today. Third, regular regional training was provided by the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware for the churches of Maryland, Washington DC, and Northern Virginia in which as many as four hundred people would participate. Fourth, quarterly meetings were held with Spanish pastors to plan, evaluate the work, and pray together. Fifth, an ELD Center was started in partnership, initially with The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and later with Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary.<sup>145</sup>

Others who contributed to the development of Hispanic language missions are Juan José, Alicia Mangieri, and Rolando Castro. The Mangieris' greatest contribution has been in the area of theological education. They have provided solid direction and guidance to the CLD centers in the state. Rolando Castro, serving as missionary to the Hispanic churches for the Maryland/Delaware Baptist Convention, has provided vision, direction, and clear leadership in the start and development of new churches in the state.

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<sup>144</sup>Lisa A. Sturtevant, "Domestic Migration to and from the Washington DC Metropolitan Area: 1985-2007," Technical Report #4, September 2009, 2 [on-line]; accessed 24 September 2012; available from [http://cra.gmu.edu/pdfs/research\\_reports/2030\\_group\\_reports/4\\_Domestic\\_Migration\\_Report\\_September\\_2009.pdf](http://cra.gmu.edu/pdfs/research_reports/2030_group_reports/4_Domestic_Migration_Report_September_2009.pdf); Internet.

<sup>145</sup>Ethnic Leadership Development Centers (ELD) later became known as Contextual Leadership Development Centers (CLD).

## **New York**

There are some key events and people that best tell the story of Hispanic missionary expansion in New York. The Baptist Convention of New York is strategically positioned to minister to people from all nations. Yet, reality reveals today that while the population continues to grow, the financial and people resources are still few. Nevertheless, there are many who have given years of their life to serve God in pioneer areas in New York. Some who through the years made Spanish work possible are people such as Paul James, Quinn Pugh, Ken Lyle, Glenn Igleheart, Daniel Sánchez, and many others. One cannot overlook the strong partnership with the Home Mission Board and particularly Oscar Romo.

Leobardo Estrada, Hispanic missionary with the Metropolitan Baptist Association, started the Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana de Manhattan in 1962. From its beginnings, this has been a key evangelistic and mission-minded congregation blessed with strong pastoral leadership. José Manuel Sánchez, a Cuban pastor, followed Estrada as pastor of Primera. Heberto Becerra, also a Cuban pastor, became pastor of this church in 1980. Before pastoring this church, Becerra was president of the Western Cuba Baptist Convention when, two months before the Mariel Boatlift, he left Cuba and did not return. The Cuban government castigated him by not allowing his family to leave Cuba until 1984. Oscar Romo provided financial help to Becerra until the Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana de Manhattan called him as pastor. Becerra provided organization and stability to this church, which he pastored for fifteen years. Freddy Noble, from the Dominican Republic, is the current pastor. Noble, a seasoned pastor, built upon Becerra's ministry and has led Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana de Manhattan to experience extraordinary church growth. He has led the church to implement a cell group strategy resulting in a membership that more than doubled in recent years.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>146</sup>Freddy Noble is a Doctor of Ministry student in the Spanish tract at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Freddy Noble shared this information in conversation with me in Chicago on 17 July 2012.

Another person who is credited with much of the development of Spanish work in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut is Manuel Alonso. Alonso emigrated from Cuba as a young child without his parents. He lived with Daniel Rodríguez who at that time was the pastor of Iglesia Bautista Getsemaní in Florida. Living with Daniel Rodríguez and his wife Mercedes, during those early years, certainly shaped and influenced Alonso's life.<sup>147</sup>

Alonso was instrumental in the development of Hispanic work in New York. Heberto Becerra credits Alonso for the strong framework for Spanish work. He cites some accomplishments to support his statement: "Manuel Alonso surrounded himself with experienced and theologically sound pastors, provided strong leadership to the work, and was instrumental in starting the Boyce Bible branch from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary."<sup>148</sup>

In western New York, the Frontier Baptist Association was actively starting new congregations. Clifford Matthews provided key leadership to the association. He was a church planter par excellence. The association's religious and cultural background is primarily Roman Catholic with a strong presence of Puerto Ricans among the Hispanic population. José Correa started the Dunkirk Spanish Church in 1977. Correa, a very dynamic and experienced pastor, secured a place of worship in the Methodist church building on Sunday evenings. He left Dunkirk to serve as a Catalytic Missionary in Northern Virginia. In January 1983, I came to serve as Pastor/Church Planter to this congregation. During the next two years, my wife Diana and I traveled to Buffalo, New York, twice a week to start a new Spanish congregation. In 1984, Iglesia Bautista Puente de Paz was started, reaching Hispanics in the city of Buffalo. The next two years, my

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<sup>147</sup>Daniel Rodríguez, in conversations with me, refers to Alonso as "*el Séptimo*," meaning his seventh child since Rodríguez has six children. Rodríguez was a mentor to me during my early years of ministry. He often told stories of the years Manuel Alonso lived with him. I also served in New York while Alonso was the Language Missions Director for the Baptist Convention of New York.

<sup>148</sup>Heberto Becerra, telephone conversation, Kansas City, Missouri, 9 October 2012.



wife and I developed indigenous leadership, strengthened the churches in Dunkirk and Buffalo, and partnered in mission endeavors with the Spanish church in Rochester, New York, pastored by Salvador Negrín. Javier Sotolongo, a young Cuban pastor and recent graduate of the Boyce branch in New York City, came to pastor the congregation in Dunkirk. Currently, Sotolongo is pastor of Estrella de Belén in Miami, Florida.

While ministry tends to be difficult in New York, there are some Spanish churches that are thriving. I have mentioned the Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana de Manhattan already. Another growing congregation is Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana de Pasaic in New Jersey. Obed Millán, as pastor of this congregation, strengthened the work and ministries of the church. Upon Millán's departure for another pastorate in Florida, the church called Cuban pastor, Federico Fernández. He has led the church not only to relocate, but also to experience church growth. The church also purchased a camp they use as a retreat center. Another growing church is Betania in Union City, New Jersey, pastored by Hector Hernández.

Despite some success in penetrating lostness, some feel the sting of frustration. José Luis Castro, pastor of Iglesia Bautista Central in Paterson, New Jersey, says, "I do not believe our Spanish churches have developed as well as one would have expected during these years. Our churches, for the most part, are very small."<sup>149</sup> Cogitating upon his twenty-eight years of ministry in New York City, he suggests that a lack of pastoral vision is probably to blame for the lack of progress by many churches.<sup>150</sup> Nevertheless, one can never forget those who were instrumental in the development of Spanish work in the Baptist Convention of New York. Some of these makers of history are: Leobardo Estrada, José Manuel Sánchez, Eliseo Toirac, Rafael and Josefitia Fraguela, Manuel Alonso, Heberto Becerra, Freddy Noble, Salomón Orellana, José Luis Castro,

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<sup>149</sup>José Luis Castro, telephone conversation, 9 October 2012.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid.

Federico Fernández, Hector Hernández, and many others who are faithfully making daily contributions to the kingdom.

### **Who Are These Hispanics?**

Hispanics come from twenty-one different countries of the world.<sup>151</sup> Although Spanish is the common language, each group is different from the other and each likes to retain its own cultural characteristics. The latest 2010 Census shows that approximately three-fourth of the Hispanic population in the United States are of Mexican, Puerto Rican, or Cuban origin.<sup>152</sup> The Christian should understand that in the midst of the diversity of cultures are great opportunities for ministering to a world that is at our doorstep. The effective communication of the gospel in the context of the culture becomes essential.

The Great Commission calls for every Christian to be missional.<sup>153</sup> A call to missions is a call to prepare to live out your faith and penetrate unfamiliar cultures even in the United States. Leading others to Christ is an important role of every Christian. Knowing how to peel the cultural onion one layer at a time is both an art and a science. Hispanic-Anglo relationships can illustrate the salient cultural characteristics of Hispanics, allowing one to see how the intricacy of Hispanic culture may facilitate or hinder effective intercultural communication.

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<sup>151</sup>Europe: Spain; Africa: Equatorial Guinea; North America: Mexico; Central America: Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama; Caribbean: Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Dominican Republic; South America: Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay.

<sup>152</sup>The 2010 Census reports that Mexican makes up 63 percent of the total Hispanic population, Puerto Rican 9 percent, and Cubans 4 percent. “La Población Hispana: 2010” (April 2012), U.S. Census Bureau [on-line]; accessed 7 September 2010; available from <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-04sp.pdf>; Internet.

<sup>153</sup>Missional is defined as identifying and joining God in His mission of the Kingdom. Jesus came to seek and to save (Luke 19:10) and to serve (Luke 4). Missional differs from missionary in that the former is living out the gospel in your community; the latter is one who is sent out to a geographically different place.

### Important Hispanic Cultural Characteristics

As is true of many cultures, the nuclear family—consisting of the father, the mother, and the children—is at the center of the Hispanic culture. For Hispanics, however, the extended family consisting of grandparents, aunts, uncle, and cousins is also important. Others that are considered important parts of the Hispanic family are second and third cousins as well as in-laws and grandparents, *comadre* (godmother), and *compadre* (godfather).<sup>154</sup> Many Hispanics make decisions in consultation with their extended family network. In contrast, the Anglo family, who is more individualistic, does not maintain significant influence over their children once they are married, as is the case in a Hispanic family. A person interested in evangelizing Hispanic families should seek to reach out to the eldest and most influential member of the family.<sup>155</sup> An Anglo pastor should also cultivate relationships with the pastor of the local Hispanic church. If this is neglected, as it is sometimes, the Hispanic congregation who is considered family may be unwilling to communicate with the Anglos.

Another characteristic of the Hispanic culture is social relationships. Hispanics value friendships with other people. The combination of friends and family becomes a significant part of their life. These are the people with whom Hispanics establish intimate, personal, and emotional relationships and with whom they share the special days in their lives. For example, baptisms, birthdays, anniversaries, and special holidays are points of celebration. The *Quinceañera* is one of the most important celebrations in a young lady's life, her fifteenth birthday, the equivalent of the Anglo celebration of the "sweet sixteen." A clear understanding of these social relationships becomes a bridge to effectively communicating the gospel. On the other hand, refusing to attend a secular party may be a major hindrance in intercultural communication because it would be perceived by

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<sup>154</sup>The cultural characteristics described in this section focus primarily on first-generation Hispanics in the United States.

<sup>155</sup>Alex D. Montoya, *Hispanic Ministry in North America* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 15.

Hispanics as not being interested in developing those extended networks or knowing their culture.

Hispanics are a proud people. Hispanic men are taught from childhood that crying is a sign of weakness. Because many Hispanics feel they have been discriminated against, they are sensitive to a person showing respect for them. Generally, when Hispanics are treated with respect, they respond in like manner. Some churches, desiring the best but not understanding culture and lacking available space, have provided space to a new church in the basement rather than the main sanctuary, making Hispanics feel inferior. At the heart of this situation is a misunderstanding of the culture, resulting in poor intercultural communication. Hispanics, on the other hand, should understand that space limitation, and not inferiority, is the basis for that decision. Another example of weak intercultural communication is when an Anglo refers to a Hispanic as “Mexican.” Those words can be offensive if the person is not from Mexico. Hispanics should also refrain from using the word “gringo,” a slang to denote foreigners usually from the United States. Most recently, the word “illegal” sometimes is used for a person who does not have the proper documentation. While this may be a matter of semantics, it hinders effective communication between an Anglo and a Hispanic. The more accepted term is “undocumented.” The basis for this is that the person is not declared illegal until the judge declares him illegal.

Religion is found in all societies. In order to understand culture, one needs to understand the religious beliefs of the people in that culture. Many Hispanic cultures are influenced by religion. North America, although believed to be a Christian nation, does not have a single major religion that influences the culture. On the other hand, many Hispanics have a “cultural religion,” that is, the practice of religion is influenced more by culture than commitment. Alex Montoya emphasizes the cultural aspects of Catholicism. “A person does not leave the Catholic church without also leaving the culture and a way

of life.”<sup>156</sup> For this reason, many people wrongly assume that if someone is Hispanic he is also Catholic.

As Hispanics come to the United States, they bring religious tradition as well. For example, many Caribbean people bring roots of spiritism. In Cuba, spiritism was used to undermine the church for generations. South Americans influenced by Gustavo Gutierrez, the father of liberation theology, bring an emphasis on the social gospel. César Chávez, a Mexican, hoisted the banner of the Virgin of Guadalupe above the marching *campesinos* (peasants). The idea behind this was that God was an active participant in the movement.<sup>157</sup>

Most Hispanics were baptized into the Roman Catholic Church and spent their early years in the church. Many were married in the church and will be buried by a Catholic priest, but not all Hispanics are faithful to the church or her teachings.<sup>158</sup> Anglo understanding of the strong cultural roots of Catholicism will provide them opportunities to establish constructive intercultural communication. Both Hispanics and Anglos sometimes may start a conversation with Catholics by pointing out the differences between Catholic and Protestant theology. One way that it may be more culturally sensitive is to point out the similarities between the two religions, since strong cultural roots have hindered some Hispanics from knowing what they believe. For example, a dialogue about the doctrine of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, or the Trinity may be bridges to positive conversations between two different cultures.

The deep cultural roots of the Catholic religion and the extended network of family and friends exert social pressures upon many Hispanics. The result of the social pressure is seen in the fact that many Hispanics may make a decision for Christ but

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<sup>156</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>157</sup>Gustavo V. Suárez, “Hispanic American,” in *Many Nations Under God: Ministering to Culture Groups in America: A Compilation from Persons Representing Various Cultures*, ed. Ele Clay (Birmingham: New Hope, 1997), 45-46.

<sup>158</sup>Montoya, *Hispanic Ministry in North America*, 19.

may take years before making a decision to be baptized and become a member of an evangelical church.<sup>159</sup>

Language is our first and most basic tool for interpreting our world. The spoken word allows us to express our thoughts about nature, what we see, and how we receive and communicate information. Richard Lewis says that language is our “linguistic map or blueprint” that defines reality for us.<sup>160</sup> Every society in the world uses a form of language for communication. Language, as a form of communication, is seen when we talk, read, listen to the radio, watch television, and dress ourselves.<sup>161</sup> In fact, to understand culture thoroughly, one needs to understand the language of that culture.<sup>162</sup>

One reason is that the same language is used by every one of the twenty-one Spanish-speaking nationalities comprising the United States Hispanic population.<sup>163</sup> When a common language is shared by different countries, identical words can have different meanings. For example, *tortilla* to a Cuban is an omelet. To a Mexican or someone from Central America, it is a thin, flat pancake made from corn flour. *Camión* to a Cuban is a truck, but to a Mexican the same word means a bus.<sup>164</sup> However, there are variations of pronunciation, cadence, and the meaning of individual words. In addition,

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<sup>159</sup>Daniel R. Sánchez, “Hispanic History and Worldview,” in *Reaching Hispanics in North America: Helping You Understand and Engage One of God’s Greatest Mission Fields*, ed. Randy Ferguson (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board, 2009), 37-38.

<sup>160</sup>Richard D. Lewis, *The Cultural Imperative: Global Trends in the 21st Century* (Boston: Intercultural Press, 2007), 132.

<sup>161</sup>Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1985), 158.

<sup>162</sup>A pastor from Mexico called me and said, “Brother, I will come by tomorrow to take you to *almorzar*,” meaning he would take me to breakfast. The next morning he knocked at the hotel door at 7:00 a.m. to take me to breakfast, and I was not ready. I, as a Cuban, was expecting him to take me to lunch. I made a wrong assumption and heard the word *almorzar* (lunch) through the filter of my own culture. This is one reason language is important for effective intercultural communication. One lesson is that even among the same cultural group, there can be hindrances to effective communication.

<sup>163</sup>Bobby Sena, *Hispanic Church Planting Guide* (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board, SBC, Hispanic Church Planting Unit, 2001), 12.

<sup>164</sup>Suárez, “Hispanic American,” 47.

Hispanics in the United States are at different levels of assimilation, making the use of language more complex. A broad look at the language spectrum shows that 76.6 percent of foreign born Hispanics say they speak Spanish, while 50.4 percent of the native born Hispanics say they speak English very well.<sup>165</sup> This generational difference sometimes presents a challenge to the Hispanic church. One problem sometimes seen in Hispanic-Anglo relationships is when Anglo churches insist that the young people attend the Anglo church, while the first-generation, monolingual people attend the Hispanic church. Hispanic pride in their country, nationality, family, and personal identity becomes an obstacle to what the Anglo church is asking. This hinders intercultural communication between these two groups.

Another cultural trait that should be understood is that of emotion. Alex Montoya mentions that the Hispanic is “more emotional than rational, more for feeling than logic.”<sup>166</sup> A task-oriented Anglo may not communicate effectively with a relational Hispanic. Catholicism and the Pentecostal movements both have made great inroads among Hispanics because of appeal to the emotions.<sup>167</sup>

Another cultural trait of Hispanics concerns their conception of time, an issue that can lead to tension in a Hispanic-Anglo relationship. The relational Hispanic does not crowd himself with events.<sup>168</sup> In the American business world, however, Hispanics are faithful to time. In a church setting, though, this view of time can create major obstacles in intercultural relationships. In an Anglo congregation with multiple services and multiple Sunday schools, where schedules are time driven, Hispanic tardiness can jeopardize effective communication.

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<sup>165</sup>Bobby Sena, “Hispanic Demographic Profile,” in *Reaching Hispanics in North America: Helping You Understand and Engage One of God’s Greatest Mission Fields*, ed. Randy Ferguson (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board, 2009), 11.

<sup>166</sup>Montoya, *Hispanic Ministry in North America*, 18.

<sup>167</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>168</sup>Sena, *Hispanic Church Planting Guide*, 12.

These salient cultural traits pertinent to a Hispanic-Anglo relationship illustrate how cultural understanding can be a help or a hindrance to effective intercultural communication. One should not think that one needs to understand everything about a culture. Even I, as a Cuban-American, sometimes fail to consider the Hispanic cultural perspectives. When that happens, communication is not effective. The burden for effective communication rests upon the person speaking and not upon the hearer. Effective intercultural communication should be receptor-oriented and should be understood by the people and meet their needs. Every person called of God should take steps to study the cultural group with which they would like to communicate.

### **1970s: The Years of Immigration**

Several factors contributed to the growing immigration of the 1970s. First, the source of legal migration changed dramatically after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965.<sup>169</sup> As a result of the new law, Asian immigration increased rapidly to 13 percent of the total number of immigrants.<sup>170</sup> The Act of 1965 resulted in unprecedented numbers of immigrants from Asia, Mexico, Latin America, and other non-western nations entering the United States. President Lyndon B. Johnson's words did not reflect the worldwide impact this new bill would have in the lives of millions of people. At the signing ceremony, Johnson stated, "This bill we sign today is not a revolutionary bill. It does not affect the lives of millions. It will not restructure the shape of our daily lives."<sup>171</sup> Some politicians today attribute this law to a politically liberal ideology resulting from "a misguided application of the spirit of the civil rights era, the Kennedy and Johnson

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<sup>169</sup>For an explanation of the Hart-Cellar Act, see p. 1 of this dissertation, n. 1.

<sup>170</sup>Oscar I. Romo, "America's Ethnicity: Update 1982" (Nashville: Language Missions Division, Home Mission Board, SBC, January 1982), 17.

<sup>171</sup>"Three Decades of Mass Immigration: The Legacy of the 1965 Immigration Act," September 1995 [on-line]; accessed 5 September 2012; available from <http://www.cis.org/articles/1995/back395.html>; Internet.



Administrations seeing these ethnic quotas as an archaic form of chauvinism.”<sup>172</sup>  
For Southern Baptists, the flood of people coming to North America presented an extraordinary opportunity for ministry.

Second, since 1975, additional immigration growth can be attributed to the “approximately 1.25 million Indochinese [that] have fled their countries because of the political turmoil in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.”<sup>173</sup> Hmong, Cambodians, and Vietnamese began to seek refuge in neighboring countries after the fall of Saigon and Laos to Communist forces in 1975. Many were relocated to different parts of the United States. The Hmong population was purposely dispersed “around the country, in places such as Providence (RI), Philadelphia, Chicago, Des Moines, Iowa, Kansas City (KS), Denver, Missoula (MT), Tulsa, and Salt Lake City. This strategy, however, proved unsuccessful as many Hmong were settled in a poor, predominantly African American neighborhoods [sic] where they encountered much hostility and violence.”<sup>174</sup>

The Refugee Program of the Home Mission Board began with the influx of Cuban refugees in 1959.<sup>175</sup> As a result of one of the most massive relief efforts in United Nations history, the work of the “Immigration and Naturalization Service was accelerated by the April 1975 fall of Indochina to Communist forces.”<sup>176</sup> Language missions seized the opportunity to reach out to these groups through evangelism that resulted in church

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<sup>172</sup>Ben Johnson, “The 1965 Immigration Act: Anatomy of a Disaster,” *FrontPageMagazine.com*, December 10, 2002 [on-line]; accessed 5 September 2012; available from <http://archive.frontpagemag.com/readArticle.aspx?ARTID=20777>; Internet.

<sup>173</sup>Oscar I. Romo, “America’s Ethnicity: Update 1981” (Nashville: Language Missions Division, Home Mission Board, SBC, January 1981), 46.

<sup>174</sup>Mark E. Pfeifer, “Hmong Americans,” *Asian-Nation: The Landscape of Asian America*, ed. Eric Lai and Dennis Arguelles, *AsianWeek Magazine* and the UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 2003 [on-line]; accessed 5 September 2012; available from <http://www.asian-nation.org/hmong.shtml>; Internet.

<sup>175</sup>Grijalva, “Makers of Ethnic History,” 176.

<sup>176</sup>*Ibid.*

planting. In fact, Joshua Grijalva records that these efforts helped establish 281 ethnic congregations.<sup>177</sup>

Third, another source giving momentum to immigration growth was the increasing number of undocumented persons entering the United States. A record 12.7 million Mexican immigrants lived in the United States in 2008, a seventeen-fold increase since 1970. Mexicans now account for 32 percent of all immigrants living in this country.

Fourth, non-immigrant internationals, although in the United States for a temporary period of time, nonetheless add significantly to the total numbers of newcomers to this country. Internationals include “diplomats and their families, attendants, servants, and personal employees; visitors for business or pleasure; aliens transiting through the United States; treaty traders and investors; students; representatives to international organization and their families.”<sup>178</sup> Each of these streams of refugees and internationals helped not only shaped the American Mosaic but also further refine the program of language missions among Southern Baptists.

### **1980s: The Years of Growth**

Reaching the lost, planting new congregations, and developing indigenous leadership characterized the decade of the 1980s. The factors that stimulated these strategies were fueled by a new language missions philosophy. This philosophy recognized that “America, a nation of immigrants, is a mosaic of peoples of divergent cultures and languages.”<sup>179</sup> Therefore, both language and culture were seen as vital to the communication of the gospel. The new philosophy of language missions called for people to worship in their own ethnolinguistic context and for the utilization of indigenous principles. Many have interpreted this position as unbiblical and one that

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<sup>177</sup>The breakdown of these 281 congregations was 89 Lao, 21 Hmong, 61 Vietnamese, 88 Caribbean, 14 Hispanics, and 8 Romanian. *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>178</sup>Romo, “America’s Ethnicity: Update 1981,” 182.

<sup>179</sup>Grijalva, “Grijalva Manuscript–Ethnic Baptist History,” 787.

contributes to segregation. Yet, one must recognize that both language and culture are important characteristics of a person's heritage "whose diverse ethnic, racial, religious, and social aspects may exist as autonomous components within the confines of a common way of life, life in a pluralistic society that is unique to the American heritage."<sup>180</sup> The language missions' philosophy made possible the establishment of effective ministries and new churches among the Indochinese refugees in the 1970s and 1980s. This language missions' philosophy also permitted the outreach to both the United Nations and Washington diplomatic personnel, as well as the many internationals that come to the United States every year.

Additionally, the yearning to communicate the gospel to people whose primary language was not English, the experiences of missionaries on the mission field, and the creativity of missionaries provided three church growth concepts instrumental to Hispanic church-planting strategies.<sup>181</sup> The three concepts—the Catalytic Church Growth Concept, the Laser Church Growth Concept, and the Kaleidoscope Church Growth Concept—contributed to the initiation of new churches during these years.

The training of indigenous leadership through the establishments of Ethnic Leadership Development Centers, although not a concept that was officially a part of language church growth theory, nonetheless played a very significant part in strategies among Hispanics.<sup>182</sup> A desire by both Anglo and ethnic churches to share the gospel and a commitment of laypeople "who have responded and shared their experiences" were additional contributing factors to the start and development of new churches.<sup>183</sup>

The creation of "Ethnic Fellowships" was another contributing factor for the growth experienced in the 1980s. Ethnic Fellowships provided encouragement, helped

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<sup>180</sup>Ibid., 771.

<sup>181</sup>These three church growth concepts are primary topics in chap. 4 of this dissertation.

<sup>182</sup>These are now known as Contextualized Leadership Development Centers.

<sup>183</sup>Grijalva, "Makers of Ethnic History," 159.

maintain a spirit of fellowship, and assisted churches in understanding and participating in Southern Baptist life. Fermín Whittaker attributed ethnic growth during this period to “intentional training for catalytic missionaries and also notes that each ethnic fellowship was challenged to start new churches among their own culture.”<sup>184</sup> A study by Delbert Fann, “Growth Trends, 1980-1984,” included seven ethnic/language culture categories among all the state conventions, revealing a 64.3 percent growth during this period. Fann’s study showed that three-quarters of the growth was primarily from nonbiological growth. He added that many ethnic congregations “purge their list of nonresident members,” making the nonresident list almost nonexistent.<sup>185</sup>

The years of growth were followed by years of uncertainty and transition. A motion was presented in 1993 at the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Houston, Texas, that a committee be appointed to study the structures and processes of the Convention. Soon after, in the midst of rumors normally associated with changes, one pressing question among language missionaries was, How will these changes affect language missions?

### **1990s: The Years of Transition**

The decades of the nineties introduced Southern Baptists to numerous organizational changes. The Report of the Program and Structure Study Committee, appointed by the Chairman of the Executive Committee in September 1993, presented their recommendations in February 1995. During the 1993 Southern Baptist Convention

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<sup>184</sup>Fermín Whittaker served on Oscar Romo’s staff in 1982. Fermín A. Whittaker, telephone interview by author, 16 October 2010.

<sup>185</sup>Oscar I. Romo, “Ethnic/Language Congregation Study 1980-1984,” in *Mosaic Church Growth Bulletin* (Atlanta: Language Missions Division, Home Mission Board, SBC, July 1986), 3. The annual Language Missions Division’s Ethnic Church Growth Request forms from ethnic congregations receiving financial assistance for 1980-1984 served as the basis for 85 percent of the information compiled. In an effort to secure additional information related to every state convention and ethnic category, the other 15 percent of the data was compiled from the Uniform Church Letters provided by self-supporting congregations. The study includes seven ethnic/language culture categories and every state convention.

annual meeting in Houston, Texas, the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention recommended the adoption of the “Covenant for a New Century,” which

called for the elimination of several agencies of the SBC and the reassignment of many ministries to other agencies. Five agencies, the Stewardship Commission, the Education Commission, the Southern Baptist Foundation, the Southern Baptist Commission on the American Baptist Seminary, and the Historical Commission were to be completely dissolved with certain of their ministries assigned to existing SBC agencies.<sup>186</sup>

Larry Lewis, the last president of the Home Mission Board, wrote in “Southern Baptists and the Home Mission Challenge,” words that describe the first Southern Baptists’ combination of emotion and purpose that defined the initial directions given to the Domestic Board of Missions in 1845. Lewis, reflecting upon ministries to language groups, said that the

HMB missions personnel speak in more than 100 languages or dialects each week. Fifteen hundred churches were planted in 1993. Of this number, 705 were Anglo, 521 were ethnic, and 284 were African-American. The visionaries and spiritual leaders who were present at the founding of the SBC in 1845 could scarcely have imagined the scope and influence of the HMB 150 years later. Nor could they have foreseen the challenges and problems facing the agency in 1995.<sup>187</sup>

Lewis also acknowledged the challenges faced by our home mission organization in a fragmented society. He observed,

Today, our society has become more secular. Many denominations are in decline. Many religious groups are prevalent in America today that did not even exist in 1845. The nation has become multicultural, urbanized, and more divided by special interests. Even though Southern Baptists are starting more than 1,000 congregations every year, the ratio of churches to population continues to decline.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>186</sup>*Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, June 20-22, 1995* (Nashville: Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1995), 138.

<sup>187</sup>Larry L. Lewis, “Southern Baptists and the Home Mission Challenge,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 30, no. 2 (1995): 6.

<sup>188</sup>*Ibid.*

The United States experienced a growth of 32.7 million people during this decade; the largest population increase in American history.<sup>189</sup> The previous record increase took place during 1950-1960, which was mostly energized by the post-World War II baby boom.<sup>190</sup> Most of the total population growth during the decade of the nineties was in the West (19.7 percent) and the South (17.3 percent), with a much smaller increase in the Midwest (7.9 percent) and Northeast (5.5 percent).

Although Hispanic migration spread across the entire country, it generally concentrated in the West, South, and Midwest. The West experienced the largest numeric increase of Hispanics. The greater proportional growth, however, “in the Latino population occurred in the Midwest and South (81.0 percent and 71.2 percent, respectively) compared to the North and West.”<sup>191</sup> The Hispanic population grew by more than 60 percent, “while the overall U.S. population grew by only 13 percent.”<sup>192</sup>

From a missiological perspective, the massive population growth of Hispanics presents a great challenge to Southern Baptists, particularly at a time when the winds of organizational change are gradually about to alter the language missions philosophy that has been in practice and refined since the 1940s. One question that was in the mind of many missionaries during the 1990s was, How will the implementation of the Covenant for a New Century affect the future of language missions in North America in years to come?

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<sup>189</sup>“Population Change and Distribution: 1990-2000,” adapted from U.S. Census Bureau, “Population Change and Distribution: 1990 to 2000,” by Marc J. Perry and Paul J. Mackun (with Josephine D. Baker, Colleen D. Joyce, Lisa R. Lollock, and Lucinda S. Pearson) in *Census 2000 Brief Series*, April 2001 [on-line]; accessed 15 September 2012; available from <http://nationalatlas.gov>; Internet.

<sup>190</sup>Ibid.

<sup>191</sup>Betsy Guzmán and Eileen Diaz McConnell, “The Hispanic Population: 1990-2000 Growth and Change,” *Population Research and Policy Review* 21, nos. 1-2 (April 2002): 109-28. This paper was presented at the Annual Meetings of the Southern Demographic Association, Miami, Florida, October 11-13, 2001 [on-line]; accessed 15 September 2012; available from [http://www.sabresys.com/whitepapers/hispanic\\_population.pdf](http://www.sabresys.com/whitepapers/hispanic_population.pdf); Internet.

<sup>192</sup>Kenneth M. Johnson and Daniel T. Lichter, “Population Growth in New Hispanic Destinations,” Carsey Institute, Policy Brief No. 8, Fall 2008, 1 [on-line]; accessed 15 September 2012; available from <http://carseyinstitute.unh.edu/publications/PB-HispanicPopulation08.pdf>; Internet.

## **Conclusion**

The next chapter introduces Oscar I. Romo and explores the missiological principles, sociological understanding, and theological foundation that undergirded his ministry of language missions. The chapter also investigates how Romo's theology influenced his methodologies, and to what extent he influenced other people and agencies. One component of discovery, of personal interest to me, is Romo's partnership with the Cuban Baptist Convention and the Cuban pastors in exile. This chapter answers the questions dealing with Romo's theology and leadership mentioned on page 4.

## CHAPTER 3

### OSCAR ISHMAEL ROMO

Missionary praxis reveals how one's theology guides one's methodologies. One's broader theological beliefs, ecclesiology, and missional context inevitably interact. Charles Van Engen refers to this interaction as the tripartite nature of theology.<sup>1</sup> Mark Lau Branson and Juan F. Martínez similarly write of this interrelationship in terms of praxis. They define praxis as a cyclical approach to missions consisting of "reflection and study on one hand and engagement and action on the other."<sup>2</sup> Oscar Romo described this interactive process in terms of a "theology of pluralism."<sup>3</sup> Romo understood the term "theology of pluralism" as the recognition that people of different backgrounds can work together without losing their unique cultural characteristics, while using their God-given abilities in ways that are most effective for missions and ministries.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, according to Romo, any missionary effort must consider the multilingual and multicultural dimension of society.

The central figure in this chapter is Oscar Romo. Several questions are explored. First, what was Oscar Romo's theology and how did it influence his language

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Van Engen, *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology* (repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 23.

<sup>2</sup>Mark Lau Branson and Juan F. Martínez, *Churches, Cultures and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 40.

<sup>3</sup>In conversations with Norma Mouton, niece of Oscar Romo, I learned that Romo changed his middle name from Ismael to Ishmael, which was his father's name. Mouton adds that "Merry sent me a copy of an official name change that he underwent to make the spelling 'Ishmael.'" Norma Mouton, "Question," e-mail to author, 2 February 2013.

<sup>4</sup>Joshua Grijalva, "Grijalva Manuscript—Ethnic Baptist History" (Nashville: Home Mission Board Ethnic Ministries Collection, AR 631-12, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, 1987), 762.



mission methodologies? Second, what was the language mission philosophy of the Home Mission Board (HMB) during Romo's years of ministry, 1971-1994? Third, in what ways did Oscar Romo influence other people and organizations? And fourth, how was Romo helpful to the HMB's partnership with Cuba?

### **Oscar Romo's Theology of Pluralism**

Oscar Romo's theology of pluralism<sup>5</sup> was significantly influenced by his earliest cultural, educational, and ministerial experiences. Romo believed the missionary's task was to make disciples. His theological position was guided by the phrase "*panta ta ethne*."<sup>6</sup> He recognized the need to contextualize the gospel of Christ to a nation of many nations, which he described as pluralistic. As a result of this theological position and influence by Donald McGavran and Melvin Hodges, he was an enthusiastic proponent of the homogeneous principle as a methodology of ministry.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Influence of Culture, Education, and Early Ministry**

Oscar Romo's life was impacted and shaped by culture, beginning with his experience growing up as a Mexican-American in Lockhart, Texas, during the Great Depression. As he recalls:

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<sup>5</sup>Oscar Romo believed in the exclusivity of Jesus Christ. The use of the term "Theology of Pluralism" was Romo's recognition that the United States was a nation made up of a large number of diverse peoples with different cultural backgrounds and unique cultural characteristics. Theology of Pluralism did not emphasize different theologies, but rather one exclusive theology to reach a diverse nation. The previous page explains Romo's understanding of pluralism.

<sup>6</sup>Daniel R. Sánchez, "Oscar Romo y Cuba," e-mail to author, 29 December 2012. The term *panta ta ethne* is the transliteration of the Greek phrase "all nations" used in Matt 28:19. Please note that although the e-mail is titled in Spanish, the content was written in English.

<sup>7</sup>The Homogeneous Unit Principle (HUP) is the most controversial of all church growth principles. McGavran, the founder of the Church Growth Movement, began to write on the HUP in 1936 and elaborated it into a fully detailed principle in his book *The Bridges of God*, published in 1955. McGavran suggested that for mission and evangelism to be most effective, people need to hear the gospel in their language and see it lived within their culture. McGavran added that it was easier for people to become Christians without having to cross cultural and linguistic barriers.

In 1940, at the age of 11, Romo was invited to attend Vacation Bible School at the First Baptist Church in Lockhart and so he became the first Hispanic Baptist in Lockhart. One of his older sisters, Minerva, escorted him to and from VBS. The following year, the family moved to San Antonio because Romo's father had been taken to a hospital there after being kicked by a mule at his smithy. As a young boy, Romo thought that the best way he could fight social injustice was to become a lawyer. But it was during his junior high school years, while working in a grocery store, that repeated visits by his pastor, D. H. Roberts, made him realize he should make the Church his life. With Roberts' help, Romo obtained a music scholarship and attended Howard Payne University in Brownwood, Texas. But Romo had to work three jobs in Brownwood to make ends meet and send money home. Romo was ordained as a Baptist minister in 1949.<sup>8</sup>

The educational system of that time influenced Oscar Romo. As mentioned in chapter 1, Romo remembers walking to his schools past the schools for Anglos and wondering why he could not go there.<sup>9</sup> The word "Mexican" was used in a negative way and children would get punished for speaking Spanish. For this reason, it was not unusual for native Spanish speakers of this generation to speak English well and with little accent. Romo remembers his childhood experience:

A native of Texas, I grew up in an evangelical home and experienced life that practiced segregation that provided limited or no educational opportunities for Hispanics. A part of society "hated" Hispanics, and the other part hated evangelicals. My childhood experiences created a vision that, if the world is to be evangelized, it must begin in America. Seeking to equip myself to serve Christ in the American global society, I acquired an education.<sup>10</sup>

Romo did not let these class distinctions discourage him. Instead, he used these experiences as a motivation to pursue an education and to extend a helping hand to other minorities.

Upon graduation from high school, Romo attended Howard Payne University. While a student at the university, he was pastor of a mission church in Brady, Texas,

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<sup>8</sup>This information was written by Norma Mouton and received by Gustavo Suárez in an e-mail from Merry P. Romo on 30 January 2013. Oscar Romo had asked Mouton to write his official biography. Norma Adelfa Mouton, "Romo, Oscar Ismael," in *Great Lives from History: Latinos*, ed. Carmen Tafolla and Martha P. Cotera (Ipswich, MA: Salem Press, 2012).

<sup>9</sup>Oscar I. Romo, "Heirs of the Faith," *MissionsUSA* 63, Supp. 92 (July-August 1992): 2-3.

<sup>10</sup>This quote is in Oscar Romo's own words. Merry P. Romo, e-mail to author, 30 January 2013.

from 1948 to 1951. Following his graduation, he moved to West Texas (1951-1952) to pastor a church in Littlefield and served as a missionary in Lamb and Bailey counties. Romo helped start twelve churches during his years as a missionary. He continued his education at the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. As a seminary student during the years 1953-1956, he pastored Iglesia Bautista Buena Voluntad in Fort Worth, Texas. He not only led the church to self-supporting status, but also to becoming one of the largest per-dollar contributors to the Cooperative Program among the Spanish churches in the state of Texas.<sup>11</sup> He received a Doctor of Ministry degree from the Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary with an emphasis in the areas of multilingual and multicultural ministry.

His experiences of life also taught Romo resiliency and the importance of developing good relationships. As a young pastor, and later as a denominational leader in Texas, he learned to navigate the intricate structures, perceived prejudices, and relational difficulties not uncommon in crosscultural ministries. One such complexity was the period of unification between Anglo and Hispanic Texas Baptists (1958-1963). Some Hispanic leaders wanted to remain separate from the Anglo convention. Others wanted to retain their autonomy but have a closer working relationship with the Anglo convention. Oscar Romo was serving as Associate in Language Missions for the Baptist General Convention of Texas during the period of “unificación,” or unification. According to historian Joshua Grijalva, key players representing the Texas convention during this important period for Hispanics in Texas were Oscar Romo, J. Woodrow Fuller, and Charles McLaughlin.<sup>12</sup>

An awareness of the growing diversity of people in the surrounding society also significantly influenced Romo’s life and ministry. Very early, he saw the cultural

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<sup>11</sup>Joshua Grijalva, comp., *Ethnic Baptist History* (Miami: Meta Publications, 1992), 115.

<sup>12</sup>Joshua Grijalva, *A History of Mexican Baptists in Texas 1881-1981* (repr., San Antonio: Baptist University of the Americas, 2010), 119.

diversity among peoples and was able to understand their physical struggles and spiritual needs. In the midst of this diversity, he recognized that every person had a personal identity and a story. In his own ministry, he was putting together the unique pieces of what later he would call the “American Mosaic.” He was driven with a passion to reach out to each segment of society through the planting of new congregations. Romo knew by personal experience the challenge of persevering through the struggles of being a minority in school and ministry, experience that gave him a special understanding of the challenges faced by other minorities.

Romo himself experienced two new cultural changes in 1965. Romo’s first assignment, in his new position as the assistant secretary of the HMB’s Language Missions Department in Atlanta, was the Navajo Indian work in Gallup, New Mexico.<sup>13</sup> This cultural experience with the Navajo Indians gave Romo a different cultural and social perspective than that with which he had been familiar in Texas. In addition, the geographical move to Atlanta was also a cultural transition for Romo as he had never lived outside of Texas. Both new experiences further enhanced Romo’s recognition of the importance of accurately understanding a culture in order to effectively minister to the people of that culture.

### **A Language Mission’s Theology**

Oscar Romo was impacted by the prejudice he experienced during his early school years. Yet, he was not discouraged by his experience of injustice and “the hatred that bred such systems of institutional prejudice.”<sup>14</sup> In fact, Romo developed “a fierce ethnic pride” that fostered within him a powerful sense of identity.<sup>15</sup> Romo was not only

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Romo, “Heirs of the Faith,” 22.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid. On one occasion, I remember when I introduced myself to an English-speaking person as Gus Suárez (emphasis on the *e*), unbeknownst to me, Oscar Romo, who was standing behind me, turns as he grabs me by the forearm and tells the individual, “No, he is Gustavo Suárez” (emphasis on the *a*). This was important to Oscar Romo because it showed pride in my ethnic identity.

proud of his heritage, but it also became part of his theology and philosophy of language missions. Much of Romo's theology was based on the refusal to embrace the idea of the United States as a "Melting Pot" and his conviction that ethnic Americans have the right to retain their unique self-identities and heritages.<sup>16</sup> Reflecting upon his personal pilgrimage, Romo is recorded by Grijalva as having said, "I have spoken English since childhood, and exist daily in an English-speaking environment. Yet for me, there is still a special spiritual significance in worshipping in a Spanish-speaking church—it is the cultural wellspring of my heritage and my thought patterns—and it is irreplaceable as a source of my personhood."<sup>17</sup> The growing diversity of the United States population presented certain missiological and theological challenges to the HMB. One challenge was to reach persons of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, and social backgrounds without compromising the gospel's message.

Six theological premises guided language missions methodologies during Oscar Romo's leadership years at the HMB, premises that are foundational and "essential for consideration in the praxis of missions in a pluralistic context."<sup>18</sup>

1. Belief in a Triune God. In order to have a complete understanding of what are God's revealed goals for missions, one must take into account the revelation of the will of the Father, the Lordship of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit. Missions begins with God. As the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, "he has been involved throughout time with the condition of humankind in history."<sup>19</sup> (Gen 1:1-2; 2:7; 18; Exod 3:14; 6:2-3; Job 26:13; Ps 2:7ff; 110; Isa 7:14; Matt 1:18-23; 3:16-17; 4:1; 6:9; 7:11; 8:29; 12:28-32; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:10; 12; Luke 1:35; 4:1; 18-19)
2. Belief in God's love for all people. From the beginning of creation to the cross and beyond, the love of God saturates the pages of Scripture. It was God's love that first reached out to the couple hiding in the Garden. It was the endless love of Christ for

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<sup>16</sup>Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 124.

<sup>17</sup>Grijalva, "Grijalva Manuscript—Ethnic Baptist History," 763.

<sup>18</sup>Most of the information for the six theological points was gathered from Grijalva's *Ethnic Baptist History* and the "Target AD-2000" strategy of the Home Mission Board. Oscar Romo, however, was instrumental in the development of these six theological premises. Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 124-27.

<sup>19</sup>William G. Tanner, "Target AD 2000: A Long Range Plan of the Home Mission Board" (Atlanta: Home Mission Board Executive Office Files, AR 631-3, SBC), box 33, 4.

the world that took Him to the cross. And, it is this limitless divine love that extends “equally to all, regardless of racial, linguistic, ethnic, or social distinctions.”<sup>20</sup> (Gen 12:3; Exod 34:6-7; 1 Kgs 18:39; Ps 18:20-22; 33:5; 83:18; 119:64; 145:7-9; Isa 45; 61:11; Rom 8:28-39; John 1:12-14)

3. Belief in the lostness of man. Genesis 3 introduces the disobedience of Adam and Eve separating a Holy God from sinful man. Genesis states unequivocally that Adam is an individual and demonstrates that all generations after Adam’s irrevocably sin. Additionally, Genesis also teaches that the outcome of sin is death—spiritual, physical, and eternal death. Man is totally unable to save himself because of the nature of his sinfulness. “His mind has been darkened, his heart depraved, and his will perverted by sin.”<sup>21</sup> Man is in need of a Savior. (Gen 3; Ps 51:5; Jer 17:9; Rom 3:23; 6:23; Eph 2:3)
4. Belief that all people regardless of language and culture must come to Jesus Christ. In the midst of the many religions found in a pluralistic United States, it is truth as revealed in Jesus Christ that becomes “objectively real and binding.” Jesus Christ presents the clear relationship that exists not only between God and man but also between man and man. He also show to man how only Christ can restore those broken relationships like no one else can. It is only in Jesus that man “finds not only God but his own true identity, in and beyond culture.”<sup>22</sup> Gen 3:15; Exod 3:14-17; Matt 1:21; 4:17; Luke 1:68-69; 19:10; John 1:11-14; Acts 4:12
5. Belief regarding the nature and functions of a local church. A theology of pluralism calls for an ecclesiological understanding. The church as the body of Christ seeks to carry out the Great Commission in order to proclaim, worship, educate, and minister to the ends of the world. The church is central to the mission of God. The central characteristic of the mission of the church is “to glorify God by making him known through faith in Jesus Christ.”<sup>23</sup> (Isa 2:1-5; 42:6; 49:6; Matt 11:29; 20:26-28; John 4:23-24; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor 12:27; Eph 4:16; 1 John 3:1; 4:10-11)
6. Belief of unity and diversity of the body of Christ. The true ethnolinguistic characteristic of the United States is that we are a nation of many nations. While many have acknowledged the multicultural concept of North America, it is the acceptance of these concepts that allows people to become “multilingual and multicultural yet [retain] their cultural identity and expression as a part of their life.”<sup>24</sup> The church is one body made up of people who have “been given one or more spiritual gifts that

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<sup>20</sup>Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 125.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 126.

<sup>23</sup>Tanner, *Target AD 2000*, 6.

<sup>24</sup>Grijalva, “Grijalva Manuscript–Ethnic Baptist History,” 771.

determine what function he should have in the body—the church.”<sup>25</sup> (Acts 2:4, 5-8; 8:25; 10:28; Rom 12; 1 Cor 7:7; 12:1; 13:3; Eph 4)

Romo was passionate about communicating the message of Christ in practical ways.

Daniel Sánchez observes,

Romo was guided by a very basic and practical theology. At the heart of his theology was the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. He was convinced that everyone needed to come to a saving knowledge of Christ as their personal Savior. The task of all missionaries is to make disciples. This includes evangelism and church planting. The guiding phrase in his theology was “*panta ta ethne*.” The passion of his life was to motivate, equip, and enable every person and mission agency to dedicate themselves to reach every ethnic person in America for Christ. The practical application of this theology resulted in the elaboration of strategies aimed at maximizing evangelistic and church-planting efforts among ethnic groups.<sup>26</sup>

Oscar Romo’s cultural milieu influenced and shaped his life. His experience with the diversity of peoples and the struggles they faced created in him a deep-seated belief that every person indeed had an identity and a story; it allowed Romo to see an America that was not a melting pot but a nation of many nations. God, through these cultural experiences, shaped Romo’s theological position, which informed his methodologies and ultimately touched the lives of many ethnic groups in the United States and around the world.

### **A Language Mission’s Philosophy**

The previous chapter shows how the HMB, from its inception, recognized the diversity of the United States. The philosophy of language missions was motivated by intentionality to contextualize the message, methods, and ministry in the ethnolinguistic context of the peoples. In 1970, the HMB’s strategy shifted from a “missionary-centered emphasis to a philosophy of church-centered contextualization.”<sup>27</sup> Oscar Romo’s philosophical beliefs, sociological understanding, and methodological principles and

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 766.

<sup>26</sup>Sánchez, “Oscar Romo y Cuba,” e-mail.

<sup>27</sup>Oscar Romo, “Ethnic Church Growth and the Southern Baptist Convention,” *Urban Mission* 16 (March 1999): 21.

practices helped shape and established a philosophical basis for language missions at the HMB. In 1951, Oscar was pastor of a Spanish church in Littlefield, Texas. The following is in his own words:

Early one Sunday morning at about 5:00, there came a knock at the door of the parsonage where I was living. There were, at the door, four or five men who were evangelical and had walked since midnight to get to the church. I opened the door to the building, turned on the heaters, and they knelt down to pray while Carrie, my aunt, fixed breakfast. These men became the core and built something like 15-20 or more Bible studies conducted each week among the *braceros* in the different ranches in Lamb County. In a sense, it was here that there began to emerge what we now know as the Language Missions philosophy.<sup>28</sup>

### **Philosophical Basis**

Six philosophical beliefs formed the basis for the work of the HMB among the language/cultural groups in the United States.<sup>29</sup> The HMB intended these principles to be theologically sound, ecclesio-centered, sociologically informed, and missiologically comprehensive.

1. America, a nation of immigrants, is a mosaic of peoples of divergent cultures and languages.
2. Language and culture are vital to the communication of the gospel.
3. A missionary endeavor in a pluralistic society must take into account the multilingual, multicultural dimensions of the society.
4. All efforts must permit every person the opportunity and the privilege of using his own language, in an appropriate cultural context, to discover the reality of Jesus Christ.
5. Every person has the right to congregate to worship God within the context of his linguistic and cultural heritage.
6. Ethnic/language-culture congregations become participants, contributors and recipients to the life and programs of the denomination.

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<sup>28</sup>Merry Romo, e-mail.

<sup>29</sup>The six philosophical beliefs mentioned in this section are from Grijalva's "Grijalva Manuscript–Ethnic Baptist History," 787.



The HMB intended their philosophy of language missions to be theologically sound. The starting point for the implementation of any strategy or methodology was rooted in Scripture. The philosophy of language missions assumed that every person needed to hear the message of salvation found exclusively in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The philosophy also recognized, as did the first century church, the existence of language and cultural barriers (Acts 10; 11:19-21) and looked for biblical methods to penetrate and reach ethnolinguistic groups in the United States. The HMB's language mission philosophy acknowledged that a plurality of cultures would naturally result in a worship experiences relevant to their cultural and linguistic context (Gen 4:2-4).

The HMB aimed for their philosophy of language missions to be ecclesio-centered. One's ecclesiology defines one's missiology.<sup>30</sup> Three central theological positions of HMB language missions during Romo's time were a belief in the lostness of man, the exclusivity of Christ, and the centrality of the local church. Evangelism, church planting, and leadership training were three important ministries emerging from this ecclesiological position. Romo's missiological thinking reflected his ecclesiological belief. Daniel Sánchez describes how Romo's ecclesiology helped shaped his missiology:

The ecclesiology that Romo preached and practiced was also basic and practical. According to him, the churches that were established needed to express themselves in ways that were biblically based and culturally contextualized. The indigenous strategies that he articulated and implemented were similar to those espoused by Donald McGavran, Allan Tippett, and Melvin Hodges.<sup>31</sup>

The HMB sought for their philosophy of language missions to be sociologically informed. Oscar Romo served at a time when the ethnic population was growing primarily through immigration. The influx of predominantly first-generation immigrants presented a challenge for reaching Hispanics of different cultural subgroups and socioeconomic backgrounds. Yet, Romo's sociological understanding of the relationship of people

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<sup>30</sup>Hayward Armstrong, Mark McClellan, and David Sills, *Introducción a La Misiología* (Louisville, KY: Reaching and Teaching International Ministries, 2011), 142.

<sup>31</sup>Sánchez, "Oscar Romo y Cuba," e-mail.

and culture helped give direction to the philosophy of language missions. In 1993, near the end of Romo's tenure, Manuel Ortiz wrote *The Hispanic Challenge*. In this book, he presented practical sociological and anthropological information helpful in understanding effective ways to reach the changing generations of Hispanics in the United States. A shift from first to second generation was noticeable. Nearly twenty years later, Daniel Rodríguez wrote *A Future for the Latino Church*. Making reference to Ortiz' book, Rodríguez presents what he calls "the new Hispanic challenge."<sup>32</sup> While Romo's sociological challenge was first generation, the twenty-first century challenge is the growing population of second-generation Hispanics. Sociological understanding is important in order to effectively reach the Hispanic population in North America.

The HMB intended their philosophy of language missions to be missiologically comprehensive, reaching all language/people groups in North America. Oscar Romo gave leadership to the development of contextual missiological principles to reach the "636 languages and numerous dialects used to communicate daily [among] . . . the 500 ethnic groups."<sup>33</sup> The practical application of these principles permeated many areas of Southern Baptist life. For example, Romo's missiology not only impacted the local churches, but also impacted associations, state conventions, and other Baptist entities.<sup>34</sup>

### **Sociological Understanding**

A clear understanding of the sociocultural background of the people is helpful in completing the task of the Great Commission. It is a fact that, at the time of Oscar

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<sup>32</sup>Daniel A. Rodríguez, *A Future for the Latino Church: Models for Multilingual, Multigenerational Hispanic Congregations* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 145.

<sup>33</sup>Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 133.

<sup>34</sup>Examples of Oscar Romo missiology are: The Catalytic, Laser, and Church Growth Concepts. The Ethnic Leadership Development Centers (ELD) partnered with seminaries, churches, associations, and state conventions. Identifying and placing ethnic leadership in Baptist agencies such as the Baptist Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources), Annuity Board (now GuideStone Financial Resources), and seminaries helped implement strategies with missiological implications. These missiological principles are presented in chap. 4 of this dissertation.

Romo's ministry, the population of the United States was rapidly increasing as a result of foreign immigration. The early twenty-first century records indicate that the number of immigrants, both legal and illegal, has continued to increase. Yet, because many people in ministry failed to see the unique cultural characteristics of different immigrant groups and understand the reality of language barriers among these immigrants, a great witnessing opportunity was lost. Many churches believed that it was better for these newcomers to become part of an English-speaking congregation. The idea of the immigrants learning English made logical sense to some since they now live in the United States. One lesson learned, however, was that "immigrants thrown into the 'Melting Pot' have proven that [ethnics], although encouraged and often forced to assimilate, continue to retain their visible heritage, linguistic abilities, and cultural uniqueness."<sup>35</sup>

An understanding of sociocultural issues helps a person see that people look at the same things from different perspectives. Several sociocultural issues that are commonly underestimated in crosscultural ministries are language, hermeneutics, thinking patterns, and the expression of thoughts. A basic tool by which one interprets the world is language.<sup>36</sup> Yet, some people minimize the importance that language plays in evangelism and church planting. In the United States, for example, some believe that all immigrants must learn English and become part of an English-speaking congregation. Others, like Oscar Romo, recognized the effectiveness of reaching and establishing churches among people of the same language/cultural group. Donald McGavran observed that most nations are composed of a mosaic of people from different nations. McGavran added that, at the time of publication in 1980, "ninety million Americans arranged in

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<sup>35</sup>Oscar I. Romo, "Ethnic Southern Baptists: Contexts, Trends, Contributions," *Baptist History and Heritage* 18, no. 3 (July 1983): 3.

<sup>36</sup>See chap. 2 of this dissertation, "Important Hispanic Cultural Characteristics," beginning on p. 70, for a broader explanation of the importance language plays in the understanding of cultures.

eight major groups (and hundreds of minor groupings) make up the unassimilated part of the American mosaic.”<sup>37</sup>

Global hermeneutics, or the interpretation of Scripture, among the diversity of people groups becomes a challenge in the American Mosaic. The way one interprets Scriptures is influenced by the culture. Ultimately, however, any interpretation is subordinate to and guided by the Word of God. For example, two people looking at poverty and injustice may come to a different interpretation and application of Scripture based on their cultural context. It is perceived by some, that Western education and literature have failed to confront the passionate issues of those living in areas where injustice and poverty prevail. René Padilla’s ministry context was influenced by Liberation Theology. Therefore, he observed, “My question is not: How do I respond to Liberation Theology in order to demonstrate its faults and inconsistencies? Rather it is: How do I articulate my faith in the same context of poverty, repression and injustice from which Liberation Theology has emerged?”<sup>38</sup>

Another important way to understand people within a particular culture is their thinking patterns. In the United States, for example, many people follow a linear way of thinking. A preacher with a Western seminary education usually begins his sermon with a topic statement, followed by logical subdivisions of the topic. These subdivisions lead to a conclusion that proves a point.

Closely related to thinking patterns is the expression of these thoughts. A person from the United States who spills a cup of coffee might say, “I am so sorry, please forgive me, I spilled the coffee.”<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, a Hispanic person may cry out, “Se me cayó el café” or the coffee slipped out of the hands, “implying that the individual

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<sup>37</sup>Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 48.

<sup>38</sup>René Padilla, *El Evangelio Hoy* (Buenos Aires: Certeza, 1975), 59.

<sup>39</sup>Edward C. Pentecost, *Issues in Missiology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982), 97.

is not to be blamed, because the coffee slipped out of the hands.”<sup>40</sup> These are examples of ways one looks at the same thing through one’s sociocultural lenses. Oscar Romo was able to articulate effectively, particularly to Southern Baptist agencies, ways to understand the sociocultural context of different ethnic groups.

An understanding of sociocultural issues helps a person see the different stages of assimilation. Oscar Romo recognized the existence, among the diverse cultures, of various stages of assimilation. The following is Oscar Romo’s attempt to categorize these stages of assimilations.<sup>41</sup>

1. Nuclear Ethnics—People who immigrated to or were born in the United States; yet they live in an isolated setting from the mainstream of American life.
2. Ethnic Americans—People who identify themselves with a language-culture group, immigrated to the United States, and are American citizens. Often they refer to their country of origin as home. Their identity contributes to their cultural heritage and the tenacious usage of a language other than English.
3. American Ethnics—People who identify with a language-culture group and who were born, raised, and educated in the United States. They are bilingual and bicultural and capable of living in two worlds simultaneously; yet, they are proud of their heritage.
4. Culturally-Aware Ethnics—People who identify themselves with a language-culture group when it is convenient and beneficial. In most cases, their knowledge of a language other than American English is limited. The invisible ethnic often becomes lost among the masses. The visible ethnic often tries to lose himself.
5. Alienated Ethnics—People whose visibility identifies them, yet their relationship with their ethnic heritage and language is nonexistent.
6. Amalgamated Ethnics—People who are constantly in search of their heritage and thus are uncomfortable in whichever setting they are in at the moment.
7. Typical Americans—These are people whose understanding of culture reflects the fact that American culture is composed of diverse cultures.

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>The following seven characteristics are in ascending order from least to most assimilated. Each of the seven points was taken from “On the Edge of Tomorrow,” a paper presented by Oscar I. Romo at the Language Missions Conference, February 1986, Miami, Florida (Nashville: Home Mission Board Language Missions Collection, Southern Baptist Historical Archive and Library, 1986), 5.

The understanding of the sociocultural idiosyncrasies and the classifications above are helpful in effectively communicating the message of the gospel. Oscar Romo's sociological understanding shaped his missiological principles.

### **Missiological Principles and Practices**

Gerald Palmer, Oscar Romo's predecessor as Director of Language Missions for the HMB, initially planted the seeds for the development of indigenous leaders and the need to contextualize the gospel among language/people groups.<sup>42</sup> Under Palmer and Romo's leadership, two important missiological principles became foundational to language mission strategies and methodologies. First, the HMB championed the indigenous church principle, which emphasizes the development of workers from within the cultural context to extend the church to unreached areas. Second, the HMB emphasized the necessity of the contextualization of the gospel message, which made it possible for people, whose language and culture was not from the United States, to hear and understand God's message in their ethnolinguistic context.

The indigenous church principle helped Southern Baptists bridge the chasm that existed between the "white men" and the people of the Indian Navajo reservation in New Mexico.<sup>43</sup> Many on the Indian reservations could not forget the scars of discrimination and paternalism they had received from earlier missionaries. Many of the misunderstandings resulted from attempts to reach Navajos with non-indigenous methodologies. One methodology used by the outside missionaries was to plant churches and build buildings. While a church building certainly was helpful, it was also a non-reproducible methodology. The Indian Christians began to "assume that no church can be planted without outside help."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>See p. 31 of this dissertation under "Gerald B. Palmer."

<sup>43</sup>Oscar Romo, "Baptist Indian Work in New Mexico" (Nashville: HMB Language Missions Collection, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, n.d.), 4.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 3.

While the Navajo nation was dealing with the issue of dependence upon outside missionaries, Hispanics in Texas were dealing with the matter of self-support.<sup>45</sup> Although the Home Mission Board language missions philosophy was influenced by Melvin Hodge's indigenous principle, the churches had not totally abandoned some outside dependency. The Home Mission Board, in partnership with the state convention, funded missionaries and gave pastoral support to people serving in different areas of ministry. Theoretically, pastoral support funding was given to a pastor over a five-year-period, reducing the initial amount by 20 percent per year. In practice, however, sometimes this pastoral support amount would continue to be paid to some as they moved from one mission field to another within the same state convention, thus creating an outside financial dependency.

Despite some Hispanic churches not achieving self-support, it must be acknowledged that advances were made both in self-government and in self-propagation, the other two "self's" associated with the indigenous principle. Allowing the local churches to choose their own leadership, agree on the fundamentals of their faith, create a standard of membership, and baptize their own converts<sup>46</sup> was critical to Romo and the HMB's methodologies. Their methodological emphasis on evangelism that leads to new churches, mentoring indigenous leaders, and impacting the cities are examples of self-propagation.

Closely related to the indigenous church principle is contextualization. Bruce J. Nicholls defines contextualization as "the translation of the unchanging content of the Gospel of the kingdom into verbal form meaningful to the peoples in their separate culture and within their particular existential situations."<sup>47</sup> Sociologically, people of

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<sup>45</sup>Gerald Palmer, transcripts of recordings, Language Missions Collection (Nashville: Home Mission Board, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, April 10, 1985).

<sup>46</sup>Melvin L. Hodges, *The Indigenous Church* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing, 2009), 36-40.

<sup>47</sup>Bruce J. Nicholls, "Theological Education and Evangelization," in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide, 1975), 647.

similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds tend to live together in certain parts of a city. Gerald Palmer observed that these ethnic groups “continue to retain their cultural identity; sometimes even when the language is not a significant factor.”<sup>48</sup> Often a church in a community reveals the “experiences, expressions, and witness of its members in their relationship with God in their sociocultural setting.”<sup>49</sup>

HMB language missions philosophies, for a period of fifty years spanning the directorships of Lloyd Corder to Russel Begaye,<sup>50</sup> believed convincingly in contextualization. In fact, Romo’s new philosophy of contextualization was seen early among Indian work. Begaye acknowledged this indigenous mindset when he said that “we have realized it will take American Indians sharing the gospel with other American Indians before we ever reach our people. We are no longer waiting for the Home Mission Board to send us missionaries, so we are going ourselves. That’s simply a New Testament principle of church growth.”<sup>51</sup> Romo’s work with different Southern Baptist agencies and state conventions to produce contextual materials for the different ethnolinguistic groups demonstrated his missiological belief of indigeneity and contextualization. Additionally, the creation and multiplication of the Ethnic Leadership Development Centers (now CLD) further provided theological training to indigenous leaders within their ethnolinguistic context.

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<sup>48</sup>Gerald Palmer, “Cultural and Lifestyle Concerns” (Nashville: Home Mission Board Collection, 1977).

<sup>49</sup>Romo, “Ethnic Southern Baptists, 7.

<sup>50</sup>Oscar Romo asked Russell Begaye, in 1981, to serve as the director of the Office of Native American Ministries, which worked with all tribal groups in the United States and Canada. He worked in this position for fifteen years and was able to influence starting 320 new churches during that time. After Romo’s retirement, Begaye became the Director of the Language Missions Division until the formation of the North American Mission Board in January 1997.

<sup>51</sup>Joe Westbury, “Ethnic Fellowships Target Locations for New Growth,” *Baptist Press*, 1 October 1987, 5.



## Oscar Romo's Leadership and Influence

While serving as Secretary of Direct Missions at the HMB, Lloyd Corder pioneered in language missions primarily in the Southwest among the Indians and Mexicans. Gerald Palmer's tenure as Director of the Language Missions Department is noteworthy for negotiating cooperative agreements with state conventions for more effective language mission work. In comparison, Oscar I. Romo led to the expansion of language missions "to minister to the world in our midst—internationals, immigrants, and refugees."<sup>52</sup>

Romo was a confident and visionary leader who had a clear picture of where he wanted to go and took the necessary steps to get there. Speaking at a Catalytic Missions Conference, he said that "it is imperative that we as Southern Baptist missions leaders: learn the past, assess our present, visualize our dreams, and lead with aggressive confidence."<sup>53</sup> His first leadership decision came shortly after becoming Assistant Secretary in the Language Missions Department in 1965. Romo's first assignment was the Navajo Indian reservation in Gallup, New Mexico. He challenged the missionaries to a new way of thinking, telling them, with confidence,

what we [Romo and staff] were going to do. Some of the missionaries were unhappy because they felt that the Indians were not qualified to become leaders. We told them that we wanted them to work with us; that if they did not want to work with us, we were still going to help the Indians in leadership programs. As a result, in ten years the Indian units on the reservation increased from 25 to 60.<sup>54</sup>

He was not known for being tactful. Yet, behind this driven and result-oriented person, Romo had an endless love for missionaries and for the destitute around the world. Fermín Whittaker, who was mentored by Romo and who served as Director of Ethnic Church

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<sup>52</sup>Grijalva, "Grijalva Manuscript—Ethnic Baptist History," 788.

<sup>53</sup>Oscar I. Romo, "Opsimathy," presented at the Catalytic Missions Conference, Missouri Baptist College, 18 May 1985, St. Louis, Missouri (Nashville: Home Mission Board Language Missions Collection, Southern Baptist Historical Archive and Library, 1985).

<sup>54</sup>Grijalva, "Grijalva Manuscript—Ethnic Baptist History," 711.

Growth at the Home Mission Board in 1982, describes Oscar Romo as “kind, caring, and involved with a servant and evangelistic heart.”<sup>55</sup>

One cannot speak of Oscar Romo’s leadership without speaking of the extensive influence he had, not only among Southern Baptists, but among government agencies, as well as other denominations and countries. When Romo became the Director of Language Missions for the HMB in 1971, there was already work among twenty-five ethnic groups in the United States.<sup>56</sup> Fourteen years later, Language Missions reported work among eighty-four language groups speaking eighty-seven languages and ninety-four American Indian tribes.<sup>57</sup> In 1994, the Language Church Extension Division reported work among 102 ethnic groups and ninety-seven Native American tribes, using 102 languages and dialects, in addition to sign language.<sup>58</sup> This expansion of language groups, partnerships, and ministries exemplifies Oscar Romo’s leadership skills and influence.

### **Expansion of Language Groups**

Romo was always looking for key leaders, particularly among new unreached ethnic groups. Some initial observations of how Romo became acquainted with and began outreach to new groups include the following.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Fermín A. Whittaker, “Oscar Romo y Cuba,” e-mail to author, 27 December 2012.

<sup>56</sup>Grijalva, “Grijalva Manuscript–Ethnic Baptist History,” 718.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>*Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, June 20-22, 1995*, 241. Richie Stanley, Team leader for the Center for Missional Research for the North American Mission Board, said that records for specific race were not kept until 1994. Before that time, the Language Mission Division compiled materials they received from each of the state conventions. The most comprehensive study was done by Delbert Fann for the period 1980-1989. The most reliable information, according to Stanley, would be found in the Annual Language Report to the Southern Baptist Convention. These reports, however, are brief and at times did not address specific ethnic groups. Consequently, I have relied in a combination of primary and secondary sources. Additionally, I have interview people who have served alongside Oscar Romo or were part of the implementation of the Hispanic church-planting strategy.

<sup>59</sup>Chap. 2 of this dissertation provides a more detail account of emerging groups in the United States.

The initial seeds for Korean work among Southern Baptists sprouted when Romo met a Korean seminary student named Dan Moon. After pastoring in Los Angeles, Moon served with the Southern Baptist Convention's Brotherhood Commission<sup>60</sup> in Memphis, Tennessee, promoting both missions education and Korean work. Oscar Romo asked Moon to serve as the key liaison between the HMB and Korean churches. Moon was instrumental in helping and instructing state conventions to understand how to serve effectively the Korean population in the United States.

Joshua Vang arrived in the United States in 1976. That same year, he established the first Laotian church in Des Moines, Iowa. Vang, a Hmong, was asked by Romo to serve as the national consultant for Laotian, Hmong, and Thai ministries in North America in 1979.<sup>61</sup> God used Joshua Vang to reach out to these three groups. As a result of Vang's influence among these groups, in 1982, there were sixty-three Lao Baptist congregations, which included the ethnic Hmong and Yaomienh groups.<sup>62</sup> That same year, twenty Laotian churches reported nearly 1,700 members and 280 baptisms.<sup>63</sup> More than one hundred churches and mission congregations were part of the Southern Baptist Convention.<sup>64</sup>

Khalil (Charlie) Hanna was born in "Fayouman, Egypt, 35 miles south of the Cairo pyramids."<sup>65</sup> He came to California in 1976 and began ministering to the Middle-

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<sup>60</sup>The Brotherhood Commission was one of the Southern Baptist entities assigned to promote men's ministries. The offices were located in Poplar Avenue in Memphis, Tennessee. In the implementation of the Covenant for a New Century, the Brotherhood Commission was consolidated with the North American Mission Board in 1997.

<sup>61</sup>Joshua Vang, *Laotian Church Planting Guide* (repr., Atlanta: North American Mission Board, SBC, 2001).

<sup>62</sup>Peter Kung, "The Story of Asian Southern Baptists," *Baptist History and Heritage* 18, no. 3 (July 1983): 46 (address presented to the Historical Commission and Southern Baptist Historical Society held in Nashville, Tennessee, in April 1983).

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup>Joshua Vang, "Laotian Church Growth Profile," in *America's Asian*, ed. Language Church Extension Division staff (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, SBC, 1990), 73.

<sup>65</sup>Wayne Grinstead, "Khalil Hanna: Work with Middle-East Americans," *MissionsUSA* 63, Supp. 92 (July-August 1992): 14.

Easterners. In fourteen years, he had started forty congregations, discovered natural leaders, written Bible study materials, secured meeting places, and directed the Ethnic Leadership Development Center in Riverside, California.<sup>66</sup> Many Arabic congregations were founded in California, but Hanna's ministry and influence was both national and international. It was not unusual for Arabic people to travel in excess of fifty miles to worship and hear the gospel in their own language. Many of the congregations were a cultural mix of Egyptian, Jordanian, Iraqis, Syrians, Palestinians, Saudi, and Sudanese.

Many Hispanics helped in the expansion of language missions in the United States.<sup>67</sup> Some of these Hispanics were directly influenced by Oscar Romo and made significant contributions to denominational life.<sup>68</sup> Daniel Sánchez assisted Romo at the Home Mission Board and has been a Professor of Missions at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary since 1983. Bobby Sena served under Romo at the Home Mission Board and also served as a key Hispanic leader with the North American Mission Board until his retirement in 2010. He has served as an adjunct professor in the Hispanic Doctoral Program at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Sena co-chaired with Daniel Sánchez the National Hispanic Task force established by the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee. Fermín Whittaker, a Panamanian, served as Director of Ethnic Church Growth under Romo. He later became a regional coordinator for the Home Mission Board serving in the West and presently serves as Executive Director-

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<sup>66</sup>Romo, *American Mosaic*, 113. Oscar Romo believed in theological education. The Ethnic Leadership Development Centers was the initial partnership between Bill Pinson, President of Golden Gate Baptist Seminary in Mill Valley, California, and Oscar Romo. It was one of Romo's primary strategies discuss in chap. 4 of this dissertation. Hanna's Ethnic Leadership Development Center in Riverside was part of the national ethnic strategy in partnership with the California Southern Baptist Convention.

<sup>67</sup>See chap. 2 of this dissertation for a historical overview of the emergence of language missions in the United States. See also David Raúl Lema's doctoral dissertation, "Southern Baptist Hispanic Missions in the State of Florida, 1960-2005" (Ph.D. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), for other Hispanics who were very influential in the development of Hispanic work, not only in Florida, but also in other ministry contexts in the United States.

<sup>68</sup>It is impossible to list the names of people who made considerable contributions to the growth of Hispanic work in the United States without, unintentionally, leaving off the names of others whose efforts were just as effective.

Treasurer of the California Southern Baptist Convention. Several leaders made significant contributions to Hispanic work in the United States through their service with the Baptist Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources). There were others who also made significant contributions during the period of 1970-1994.<sup>69</sup> Ramón Martínez, a Cuban, came to the Baptist Sunday School Board in 1992 to coordinate church development work among ethnic groups. In 1994, three additional employees came to work in the ethnic department. Tony Arango and Oscar Fernandez, both Cubans, served as editors, and Carlos Alcina from Honduras served as a consultant. Roberto Gama, a Colombian, served as editor of *La Fe Bautista* (Baptist Faith), *Quietud*, a discipleship magazine, and the *Estudios Bíblicos de Invierno* (Winter Bible Studies) from 1991-1995. Fernando Garcia and Daniel Rodríguez were two Cubans who also served during this period as editors.

Other key contributors to Hispanic work during Romo's years included Donoso Escobar, a Nicaraguan, who served as the Director of the Southern Baptist Immigration and Refugee Service from 1980-1983. In June of 1983, Escobar accepted a faculty position at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Mauricio Vargas, a Salvadorian, served as a Language Catalytic Missionary in North Carolina (1978-1987) and the Language Mission Program leader for the Missouri Baptist Convention (1987-2010).

### **Expansion of Partnerships**

During the period 1970-1994, Tito Fafasúli became the first Hispanic to serve at the Baptist Sunday School Board. Hired in 1977, Fafasúli, an Argentinean, faithfully and proficiently translated the adult English Sunday school material into Spanish. During

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<sup>69</sup>Gustavo V. Suárez was also influenced by Oscar Romo. He served as Language Catalytic Missionary with the Maryland/Delaware Baptist Convention, Language Program Leader and State Director of Missions with the Baptist Convention of New Mexico, Executive Director-Treasurer for the Northwest Baptist Convention, and presently serves as Professor of Church Planting at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City.

these initial days of language missions, much of the materials were translations from the English. While translations were not the best material for the Spanish churches, it filled a great need to have resources in the language of the people. As new Spanish churches were started, the need for Spanish materials written by Hispanics was accentuated. *El Intérprete* was the Spanish-language Adult Sunday school material written by Hispanics. In 1999, the Sunday School Board stopped the publication of the *El Intérprete*.<sup>70</sup>

Romo noticed that the HMB work among the Chinese was the smallest despite being the second oldest work among ethnic churches. Peter Kung was elected to head the Language Missions Unit at the Baptist Sunday School Board in 1986. Besides his work with the Sunday School Board, he also served as Chinese consultant with the Home Mission Board. Romo encouraged ethnics not to be timid, but rather to be active participants at the negotiating table. Romo saw in Kung “a person who would speak up, do his homework and who was aggressive in his own way.”<sup>71</sup>

Oscar Romo believed in theological education. In 1981, William Pinson, then president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in California, and Romo had various conversations “to discuss the possibility of such training in cooperation with the seminary and the Home Mission Board.”<sup>72</sup> These conversations resulted in the establishment of Ethnic Leadership Development Centers in Arizona, New Mexico, California, Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Hawaii, and American Samoa. Joshua Grijalva served as the founding director of the program in Mill Valley, California. These centers

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<sup>70</sup>A decision was made in the year 2000 under the “Curriculum for a New Century” to return to translations of materials. A survey of the top one hundred Hispanic churches that used the Spanish materials asked if they would be willing to use Sunday school material that was translated from English to Spanish. Ninety-seven percent of the respondents said that they would use translated material as long as it was doctrinally sound and held to Baptist distinctives. Oscar Fernández cites several advantages for the use of translated materials. First, one receives the benefits of writers who are biblical scholars. Second, there is a consistency in the material from preschool to adults. Third, there is sound biblical teaching based on strong theological and doctrinal foundation in accordance to the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*. Fourth, editors not only translate, but also contextualize the material to the specific cultural context. Oscar Fernández, telephone interview by author, 27 December 2012.

<sup>71</sup>Grijalva, “Grijalva Manuscript–Ethnic Baptist History,” 712.

<sup>72</sup>Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 156.

gradually spread throughout the entire United States. This partnership, initially supported by various seminaries, continues to be strategically important to Golden Gate and Midwestern seminaries thirty years after its inception.<sup>73</sup>

As the political and economic conditions continue to deteriorate in the 1980s, the Home Mission Board recognized the plight of the Haitian people. Oscar Romo called on Peter Golinski to reach out and minister to them. Since Haitians spoke French and were not officially classified as refugees, “they were often repelled rather than helped by the immigration authorities.”<sup>74</sup>

Elías D. Pantoja joined the Annuity Board in 1993 (now GuideStone Financial Resources). At the Annuity Board, Pantoja related to more than 8,000 languages, ethnic, and African-American churches in the Southern Baptist Convention. He was instrumental in doubling the number of language and ethnic groups served by the Annuity Board and in developing materials for these groups. The Annuity Board developed materials translated into Spanish, Korean, Chinese, French-Haitian, and Vietnamese. Previously, Pantoja served Hispanics effectively through his ministry as a Language Catalytic Missionary for Shelby Baptist Association in Memphis, Tennessee (1977-1983), as Language Missions Program Leader with the Missouri Baptist Convention (1983-1987), at the Baptist Sunday School Board (1987-1990), and as Language Missions Program Leader with the Arkansas Baptist Convention (1990-1993). Elías Dávila Pantoja died in a car accident on April 30, 1999.<sup>75</sup>

Oscar Romo was familiar with the unification between the Mexican Baptist Convention of Texas and the Baptist General Convention of Texas that was finalized

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<sup>73</sup>The original name was Ethnic Leadership Development centers, but in the mid-1990s the name was change, in order to be more inclusive, to Contextualized Leadership Development centers.

<sup>74</sup>Grijalva, “Grijalva Manuscript–Ethnic Baptist History,” 715.

<sup>75</sup>Marv Knox, ed., “Pantoja Killed in Auto Accident,” *Baptist Standard*, 12 May 1999 [on-line]; accessed 22 December 2012; available from [http://www.baptiststandard.com/1999/5\\_12/pages/pantoja.html](http://www.baptiststandard.com/1999/5_12/pages/pantoja.html); Internet.

in 1964. Romo also was aware of the existence of the Convención Bautista Hispana de Nuevo México, founded on November 6, 1923.<sup>76</sup> The leadership of the two Hispanic conventions helped develop strong working relationships with their respective Anglo conventions. These relationships provided more resources, resulting in new churches.

Ethnic Fellowships provide language churches a channel for expression, cultural awareness, and for focusing denominational programs to meet the needs of the ethnic group. These fellowships serve as a link with the Anglo associations and state conventions. Fermín Whittaker attributes the growth of Hispanic congregations to “intentional training for catalytic missionaries and ethnic fellowships.”<sup>77</sup> Whittaker also notes that each Ethnic Fellowship was challenged to start new churches among their own cultural group. Romo’s leadership among the fellowships helped interpret “the Southern Baptist Convention to the ethnic churches and the churches to the denomination’s agencies.”<sup>78</sup>

### **Expansions of Ministries**

Romo’s desire to reach the nations represented within the United States led him to initiate a ministry to the diplomatic corps at both the United Nations in New York and the embassies in Washington, DC, in the late 1970s. Ted Mall, an Asian Indian, and Ron Meron, of German descent, “worked in the United Nations as personnel witnessing to the multi-ethnic groups.”<sup>79</sup> Mario Acacia, an Italian, served the embassy’s personnel in Washington.

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<sup>76</sup>Thomas Eason and Luis Gómez, “Reaching N.M. Hispanics Began in 1849,” *Baptist New Mexican*, 27 October 2012 [on-line]; accessed 24 December 2012; available from <http://www.bcnm.com/page.php?team=Executive&category=Information%20Services%20Team&page=Reaching%20N.M.%20Hispanics%20Began%20in%201849>; Internet.

<sup>77</sup>Fermín Whittaker served on Oscar Romo’s staff in 1982. Fermín A. Whittaker, telephone interview by author, 16 October 2010.

<sup>78</sup>Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 172.

<sup>79</sup>Grijalva, “Grijalva Manuscript–Ethnic Baptist History,” 717-18.



As a committed Southern Baptist, Romo wanted the story of language missions told effectively to the churches. He recognized the importance of Cooperative Program gifts and the stewardship responsibility of his office. He utilized various means to tell the story. “Mosaic Church Growth” was a newsletter published by the Language Missions Division of the Home Mission Board. The newsletter gave emphasis to one topic per issue that was supported with specific data.

*The Communiqué* was a newsletter that published news related to refugee ministries. The newsletter always presented the local church with suggestions of how to sponsor refugee families.<sup>80</sup> Another way Romo and the HMB disseminated information about language works was through the various state convention papers, as well as via *Baptist Press*.<sup>81</sup> Additional publications, during the years 1970-1994, were “magazines, state papers, books, bulletins and other materials published in the language of the people served by Language Missions.”<sup>82</sup>

Behind the story of language missions and the HMB language missions national strategy lies sound missiological, sociological, and demographical research. Oscar Romo believed that every missionary should research his area and context of ministry. Every State Language Program Leader had an administrative notebook that guided the language leaders through the necessary steps to complete research for his ministry context.<sup>83</sup>

The national language strategy was designed to penetrate the two hundred plus ethnic groups and called for research in the “historical, sociocultural, linguistic, family and kinship, behavior, religious, educational, and political heritages of these ethnic groups.”<sup>84</sup> The findings of the research were published in the annual “America’s

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 720.

<sup>81</sup>In 2005, *Baptist Press* started a weekly column written in Spanish by Hispanics called *BP en Español*.

<sup>82</sup>Grijalva, “Grijalva Manuscript–Ethnic Baptist History,” 720.

<sup>83</sup>Tim Hill, telephone interview by author, 27 August 2010.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., 799.

Ethnicity” report in *Mosaic* or shared with the missionaries during the annual Catalytic or Language Missions conferences.

Romo introduced Southern Baptists to new missiological concepts that proved to be effective in reaching language/cultural people in the United States. The following is a brief summary of some of the key missiological concepts Romo emphasized:<sup>85</sup>

1. Ethnic Church Growth. The development of churches within the linguistic and cultural context of a people, based upon the New Testament principles and relevant methodologies.
2. Transcultural Outreach. A church that provides a ministry to ethnic persons in their community.
3. Microscopic Urban Strategy. A strategy that is designed to reach to the language population in the urban area.
4. Catalytic Missionary Concept. The equipping and utilization of missionary personnel to start and develop new churches and also strengthen existing congregations.
5. Laser Church Growth Concept. The development of new techniques to penetrate new mission fields in urban areas.
6. Kaleidoscopic Church Growth Concept. The usage of one facility by several language congregations in an urban area.<sup>86</sup>

Another successful outreach of the Home Mission Board that resulted in many new congregations was the refugee ministry. Southern Baptists’ exposure to refugee ministry started in 1959 with the influx of Cubans who came to Miami, Florida. In 1965, the Immigration and Refugee Service Office was created by the Home Mission Board and assigned to Language Missions. Two years later, refugees from Cuba continued to flood the shores of Florida. The work of this office was accelerated by the influx of immigrants from Southeast Asia in 1975.<sup>87</sup> As the numbers of refugees and other immigrants coming

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 723.

<sup>86</sup>The Catalytic, Laser, and Kaleidoscopic Church Growth Concepts are described in more detail in the next chapters of this dissertation.

<sup>87</sup>Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 177.

to the United States continued to increase, the evangelistic efforts of individuals and churches resulted in “281 ethnic congregations.”<sup>88</sup>

In this section, the reader has observed how Oscar Romo provided leadership in the expansion of new language groups, new partnerships, and new ministries. In the next section, the reader will also explore Romo’s leadership among Southern Baptists, early in his ministry as Language Director, in helping the Cuban people in their struggles, thereby spreading his leadership and influence beyond the borders of the United States.

### **Partnership with Cuba**

It is outside the scope of this section and this dissertation to give a detailed history of Baptist work in Cuba.<sup>89</sup> Rather, this section focuses on significant events affecting Cuban Baptists and Oscar Romo’s relationships with Cubans, both in Cuba and in the United States.

### **Early Years of the Revolution (1958-1961)**

By 1958, Baptist work had flourished in Cuba. Numbers had grown to “8,775 strong, spread throughout the island in 85 churches and missions.”<sup>90</sup> The year of 1959 started as a year of hope and new beginnings for the people of Cuba. Fidel Castro’s forces caused Dictator Fulgencio Bautista to leave the country. To most Cubans, Castro seemed to represent freedom from the many years of oppression. Yet, that freedom longed for

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid. For a breakdown of the number of churches and ethnic groups represented in the 281 new churches, see p. 77 of this dissertation, n. 177.

<sup>89</sup>Many historical books describe the ministry of Cuban Baptists. See, for example, Kurt Urbanek, *El Gran Avivamiento de Cuba: Movimiento de Plantación de Iglesias en Cuba* (Lexington, KY: Kurt Urbanek, 2012); Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History; Annual Report of the Foreign Mission Board* (Atlanta, GA: Southern Baptist Convention, 1886); J. B. Lawrence, *History of the Home Mission Board* (Nashville: Broadman, 1958); and Arthur B. Rutledge and William G. Tanner, *Mission to America: A History of Southern Baptist Home Missions* (Nashville: Broadman, 1969).

<sup>90</sup>Phyllis Thompson, “Remembering Cuba,” *MissionsUSA* (March-April 1989): 12.

by Cubans was short lived since, in December 1961, shortly after the Bay of Pigs fiasco, Castro announced that Cuba would become a socialist nation.

Churches began to feel the sting of the revolution on June 6, 1961, with the passage of the “Ley para la nacionalización de la enseñanza.”<sup>91</sup> The law was a critical and furtive way for the government to inject communist doctrine into the minds of young Cubans. The beginning of this indoctrination caused a worldview clash as children from Christian homes heard about God in the home and the churches, but were taught in school that their religious views were incorrect.<sup>92</sup>

The confident expectation the Cuban people had for genuine freedom initially blinded them to the real significance of the changes. Two key leaders of the Baptist work in Cuba were Herbert Caudill, superintendent of missions in Cuba, and Luis Manuel González Peña, who served on two occasions as president of the Cuban Baptist Convention. Each of these men enthusiastically defended the government. Caudill vehemently criticized the *Christian Index* article dated August 18, 1960, that defended and lauded the Roman Catholic Church “for their courage in condemning the Communistic regime.”<sup>93</sup> Caudill pointed out that the Catholic Church was not fighting the oppression of communism in Cuba. Instead, Caudill believed the Catholic Church was fighting to recover the millions of pesos they received annually from the Batista

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<sup>91</sup>Urbanek, *El Gran Avivamiento de Cuba*, 73. The Cuban government passed the “law for the nationalization of education” on 6 June 1961.

<sup>92</sup>One thing I do remember about my kindergarten years is the day when the teacher asked us to close our eyes and placed a piece of candy in each student’s little hand. She asked the class, “Who gave you the candy?” “God gave us the candy,” I replied. She proceeded to give us a lecture that God did not exist and that the candy was given to us by Castro. This presented a conflict of values. I had been taught since early in my life of the existence of God and now school was teaching me that God does not exist. I was also taught that if anyone in the family said anything against Castro, it was my duty to report them to the Communist Party.

<sup>93</sup>Herbert Caudill, “Let’s Keep the Record Straight,” letter to the *Christian Index* editor, Havana, Cuba, 15 September 1960 (Nashville: Home Mission Board, Cuba Work Collection, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, 1969).

government because since “January 1, 1959 when Batista left Cuba these gifts have been suspended.”<sup>94</sup> Caudill further stated,

I am not trying to defend Fidel Castro or the Cuban revolution. My only purpose is to clarify the present situation in Cuba in regard to religious liberty. I think that we as Baptists should be very careful to speak the truth. The religious situation in Cuba is not identical with that of Colombia or Spain. No properties used for churches, Catholic, Protestant, or Baptist have been touched by the present government. Catholic churches as well as churches of all other denominations are wide open and hold all the services they have ever held.<sup>95</sup>

Luis Manuel González Peña defended the revolution in an article titled, “This Is Our Truth, This Is Cuba’s Reality.” González Peña wrote as a person who saw himself a victim of America’s imperialism. He defended the Agrarian Reform as just. He cited the example of the United Fruit Company that bought 600,000 hectares or 1,631,000 acres (2548.44 square miles) for \$6,000. González Peña asked, “Is it an injustice that our country commits when it recuperates its lands to distribute them among the miserable rural people?”<sup>96</sup> He also lauded Castro’s government for the moral reform he brought to Cuba. González Peña listed several benefits of the Castro government reform of “our vices and bad customs [habits].”<sup>97</sup> First, according to Peña, now there was administrative honesty and integrity at the national, state, and municipal (county) government.<sup>98</sup> Second, Peña noted gambling had been eliminated or eradicated. Third, Peña observed that alcoholic beverages had been restricted. Fourth, Cuba was no longer the center of drug trafficking. Fifth, prostitution was under control and the “white slave” trade had been eliminated. Sixth, Peña believed that Cuban evangelical churches now enjoyed the same

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>Luis Manuel González Peña, “This Is Our Truth, This Is Cuba’s Reality” (Nashville: Home Mission Board, Cuba Work Collection, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, n.d.).

<sup>97</sup>Ibid.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid. The following seven points are González Peña’s personal observations of Castro’s government moral reform in Cuba.

respect and liberty as any church in the United States. Seventh, in Peña's perspective, the most outstanding phenomenon of the revolution was the "conversion of soldiers' barracks and military centers into cities and schools."<sup>99</sup>

The positions held by both Caudill and González Peña were not unique during the early years of the revolution. The evangelical churches in Cuba enthusiastically repudiated the dictatorship of Batista's government and fully embraced the new government established in January 1, 1959.<sup>100</sup> In fact, other missionaries such as Hubert Hurt and Marjorie Caudill agreed with González Peña's view of the moral changes brought by the revolutionary government. Caudill condemned Fulgencio Batista's supporters and others who opposed Castro, like the gamblers for their distribution of false propaganda about the new government.<sup>101</sup> The relatively tranquil early days for the church were about to be ignited by a furious attack from an atheist communist ideology.

### **The Difficult Years (1962-1969)**

Castro's government began to experience and to react to opposition from the Roman Catholic and evangelical churches. According to Theron Corse, "Castro accused the 'imperialists' of changing from using the church as a front for counterrevolutionary to using certain Protestant groups whom he characterized as not only a thread to national security, but also an obstacle to modernization and nationalism."<sup>102</sup> The marginalization of the church was further strengthened with the restriction of services to buildings, the required registration of each pastor and church with the government, and the prohibition

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

<sup>100</sup>Heberto Becerra, telephone interview by author, 28 December 2012.

<sup>101</sup>Urbanek, *El Gran Avivamiento de Cuba*, 72.

<sup>102</sup>Theron E. Corse, *Protestants, Revolution, and the Cuba-U.S Bond* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), 73. "Castro acusó a los 'imperialistas' de cambiar de usar a la iglesia Católica como un frente para las actividades contrarrevolucionarias a usar a ciertos grupos protestantes a los que caracterizó no solo de amenaza a la seguridad sino también como obstáculos a la modernización y al nacionalismo."

of house church worship. As persecution became more intense, many pastors and members emigrated to the United States. According to Leoncio Veguilla, during the period of 1960-1964, about ninety of the convention's 103 pastors and about a third of the membership left the country. The greatest tragedy and threat to Baptist work came on April 8, 1965, when sixty-five pastors and missionaries were arrested.<sup>103</sup> Among the accusations made against Herbert Caudill, considered the leader of a group of spies composed of pastors and missionaries, was conspiracy "against the integrity and stability of the nation."<sup>104</sup> An additional charge was "illegal change of foreign currency."<sup>105</sup> An interesting development was Caudill's own words during his trial:

With regards to the charge of ideological divisionism, I argued that we simply continue preaching and teaching the gospel just as we have done before the arrival of communism. The government under which we lived had changed. With regards to charge number 6, the Cuban government does not allow that Cuban money is taken out of the country. It is illegal to have foreign currency. If a person has permission to leave the country and desires to purchase the tickets, he must deposit money with the government that has international value. At this moment, the Cuban peso does not have any value in the international market. When people leave the country, sometimes they give to us Cuban pesos that we may use it in our ministries. No Cuban money left the country. The money we received we used it in Cuba.<sup>106</sup>

Caudill argued that the Cuban "peso" did not have any value internationally.

Therefore, when a Cuban is permitted to leave the country, he cannot purchase airline

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<sup>103</sup>Thompson, "Remembering Cuba," 13.

<sup>104</sup>Minutes of "Delivery of Prisoner" Case #697/64, Revolutionary Tribunal #1, District of Havana (Nashville: Home Mission Board Communication Collection, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archive, 25 November 1966).

<sup>105</sup>Thompson, "Remembering Cuba," 12.

<sup>106</sup>Herbert Caudill, *On Freedom's Edge: Ten Years Under Communism in Cuba* (repr., Atlanta: Home Mission Board, SBC, 1984), 66-67. "En cuanto al cargo sobre el divisionismo ideológico, argumenté que nosotros sencillamente continuábamos predicando y enseñando el evangelio como lo habíamos hecho antes de la llegada del comunismo. El gobierno bajo el cual vivíamos había cambiado. Con respecto al número 6, el gobierno Cubano no permite que ninguna divisa salga del país. Es ilegal poseer dinero de otros países. Si las personas tienen permiso para salir del país y quieren comprar los boletos, tienen que tener un depósito de dinero del gobierno que tenga valor en el cambio internacional. En este momento, el peso cubano no tiene valor en el mercado internacional. Cuando la gente deja el país, a veces nos dan dinero cubano para que lo usemos en nuestro trabajo. Ningún dinero cubano salió del país. Lo que nos dieron lo usamos en Cuba."

tickets without American dollars. Caudill and his son-in-law David Fite were convicted for their crimes to ten and six years, respectively. Eventually, they were released and departed Cuba in 1969 leaving “the Baptist Convention of Western Cuba without missionary guidance for the first time in 83 years.”<sup>107</sup> But even during this time of persecution, the Word continued to go forth. As David Fite proclaimed, “They locked me up like a common criminal because I preached the Word, but they haven’t locked up the Word.”<sup>108</sup>

During the difficult period that started with the imprisonment of pastors and missionaries in 1965, Oscar Romo became the liaison between the Home Mission Board and the Baptist Convention of Western Cuba. Daniel Sánchez recalled,

The late 1960s and early 1970s were a crucial period of time in which Romo was viewed as the lifeline between the Home Mission Board and the Western Baptist Convention of Cuba. When a significant number of Cuban pastors were imprisoned along with missionaries like Herbert Caudill, the churches in Western Cuba were very isolated from outside contacts as well as in dire financial need. At that time only a few Cuban pastors were allowed to leave Cuba to attend meetings of the Baptist World Alliance in different parts of the world. It was during this time that Oscar Romo had instructions from the Home Mission Board to go to the places where the Baptist World Alliance was meeting with the purpose of meeting with the Cuban pastors who were in attendance. It was at these meetings that Romo would provide information to these pastors and receive information from them regarding Baptist work in Cuba. This communication channel was viewed as vital by the leaders and church members in Cuba and gave them a sense of well-being knowing that they had not been forgotten and were being uplifted in prayer by Southern Baptists.<sup>109</sup>

### **The Church Defines Itself (1970-1994)**

During these difficult years, the Western Cuban Convention had to define its position as churches and as a national convention in relation to the government. As

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<sup>107</sup>Thompson, “Remembering Cuba,” 13.

<sup>108</sup>W. C. Fields, “Word Can’t Be Locked in Cuba,” *Baptist Press*, 18 March 1969 [on-line]; accessed 20 December 2012; available from <http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/2741,18-Mar-1969.pdf>; Internet.

<sup>109</sup>Sánchez, “Oscar Romo y Cuba,” e-mail.



a result of the imprisonment of 1965, other pastors distrusted any pastor who tended to align himself with the government. The lack of trust grew when the government allowed for some pastors to travel to other countries, but did not allow other pastors the same privilege. Some of the pastors and convention leaders even led groups of people from churches to go cut sugar cane for the government.<sup>110</sup> This action was viewed by hardliners among the Christians as supporting and working for the Cuban government.

In the ongoing tensions between the Western convention and the government, the years 1983-1985 brought additional internal conventional problems. During these three years, both the Western and Eastern Baptist conventions were denied permits to hold their annual conventional meetings. The Castro regime imposed a limit of only 350 delegates per convention. Rather than acquiesce and limit the participation of delegates, they decided not to have the annual meetings instead of submitting to the government's demand.<sup>111</sup>

Two prominent names among the religious leaders with strong ties to the Cuban government were Raúl Suárez and Felipe Carneado. Raúl Suárez has been the director of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Center in Havana, Cuba, since it was established in 1987.<sup>112</sup> Suárez attended the Western Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary. While in seminary, Suárez was an early supporter of the revolution.<sup>113</sup> Some of his writings show that he may have also departed from a conservative view of Scripture and embraced a theology of liberation. In an interview titled "Human Reflections," Suárez stated that:

Liberation theologians offered a biblical and theological foundation so that as Christians—as Camilo Torres Restrepo used to say—we would decide and make

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<sup>110</sup>Fernández, telephone interview.

<sup>111</sup>Urbanek, *El Gran Avivamiento de Cuba*, 84.

<sup>112</sup>Octavio J. Esqueda, "Theological Higher Education in Cuba: A Case Study of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Texas, 2003), 30.

<sup>113</sup>Heberto Becerra, interview by author, Kansas City, Missouri, 8 November 2012.

a commitment to make a revolution. In contrast to other Latin America countries, where Christians look for an ethical, biblical, and theological foundation to establish a revolution, in Cuba we unite our efforts so that the revolution may produce through our doing all her programs for the benefits of the people. This is what Dr. Sergio Arce has called “the Cuban theology in revolution.” From the early days of transformation we realized that to work for that [communist] cause was to concretely see through people’s lives that the purpose of Christ was been accomplished.<sup>114</sup>

Suárez exalted and equated the Cuban theology of liberation as active and revolutionary. The theology of liberation, Suárez added, gives Christians a biblical and theological rationale for creating a revolution. In that sense, the revolution becomes the means by which people receive benefits from its programs. In contrast, in many Latin American countries, Christians seek an ethical, biblical, and theological base in order to accomplish a revolution.

In February 1987, the climax of the Cuban Baptist’s struggle for a clearly defined political and theological position in relation to the government finally occurred. Raúl Suárez was one of three pastors that were expelled from fellowship with the Baptist Convention of Western Cuba. Suarez’ dismissal was the first time in the history of the Baptist Convention of Western Cuba that any pastor or church was expelled from fellowship. These three churches and their pastors formed a new convention, *Fraternidad de Iglesias Bautistas de Cuba (FIBAC)*, or Fellowship of Baptist Churches in Cuba.<sup>115</sup>

In a lecture delivered on January 28, 2010, Suárez, reflecting on his initial theological formation, blamed United States missionaries for transplanting their

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<sup>114</sup>Isachi Fernández-Fernández, “Reverendo Raúl Suárez, Revelaciones Humanas,” 7 March 2008, *Periódico Cubarte* [on-line]; accessed 31 December 2012; available from <http://www.cubarte.cult.cu/periodico/entrevistas/6614/6614.html>; Internet. “Los teólogos de la liberación ofrecieron una base bíblica y teológica para que los cristianos—como decía Camilo Torres Restrepo—nos decidamos y nos comprometamos a hacer la revolución. Pero a diferencia de otros pueblos de América Latina, en donde los cristianos buscan una base ética, bíblica, teológica para concretar la revolución, en Cuba sumamos nuestros esfuerzos para que la Revolución pueda llevar a vías de hechos todo su programa en beneficio del pueblo. Es lo que el doctor Sergio Arce ha llamado ‘la teología cubana en revolución.’ Desde las primeras transformaciones nos dimos cuenta de que trabajar por esa obra era ver concretamente, en la vida de los seres humanos, que se estaba realizando el programa de Jesucristo.”

<sup>115</sup>Urbanek, *El Gran Avivamiento de Cuba*, 85.

American ideological-religious understanding, an understanding that gradually separated the Cuban people from their own cultural concerns. Suárez maintained that:

The Protestantism initiated and directed by Cuban patriots that came to know the gospel in exile, with the Islands' occupation as the result of military intervention by North America in the Spanish-American War, had to accept the arrival of Mission Boards south of the United States. Practically, a new leadership was imposed that became the principal task of the historic Protestant denominations. The North American missionaries transplanted their churches, and with them, the American gospel with its strong ideological and racist tone. It was with rare exceptions, instruments of the project for Northamericanization of the island that gradually was implanted in all areas of national life. For this reason, we Protestant inherited the influence of an ideological-religious mindset that separated us from the interest, aspirations, and social claims of our people.<sup>116</sup>

Raúl Suárez and Sergio Arce, former president of the Evangelical Theological Seminary, were elected to the national Communist legislature in 1991.

The second prominent religious leader with strong ties to the Cuban government is Felipe Carneado. For nearly thirty years, Carneado was the Director of the Department of Religious Affairs and a member of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party. Oscar Romo and Carneado met in the mid-seventies. Both of these men are described as having “forceful personalities, men of strong wills and rock hard beliefs, capable of intimidating coworkers. Yet each is warm, human, at times, almost vulnerable—and always compassionate.”<sup>117</sup> Oscar Romo’s passion for reaching the Cuban people was a motivation to discover effective ways to provide for the needs of Cuban pastors and to facilitate the spread of the gospel in Cuba. Romo felt comfortable in

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<sup>116</sup>Raúl Suárez Ramos, “Pueblos y Sumak Kawsay desde la Perspectiva Cubana,” 28 January 2010 [on-line]; accessed 31 December 2012; available from <http://jubileomlp.blogspot.com/2010/01/ponencia-pueblos-y-sumak-kawsay-raul.html>; Internet. “Por otra parte, el protestantismo iniciado y dirigido por patriotas cubanos que habían conocido el evangelio en la emigración, con la ocupación de la Isla como resultado de la intervención norteamericana en la guerra hispano-cubana, tuvo que aceptar el arribo de las Juntas Misioneras del Sur de los Estados Unidos. Prácticamente, se les impuso un nuevo liderazgo que ocupó la dirección de las principales denominaciones del protestantismo histórico. Los misioneros norteamericanos trasplantaron sus iglesias y con ellas, el evangelio americano con su fuerte carga ideológica y racista. Fueron, con rarísimas excepciones, instrumentos del proyecto de norteamericanización de la isla que paulatinamente se fue implantando en todas las esferas de la vida nacional. Por esta razón, los protestantes heredamos la influencia de un esquema ideológico-religioso que nos fue separando de los intereses, reclamos y aspiraciones sociales de nuestro pueblo.”

<sup>117</sup>Thompson, “Remembering Cuba,” 8.

extending a helping hand to people in need. Daniel Sánchez reflected on Romo's ministry to Cuba, saying:

Romo was not intimidated by the challenge of meeting with top leaders in denominational or government agencies. His meetings (at times confrontational) with these leaders were legendary. Whether it was a US agency leader (e.g., World Relief, Immigration Official) or a governmental leader in another country (e.g., Carneado in Cuba), Romo sought to communicate with them in a very frank and factual manner. In the midst of Romo's passion and impatience, there was a deep caring spirit.<sup>118</sup>

Although Romo began to work and develop relationships with Cuban pastors in 1965, it was not until 1978 that he was given permission to visit Cuba. When he arrived in Cuba, he found a convention in the midst of political struggles—yet the church was growing. All the missionaries had returned to the United States in 1969, so when Romo arrived, the Cuban convention had been without the guidance of missionaries for almost ten years.<sup>119</sup> Leoncio Veguilla, a past president of the convention, later expressed his thankfulness for all Romo had done for Cuban Baptists, “When it was said that Cuba was closed, he came to us. When we were without money, he came; when we needed glasses, he came; when we needed medicine, books, hymnals, Bibles—whenever we had a need—he came. We owe a great deal to Oscar Romo and the Home Mission Board.”<sup>120</sup> Not everyone agrees with Veguilla's flattering statements about Romo, however. Some of the Baptist hardliners saw Romo's relationship with Felipe Carneado, minister of religion for the Cuban government, as wrong, even to the point of calling Romo a communist.<sup>121</sup>

Heberto Becerra, president of the Cuban Baptist Convention from 1975 to 1978, does not agree with the harsh statements about Romo. Like Veguilla, Becerra believes that Romo's assistance opened opportunities for ministries across the entire

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<sup>118</sup>Sánchez, “Oscar Romo y Cuba,” e-mail.

<sup>119</sup>Thompson, “Remembering Cuba,” 13.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>121</sup>Israel Cordoves, telephone interview by author, 27 December 2012.

island. He referred to Romo “as an angel of God.”<sup>122</sup> Becerra was instrumental in bringing Romo to Cuba for the first time, recalling that “it was a long and laborious task to get all the documentation to bring Romo to Cuba.”<sup>123</sup> The four significant contributions of Becerra’s presidency were: (1) bringing Oscar Romo to Cuba, (2) bringing, at a different time, A. B. Wong, the president of the Baptist World Alliance to Cuba, (3) receiving resources in Cuba from Romo through the Baptist World Alliance, and (4) receiving the use of a vehicle for the Cuban Baptist Convention through Romo’s help.

Romo wrote an extensive, informative, and revealing memo to William G. Tanner, Gerald B. Palmer, and M. Wendell Belew on July 19, 1977.<sup>124</sup> In the memo, he makes the suggestion to “read it carefully and confidentially, especially the area dealing with the comments.”<sup>125</sup> He writes the following comments:

The following is information gathered in conversation, periodicals, etc.

- A. The convention President, Becerra, led the Executive Convention to approve a resolution condemning the U.S. for the air explosion of a Cuban plane in Barbados.
- B. The Dean of Students, Becerra, led the seminary students to spend two weeks cutting cane for the government. This has never been required. It was voluntary.
- C. Becerra is a member of the ‘Block Committee’ in his area of town.
- D. The resentment toward past leaders is such that every effort is being made to discredit the ‘old guard.’
- E. Approximately 25% of the pastors are a product of the revolution.
- F. It is apparent that if Baptist work is to continue it will be necessary for all concerned to carefully seek to assist on a fraternal basis.

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<sup>122</sup>Heberto Becerra, interview by author, Kansas City, Missouri, 17 August 2010.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid.

<sup>124</sup>William G. Tanner was President of the Home Mission Board, Gerald B. Palmer was Vice President of the Home Mission Board, Mission Section, and M. Wendell Belew was the Director of the Home Mission Board’s Missions Division.

<sup>125</sup>Oscar I. Romo, “Inter-Office Correspondence,” Permanent Cuba File, Oscar Romo Correspondence File (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, 19 July 1977).

G. The Executive Committee has extended an invitation for William G. Tanner, Gerald B. Palmer, and Oscar I. Romo to visit Cuba.<sup>126</sup>

This memo reveals three questionable actions ascribed to Heberto Becerra who was President of the Western Cuba Baptist Convention from 1975-1978. First, Becerra led the Executive Committee to voice their disagreement against the government of the United States for the air explosion of a Cuban plane. Second, Becerra, as Dean of the Baptist Seminary in Cuba, mobilized the students to cut sugar cane for two weeks. This action was the first time seminary students were asked to go cut sugar cane for the government.<sup>127</sup> Third, Becerra was a member of the “Block Committee”<sup>128</sup> in his neighborhood. While it is not fair to label Becerra a communist for these questionable actions, one could readily observe the divisive political nature among the pastors.<sup>129</sup> The memo also points to the delicate situation both among pastors and also with the government.

In April of 1980, Becerra left Cuba with an invitation to preach in the United States, and would never return. When news of Becerra’s exodus from Cuba became known to Romo, he immediately called Becerra saying, “I expected you to leave the

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<sup>126</sup>Ibid.

<sup>127</sup>Fernández, telephone interview.

<sup>128</sup>“Block Committee,” or Comité de Defensa de la Revolución (CDR), is a network of neighborhood committees across Cuba. The purpose of the “Block Committees” is to be a political neighborhood watch and report any action against the Cuban government

<sup>129</sup>Heberto Becerra denied that he led the Executive Committee to condemn the action of the United States in Barbados. He also denied that he was a member of the “Block Committee” in his neighborhood. He did admit, however, that as Dean of the seminary, he led the students to go for one week to cut sugar cane for the government. The reason why he took this action was that the seminary had few students. The government was not allowing some to come to the seminary. He felt that taking this action might soften the government position against the Baptist convention. He mentioned that when he became President of the convention in 1975, he was not able to get anything approved by the government. A pastor, now deceased, by the name of Manuel Salon was the person who had connections with the government. Becerra adds, “he [Salon] made it very difficult for me during the first few months of my presidency.” Becerra felt that Salon was a spy for the government. When asked, “why do you think these three points were part of Romo’s memo?” he explained that possibly Salon communicated these things to Romo, but he explicitly denied the first and third point, agreeing only on the week of cutting sugar cane. Heberto Becerra, telephone conversation with author, 22 January 2013.

country. How can I help you?”<sup>130</sup> For the following six months, Romo helped Becerra get established in a new country with an assistance of \$1,000 per month. In November of that year, Becerra became the pastor of Primera Iglesia Bautista de Manhattan in New York. When he left Cuba, he was led to believe that his family would soon follow. The Cuban government denied them permission to leave for the next five years. His return to them would have meant a twenty-year imprisonment.<sup>131</sup> It took five years of negotiations between Cuba and the United States before his family joined him in New York.<sup>132</sup>

Becerra learned to understand the “loneliness of other Hispanics who find themselves separated from their families.”<sup>133</sup> He also learned to work with people from sixteen different nationalities. God used Becerra to lead the four-hundred-member church in Manhattan to start four new mission congregations and a radio ministry, as well as to lead many persons to the Lord. One of these was a former leader of the “Sendero Luminoso,” or Shining Path communist revolutionary group from Peru.<sup>134</sup> Becerra, on a national level, was also a model for younger generations of Hispanic leaders.

These examples are typical of Oscar Romo’s passion to creatively help Cuban Baptists. Heberto Becerra and Oscar Romo’s partnership in Cuba made possible lasting relationships that resulted in new partnerships and new congregations in the United States. Romo provided missionary status, which included health insurance, to the initial Cuban pastors.<sup>135</sup> Don Kammerdiener supports Moreno’s statement and goes further to describe how “Oscar [Romo] assisted many Cubans who came to the U.S. Some of these

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<sup>130</sup>Heberto Becerra, interview by author, Kansas City, Missouri, 17 August 2010.

<sup>131</sup>Joe Westbury, “The Price of Freedom,” *MissionsUSA* (September-October 1982): 27.

<sup>132</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup>*Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>135</sup>Frank Moreno, telephone interview by author, 18 October 2010.

pastors were given a pension by the Home Mission Board. Without this assistance these pastors would have had no retirement funds.”<sup>136</sup>

### **Cuba’s Transition from Home Mission Board to Foreign Mission Board**

The Home Mission Board historically supported Baptist work in Cuba. During the very difficult years after the revolution, Oscar Romo creatively discovered ways to help Cuban Baptists. Since 1965, Romo developed excellent relationships with the churches, Baptist convention, and government leadership that facilitated ministry in the midst of a communist government.

Many Cuban pastors who made the difficult decision to leave their native country found a friend in Oscar Romo. It was this friendship and extensive relational and professional network that helped Romo find new places for Cuban pastors to serve in a new and strange land. Sánchez observes that

when many of the Cuban pastors were released from prison they were encouraged by the Cuban government to leave the country. It was during this time that Romo and his staff, in communication with Baptist State Convention leaders, was instrumental in placing Cuban pastors in existing congregations or church-planting efforts in many parts of the country. This resulted in the establishment of Hispanic congregations especially along the eastern part of the United States where few of them existed prior to this period of time.<sup>137</sup>

One person who was instrumental in the transition of Cuba from the Home Mission Board to the Foreign (now International) Mission Board was Don Kammerdiener, who was FMB Area Director for the Caribbean. Reflecting upon the historical background of the relationship of Southern Baptists to Cuba, Kammerdiener cites the great influence the United States had over Cuba after the Spanish-American war.<sup>138</sup> Over time, probably because of increased difficulties in the relationship

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<sup>136</sup>Don Kammerdiener, “Oscar Romo y Cuba,” e-mail to author, 29 December 2012.

<sup>137</sup>Sánchez, “Oscar Romo y Cuba,” e-mail.

<sup>138</sup>Kammerdiener, “Oscar Romo y Cuba,” e-mail.



between the churches and the Cuban government, “it was eventually recognized that the relationship with Baptists in these countries should properly pass to the Foreign Mission Board.”<sup>139</sup> Sánchez agrees and remarks that “in light of the continued government restrictions, the leaders of the Home Mission Board and the Foreign Mission Board felt that it would be beneficial for Cuba to be seen as a separate country and not an extension of the United States.”<sup>140</sup> Reflecting on those days, Kammerdiener says, “Oscar and I worked out the details of the transfer. He was most helpful in sharing with me his vast knowledge of Cuba and Baptist work there. From my perspective, this transition could not have been smoother.”<sup>141</sup>

Cuban Baptists became a self-reliant group as a result of the difficulties perpetuated by the Castro government. Most Cuban Baptists proudly maintain the heritage, music, organization, and theology largely imported by the missionaries in the 1950s. Both Sánchez and Kammerdiener agree on the exceptional growth experienced by the Cuban churches in the early years of the twenty-first century. When reflecting upon helpful strategies for the work in Cuba, Sánchez points to effective partnerships:

A factor that paved the way for the transition of Baptist work in Cuba from NAMB [North American Mission Board] to IMB [International Mission Board] was the fact that the Home Mission Board was instrumental in establishing strong Baptist churches, a seminary, and a strong Baptist Convention. This became the foundation for the work that has continued to grow. A wise decision of the part of the IMB has been to enable entities such as the Baptist Convention of Florida and seminaries such as Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary to be involved in leadership training over extended periods of time.<sup>142</sup>

On the other hand, Kammerdiener believes growth has also been slowed by some received traditions, such as the insistence that only ordained pastors can perform

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<sup>139</sup>Ibid.

<sup>140</sup>Sánchez, “Oscar Romo y Cuba,” e-mail.

<sup>141</sup>Kammerdiener, “Oscar Romo y Cuba,” e-mail.

<sup>142</sup>Sánchez, “Oscar Romo y Cuba,” e-mail.

the ordinance of baptism and the Lord's Supper.<sup>143</sup> Kammerdiener's major point of disagreement with Oscar Romo was over mission theology. For example, Romo insisted on the indigenous church principle and was "convinced that mission work should always be led by ethnic believers of the target group. I believe strongly that the Spirit of God is sovereign and gives gifts and calling to whomever He chooses. It is not the accident of one's birth but the presence of a missionary gift and calling that gives authenticity to one's ministry."<sup>144</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Oscar Romo's refusal to accept the idea of the "melting pot" was shaped by a sense of ethnic pride that fostered within him a powerful sense of identity. The cultural milieu of his day ultimately shaped his theological position. The practical application of Romo's theology was seen in his ecclesiology. He was convinced concerning the lostness of all people and the need for everyone to come to a saving knowledge of Christ as personal Savior. As a result, his methodologies were expressed in ways that were biblically based and culturally contextualized. The indigenous strategies that he articulated and implemented were similar to those espoused by Donald McGavran, Allan Tippett, and Melvin Hodges.

The next chapter introduces the reader to three important questions one must answer in order to have a better understanding of the importance and influence of language missions in the Southern Baptist Convention during the period of 1970-1994. First, what were the challenges presented by the American Mosaic? Second, what were the most salient language missions strategies? Third, what were the outcomes of these strategies?

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<sup>143</sup>Kammerdiener, "Oscar Romo y Cuba," e-mail.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER 4

### CHURCH-PLANTING STRATEGIES

#### **Introduction**

The demographic landscape of North America has been changing gradually for many years. The passage of the Immigration Act of 1965<sup>1</sup> resulted in significant population growth. As more people from the Western Hemisphere came to the United States, new languages, foods, and religious traditions spread throughout the country. One ethnic group that came from Central and South American countries was Hispanics. The rapidly growing Hispanic population presents both a challenge and also a great mission opportunity to the local church. This growth becomes a demographic, sociocultural, and missiological challenge to the North American church. This growth also creates great mission opportunities for the church because God is bringing the nations of the world to its doorstep. Many of these immigrants are looking for political freedom and a better life for their families. The church, more than any other government or secular agency, is uniquely positioned to present the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Great Commission, to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19), is a mandate for the church to make every necessary change needed to reach these people groups in its mission field. Will the church be willing to make the necessary changes to thrive effectively in a multicultural world?<sup>2</sup>

Figure 1 and table 1 show the Hispanic population change over a period of forty years (1970-2010). Hispanics grew from 9.1 million people in 1970 to a robust

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<sup>1</sup>Joshua Grijalva, comp., *Ethnic Baptist History* (Miami: Meta Publications, 1992), 160. For more explanation about the Immigration Act of 1965, see p. 1 of this dissertation.

<sup>2</sup>Gustavo V. Suárez, “A Critique of the Multi-ethnic Church Planting Strategy,” *Great Commission Research Journal* 3, no. 2 (Winter 2012): 237.

50.5 million people in 2010, or a 454.9 percent growth. During the twenty-five years this dissertation covers (1970-1994) the Hispanic population grew from 9.1 million people in 1970 to 26.6 million people in 1994, suggesting a 192.3 percent growth.

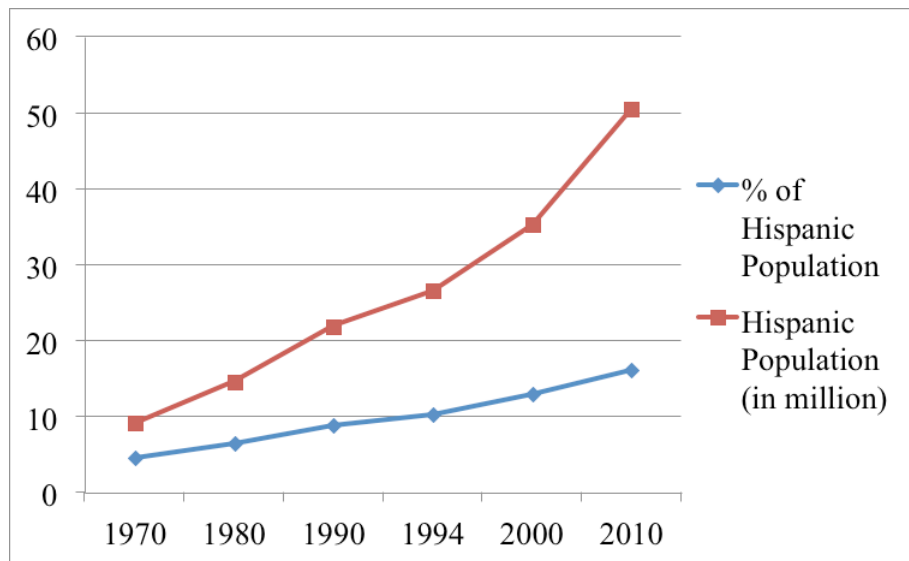


Figure 1. Growth of Hispanic population

Table 1. Growth of Hispanic population

Year	Hispanic Population (in millions)	Percent of Hispanic Population
1970	9.1	4.5
1980	14.6	6.4
1990	21.9	8.8
1994	26.6	10.2
2000	35.3	13.0
2010	50.5	16.1

Oscar Romo had an intentional strategy not only to reach the lost, but also to discover, develop, and deploy leaders and to involve other Southern Baptist agency leadership for effective ministry to language groups in North America. This chapter

introduces the reader to two important questions one must answer in order to have a better understanding of the importance and influence of language missions in the Southern Baptist Convention during the period of 1970-1994. First, what were the challenges presented by the American Mosaic? Second, what were the most salient language missions strategies?

### **Challenges Presented by the American Mosaic**

The gradual growth of the Hispanic population changed the face of North America and presented unique challenges to the American Mosaic. Although speaking one language, Spanish, there are distinct sociological differences. The growing diversity in the United States during the years 1970 to 1994 presented certain challenges to the local churches, language missions, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

#### **A Challenge to the Local Church**

The church in North America, at least since the early twentieth century, has been adjusting to changes from a homogenous society to a more diverse society. These changes, although gradual at first, intensified in the 1960s with the initial exodus of Cuban refugees to Florida. Additionally, despite the many amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act in anticipation of the restriction of Mexican immigration, “the number of legal immigrants rose from 38,000 in 1964 to 67,000 in 1986; and over the same period gross undocumented migration increased from 87,000 to 3.8 million entries per year.”<sup>3</sup> The increase of both legal and illegal immigration was not just restricted to people from Mexico. People from “Poland, Ethiopia, Korea, China, the

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<sup>3</sup>Jorge Durand, Douglas S. Massey, and Emilio A. Parrado, “The New Era of Mexican Migration to the United States,” September 1999 [on-line]; accessed 25 April 2013; available from <http://www.journalofamericanhistory.org/projects/mexico/jdurand.html>; Internet.

Philippines, Latin America, Central America, and numerous other countries”<sup>4</sup> were also coming to the United States illegally.

Another source of challenge to the local church was that many of the new immigrants to the United States were first generation who identified with a language and culture other than English. Many of the churches did not know effective ways to communicate the gospel in the language and culture of the people. An obvious challenge to the local churches was the myriads of cultures and languages that sometimes were present in the Anglo congregation. Some churches attempted to reach out to the new immigrants by sponsoring refugees, others taught English as a second language, others adopted families, but few were able to present Christ in a culturally relevant way to the Hispanics.

Some Anglo churches encouraged and led the Hispanics to form Spanish-speaking churches. Other churches encouraged Hispanics to join English-speaking congregations. The latter was popular among many of the denominations in the United States in the early 1960s and 1970s. The cultural differences created a learning experience for both Anglo and Hispanic churches.

Anglo pastors were also challenged in terms of the function of the pastoral role. For example, many of the Anglo pastors spent considerable time in the study each week. The Spanish pastor, on the other hand, spent considerable time taking people to the hospital, medical appointments, and the immigration office, and also translating for church families. In some occasions, these two divergent ways of doing ministries caused conflicts between Anglo and Hispanic pastors. The church in the United States was at a crossroads. On the one hand, language churches were influenced by the idea of congregationalizing based on the language and culture of the people. On the other hand,

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<sup>4</sup>Oscar I. Romo, “On the Edge of Tomorrow,” paper presented at the Language Missions Conference, February 1986, Miami, Florida (Nashville: Home Mission Board Language Missions Collection, Southern Baptist Historical Archive and Library, 1986), 3.

many denominations, wanting to depart from the idea of segregation, introduced the idea of a “church for all the people.”<sup>5</sup>

### **A Challenge to Language Missions**

The American Mosaic not only presented a challenge to the local church, but it also helped give structure to the strategic thinking and direction that language missions was to take. The cultural environment during World War II brought awareness to the oneness of the United States. For example, in the 1950s the idea of unity and the fact that “people could no longer be confined to the ‘other side of the tracks’”<sup>6</sup> encouraged the church to think of assimilation. The idea of a “church for all people,” or assimilation, presented a challenge to Oscar Romo’s sense of ethnic pride and identity.

Oscar Romo, in his presentation “On the Edge of Tomorrow,” recalls the influence of the early years of language missions, as well as the struggles faced by language congregations. Since many attending ethnic congregations were

of lighter complexion than the blacks, [they] were encouraged and often ‘forced’ to join the church whose congregation was the largest and strongest. Properties, previously used by ethnic churches, were disposed of and the funds were given to the Anglo church. Ethnic pastors became associate pastors. English became the language of the congregation because, after all, if the ethnic were to live in America, they should speak English. Those ethnic congregations that did not do “as they were told” lost their financial support; and the pastors were dismissed from the denomination. Ethnic churches were closed. The people began to adjust, but were bewildered. In an effort to meet the needs of the ethnic adults, local churches established language classes and departments in Sunday school. Some efforts were made to interpret English services. The language pastor had to revalidate his credentials in an accredited seminary that only used English in its programs.<sup>7</sup>

The rapidly growing influx of people from many nations with different worldviews presented a missiological and a theological challenge to the work of language

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 6-7. Oscar Romo is describing the “Contextual Crossroads of Missions.” In this section of his paper, Romo describes the efforts to assimilate and work toward integration of cultures. This paragraph is very general and lacks specific examples. I do not doubt that some of these cultural conflicts were present during the time. Yet, one has to be careful not to make broad, general statements.

missions in the United States. Although Hispanics share a common language, there are differences in intonation and culture among people of different countries. Many Hispanics come from a Roman Catholic or Pentecostal background. In the midst of this religious and cultural diversity, however, Southern Baptists were resolved to reach persons of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, and social backgrounds without compromising the gospel's message.<sup>8</sup>

### **A Challenge to the Southern Baptist Convention**

Oscar Romo became Director of Language Missions for the Home Mission Board in 1971. As the new director, he brought a new philosophy to language missions, one that went against the practice of that day and one that would ultimately transform Southern Baptists' language missions. When some denominations and churches accepted the concept of the "Melting Pot," Romo rejected it, embracing the idea of pluralism<sup>9</sup> and the right of each person to retain his or her unique self-identity and heritage. When some denominations and churches accepted the concept of the "one church for all," Romo refused to accept it, embracing strategies aimed at reaching specific language/cultural groups.

When some denominations and churches accepted the concept of "oneness," Romo disapproved of it, recognizing the diversity of the people. When some denominations and churches accepted the concept of assimilation, Romo abandoned it, presenting the need to be contextual. When some denominations and churches accepted the educational concept of "one language," Romo condemned it, demonstrating the need for contextual materials in the language and culture of the people.

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<sup>8</sup>See "A Language Mission's Theology" section in chap. 3, beginning on p. 87 of this dissertation, for an explanation of the theological premises that guided language missions methodologies.

<sup>9</sup>Oscar Romo used the term 'pluralism' to refer to the United States as a nation of many nations. Romo did not use the term to speak of pluralistic theologies.



Perhaps the greatest challenge to the Southern Baptist Convention was what Oscar Romo called the “American ethnics.”<sup>10</sup> This segment of society is not only bilingual, but in some cases they are also trilingual and multicultural, yet capable of relating to different cultures. American ethnics, although fluent in English, are proud of their Spanish heritage. These Americans “historically have never ‘melted,’ nor will they ever ‘melt.’”<sup>11</sup> These American ethnics are the “Ñ generation,”<sup>12</sup> or the “in-between generation.”

During the early years of 1970s, although the percentage of first generation was at its highest level of 45 percent of the Hispanic population,<sup>13</sup> Romo began to encourage missionaries to strategically plan to reach the second-generation Hispanics. Today, as one looks back through history, one is able to appreciate Oscar Romo’s visionary leadership. A 2003, a Pew Research Center study on “The Rise of the Second Generation” shows that the projection between 2000 and 2020 anticipates first-generation Hispanics to drop from 45 to 25 percent of the population. Second-generation Hispanics, on the other hand, are anticipated to increase from 28 to 47 percent of the population.<sup>14</sup> The generational

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<sup>10</sup>The American ethnics, according to Oscar Romo’s definition, are people who identify themselves with a language-culture group and were born, raised, and educated in the United States. They are bilingual and bicultural and are capable of living in the two worlds simultaneously; yet, they are proud of their heritage.

<sup>11</sup>Oscar I. Romo, “Opsimathy,” presented at the Catalytic Missions Conference, Missouri Baptist College, 18 May 1985, St. Louis, Missouri (Nashville: Home Mission Board Language Missions Collection, Southern Baptist Historical Archive and Library, 1985), 4.

<sup>12</sup>The Ñ generation is a term I use to refer to second-generation Hispanics who, although fluent in English and proud of their Hispanic heritage, find themselves many times “in between” and not fitting in a traditional first-generation Hispanic church or in an English-speaking Anglo congregation. Ñ is the letter in the Spanish alphabet found between the letters N and O; thus, the in-between generation. Although the term is used by some writers, it is not in relationship to the different generations and the church. Bill Teck, founder of the Generation Ñ website, treats the subject from a secular perspective. His website is found at <http://www.generation-ntv.com/>.

<sup>13</sup>Roberto Suro and Jeffrey S. Passel, “The Rise of the Second Generation: Changing Patterns in Hispanic Population Growth,” 14 October 2003, *Pew Hispanic Center*, 3 [on-line]; accessed 14 March 2013; available from <http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/reports/22.pdf>; Internet.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

shift in demographics among Hispanics, which was predicted by Romo in the 1970s, presents challenges to the Southern Baptist Convention. These denominational challenges are much more evident in the twenty-first century.

American ethnics today are the growing second generation that easily becomes invisible ethnics to the Anglo majority. They become invisible because many speak English without an accent, are married to an Anglo, are well educated, and are middle-class professionals. These second generations “are challenging Southern Baptists to the development of an aggressive effort to share the gospel contextually and with relevancy. They call for the development of an English-speaking, language-culture church, of which a typical Anglo pastor is not equipped to serve.”<sup>15</sup> Yet, in the twentieth-first century, the Southern Baptist Convention is more likely to readily embrace a multiethnic strategy than to provide a contextual strategy to reach specific language/cultural groups.

### **Language Missions Strategies**

Strategic plans are only good if they lead to effective results. The combination of church growth concepts, the creation of the ELD program, contextual materials, and the emergence of national ethnic fellowships were some of the strategic components that contributed to the effectiveness of language missions among Southern Baptists during the years 1970 to 1994. This section provides a descriptive overview of the most salient language missions strategies. Primary strategies are those that were significant in contributing to new ethnic congregations. Secondary strategies helped strengthen and develop not only the missionary, but also the ministries of language missions. Secondary strategies played a supportive role to primary strategies.

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<sup>15</sup>Romo, “Opsimathy,” 5.

## **Primary Language Missions Strategies**

Four primary language missions strategies are considered.<sup>16</sup> The Ethnic Church Growth Concept was instrumental in presenting the gospel in the ethnolinguistic context of the people. The Ethnic Leadership Development Centers provided specialized training in the language of the people.<sup>17</sup> The National Language Strategy was an attempt to bring coordination of language missions between state conventions and the Home Mission Board. The emergence of Ethnic Fellowships was also an important component of primary strategies.

**Ethnic Church Growth Concept.** Romo's American Mosaic demanded creative ways to communicate the message of Jesus Christ. The gospel is the only constant truth in the midst of a diverse population, many of which were influenced with fallacious doctrinal positions. The Ethnic Church Growth Concept included methodologies whose goals were to seek to evangelize and congregationalize people, primarily living in the cities. The task of reaching the American Mosaics

calls for imagination, exercise of values, attitudes, feelings, convictions, and aspirations that actually transcend the cognitive domain of those seeking to carry out the command of Christ—'Go . . . tell.' Thus the development of concepts that provided the opportunity for expression, creativity, thought, participation, and evaluation has been essential in the development of a viable strategy for persons living in changing ethnic patterns.<sup>18</sup>

An interrelatedness existed between the Microcosmic Urban Strategy<sup>19</sup> and the Ethnic Church Growth Concept. In essence, the city was a training ground where

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<sup>16</sup>I decided what methodologies were placed as primary or secondary strategies based on my research and personal experience of ministry during Oscar Romo's tenure as Director of the Language Missions Division of the Home Mission Board.

<sup>17</sup>Joshua Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History* (Miami: Meta Publications, 1992), 160.

<sup>18</sup>Joshua Grijalva, "Grijalva Manuscript—Ethnic Baptist History" (Nashville: Home Mission Board Ethnic Ministries Collection, AR 631-12, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, 1987), 819.

<sup>19</sup>Microcosm means "little world." Oscar Romo observed that each city had sections comprised of people from different parts of the world. These people had their own language and culture and thus formed their own "little world."

language missionaries put into practice the church growth concepts. Romo recognized that “the metro areas are in reality clusters of communities that permit persons to proudly retain their ethnicity and communicate in the language of their soul.”<sup>20</sup> His strategies were designed to reach ethnicities primarily living in the cities without ignoring the rural areas.

The Microcosmic Urban Strategy provided assistance to existing Anglo congregations in transitional communities. There were at least four benefits for the implementation of this strategy. First, the strategy created awareness among English-speaking congregations of the language/cultural groups in that geographical area. Second, the strategy provided training for churches that may be in transitional areas. Third, the strategy presented possible outreach opportunities to language/cultural groups within the existing ministries of the local church. Fourth, the strategy applied indigenous church growth principles to establish new language/cultural congregations.

The Catalytic, Laser, and Kaleidoscopic church growth concepts were methodologies used within these clusters of communities (microcosms). These three concepts were used effectively to discover new language groups, present a contextualized gospel, start new congregations, and allow for a Christian expression that varies from culture to culture. Oscar Romo introduced Southern Baptists to these new missiological terms.

During his growing up years, Oscar Romo was influenced by a keen awareness of paternalism, both in life and in ministry. The Catalytic Church Growth Concept emerged from a desire to move from “paternalism to fraternalism.”<sup>21</sup> Ministry, from Romo’s perspective, was a partnership of people from different cultural backgrounds working together, as equals, to reach the nations gathered around a geographical

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<sup>20</sup>Oscar I. Romo, “Church Growth Concepts,” M. Wendell Belew Collection (Nashville: Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archive, 1968-1970), 5.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 1.

area; namely, a local mission field. The concept of catalytic missions included a twofold approach: (1) the planting and development of indigenous language/cultural congregations to become self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating; and (2) encouraging existing churches to consider a crosscultural ministry to all persons in the community.<sup>22</sup> Romo often challenged missionaries to think beyond their own cultural groups and reach other ethnic groups in their community.

Frequently asked questions related to the catalytic concept are, What is a catalytic missionary? and What does a catalytic missionary do? A catalytic missionary was appointed by the Home Mission Board to serve a specific language group or sometimes multiple language/cultural groups in a geographical area.<sup>23</sup> A catalyst was a change agent. The general responsibilities of a catalytic missionary were to develop “mission principles into a mission field, using or developing relevant methodology, equipping leadership, and strengthening the various groups in their efforts to witness effectively to the people in their community.”<sup>24</sup> Catalytic missionaries sometimes were used in one of two ways: Catalytic cycling or Catalytic lending.<sup>25</sup> The Catalytic Church Growth Concept was church-centered, people-oriented, and indigenous.

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>See p. 40, n. 65, of this dissertation for more explanation. The term “Catalyst” is used in chemistry as a substance that accelerates a reaction but it is not changed in the process. The Catalytic missionary was a change agent. For example, he started churches, but did not become the permanent pastor of that congregation. He equipped leaders through the Ethnic Leadership Development centers, but did not become a professor. I was the Language Catalytic Missionary for the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware from 1985-1992. As a Language Catalytic Missionary, I was to initiate and develop indigenous churches among all language cultural groups except Koreans. The convention had another person who was the Korean Catalytic missionary.

<sup>24</sup>Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 145.

<sup>25</sup>Grijalva, “Grijalva Manuscript—Ethnic Baptist History,” 930. Since a Catalytic missionary was a change agent, they had flexibility in ministry. Catalytic Cycling was when a missionary was assigned to a particular area with the understanding that after a need assessment his responsibilities may change. For example, a missionary may have been placed in an urban area to start a church among one ethnic group. The evaluation of the needs, however, shows a growing multiethnic population (various ethnic groups). This missionary assignment may be changed from a particular ethnic group to a Multiethnic Catalytic role. The urban area normally had a few Catalytic missionaries each with specific cultural expertise. An example of Catalytic Lending was when one Catalytic with expertise among Indochinese came over to another area of the city to help a Hispanic Catalytic who found a group of Indochinese people.

Another Ethnic Church Growth Concept was called the Laser Church Growth Concept. Laser stands for “Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation.”<sup>26</sup> Laser is another of Oscar Romo’s missiological terms. The Laser Church Growth Concept places people from one language/cultural group to passionately communicate the gospel message to people of the same language/cultural group, in an urban area, with the intent of starting a new church. The Laser’s main focus, like the Catalytic Church Growth Concept, was to discover, evangelize, and congregationalize people from specific language/cultural groups.

Acts 9-12 gives a good biblical background for the Laser Church Growth Concept. The apostle Paul “led the penetrating, cultivating, motivating, and establishment of churches in the first century.”<sup>27</sup> The purpose of the Laser Penetration places emphasis on these objectives in order to reach the different language/cultural groups “in a twentieth century microcosmic society.”<sup>28</sup>

A Laser Church Growth Penetration took place in a period of three to seven days. Persons with experience and knowledge in a language/cultural group were placed in a geographical area. During the week, these people attempted to locate key people from the target group that live in that area. Each team usually arrived at the target community by 8:00 a.m. The different teams visited the Chamber of Commerce, churches, businesses, community centers, schools, hospitals, radio and television stations, universities, social clubs, and restaurants. The teams also examined telephone books looking for names normally associated with the target group.

Each evening, the teams gathered for a time of debriefing. Each team reported on new organizations and people they met. They also shared names of people from

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<sup>26</sup>Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 146. For more information, see p. 16 of this dissertation, “Laser Church Growth Concept” section under “Definitions.”

<sup>27</sup>Romo, “Church Growth Concepts,” 2.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

another target group they met during the day. The team made recommendations and necessary adjustments for the next day's activities. Plans were made for the next day and the changes were injected into the daily plan.

The goal of each team was to have a Bible study with their target group on the last day of the week. The target group was people they had discovered during their daily incursions to the city during the week. A time of celebration was held on the last evening after each team returned. During the time of celebration, each team made their final report and recommendation. The information was left with the local leadership and immediate follow-up took place. Any administrative recommendations such as a new missionary position were negotiated between the Home Mission Board and the local Baptist association and state convention. The 1978 Language Missions Report to the Southern Baptist Convention reported that the Home Mission Board "conducted Laser Church Growth efforts in Los Angeles and St. Louis with 25 new units established."<sup>29</sup>

Another Ethnic Church Growth Concept was called the Kaleidoscopic Church Growth Concept. Most children have seen and possibly played with a kaleidoscope. A kaleidoscope is an optical instrument that is rotated to make the loose bits of colored glass produce a symmetrical design. The glass inside the tube never changes. The arrangements of the pieces of glass, however, continually change as a result of "an outside force upon the instrument."<sup>30</sup> In explaining the Kaleidoscopic Church Growth Concept, Oscar Romo observed that the "unchangeable elements of the kaleidoscopic church are the proclamation of Jesus Christ, worship, leadership development, effective ministry, and missions."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Porter W. Routh, *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, June 13-15, 1978* (Nashville: Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1978), 78.

<sup>30</sup>Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 146.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 147.

The Kaleidoscopic Church Growth Concept emerged in 1967 as an effort to help congregations in urban settings serve the entire ethnic community and to anticipate future changes. Many congregations, in urban areas, found themselves in the midst of transitional communities. The people moving into the community were usually different than those who were members of the church. Transitional communities created serious problems for the established church. Transitional communities created a financial burden as more people left the church than become members of the church. As the membership decreased, it became more difficult to maintain the building and pay the costs of utilities. A lack of ability to identify and reach the changing community became a reality. Transitional communities created a missiological burden. As people from different ethnic backgrounds moved into the community, it became more difficult for the established church to present the gospel contextually to the new neighbors. Transitional communities also created great mission opportunities for the established church to work with the new neighbors in reaching the community. Consequently, the Kaleidoscopic Church Growth Concept became an effective tool.

Oscar Romo explained in his article “Kaleidoscopic Church Growth Concept” how this would work:

Why not form a corporation composed of several congregations (Anglo and ethnics) in which the autonomy of each congregation is preserved and the resources of the congregations are combined to present a strong evangelistic witness in the community? This idea was proposed at a conference of the Language Missions Department of the Baptist Home Mission Board. As a result, Nineteenth Avenue<sup>32</sup> decided to experiment with this concept.

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<sup>32</sup>Nineteenth Avenue Baptist Church in San Francisco, California, experimented with the Kaleidoscopic Church Growth Concept in 1970. The church was concerned about its survival, but they also had an intense desire to reach their community. Francis M. DuBose, Urban Missions Leader and retired professor of missions from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, was a longtime member of this congregation. In later years, this congregation moved away from the doctrinal position of Southern Baptists and became affiliated with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Today, Nineteenth Avenue Baptist Church is known as Church of the Nations and includes five ethnic congregations in addition to the Anglo congregation, which is pastored by a woman. The church covenant found on their website is very general and lacks any doctrinal position. While I do not agree with their doctrinal position, I am including it because I believe in the early 1970s this church communicated well the idea of the Kaleidoscopic Church Growth Concept.



The Nineteenth Avenue Baptist Church has made several attempts to start a mission. The question of language, autonomy, and the utilization of property had arisen before. The response of the ethnic person has been minimal. The Anglo church had a membership of 132 in 1967. The total receipts for the year was \$11,850. The church had a debt of \$63,000 on its building at the time. This church was concerned about its own survival. Its concern for the community was even stronger. This concern led the church to invite Henry Mu to initiate a Chinese Bible class in their building in 1968. Later that year this class became a mission. Its growth in membership as well as in stewardship led both pastors to crystallize their thoughts concerning the multi-congregational corporation.<sup>33</sup>

The result of this partnership was very encouraging. A ten-year study of the Nineteenth Avenue Baptist Church reveals that the membership grew “at the rate of 97% (from 105 to 207).”<sup>34</sup> If the membership of the four congregations is combined, “the rate of growth is 226%—from 105 to 309.”<sup>35</sup> The Anglo congregation experienced a 255 percent increase in its finances, but the combined total receipts for the four congregations grew from \$9,527 to \$52,370.<sup>36</sup> It is not difficult to capture the potential for cooperative and effective ministry to the community by the four congregations

**Ethnic Leadership Development.** Many of Oscar Romo’s greatest strategies usually developed around the table with friends while drinking coffee, sharing, and further developing relationships. The Ethnic Leadership Development Centers, a strategy to train ethnic leaders, was birthed in 1981 from a conversation between Oscar Romo and his friend William Pinson, then President of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, California. Joe Hernández shared about the early beginnings of the Ethnic Leadership Development:

Oscar had been interested in the provision of theological education as a strategy for Language Missions with two primary projects (1) the Hispanic Baptist Bible Institute [various names] and supported it through joint funding with BGCT, and

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<sup>33</sup>Oscar Romo, “Kaleidoscopic Church Growth Concept,” M. Wendell Belew Collection (Nashville: Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archive, 1968-1970), 12.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

(2) the Puerto Rico Baptist Seminary, which was entirely an HMB project. While both of these programs provided training for Hispanic pastors, it was not enough to meet the needs across the U.S. Oscar then worked with NOBTS in the Miami Ethnic Branch, which focused on Hispanics and Haitians. Unlike the two previous projects, this one required considerably less money to operate. It also was a project with a three-way relationship—HMB, Florida Baptist Convention, and NOBTS. For the missions money invested, the Miami Ethnic Branch proved to be the best “return on investment.” As precursors to the ELD Centers, Romo sought a project that would cover a broader geographical and ethnic area, thus leading to his exploration of the ELD concept with Dr. Bill Pinson of GGBTS. With the possibility that this project might work out, Romo enlisted Joe Hernández and Josue Grijalva to develop the concept. Hernández worked out the concept and relationships with GGBTS and the state conventions, while Grijalva did the administrative work at GGBTS and the field activity for the centers connected to GGBTS. Hernández was working with a Language Missions Division strategy called Ethnic Leadership Development, which Hernández developed, not only the ELD Centers, but other equipping components from non-credit seminars to a DMin project. Hernández expanded the work of the centers with other seminaries, which included SBTS and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.<sup>37</sup>

The development of a strategy to train ethnic pastors known as the Ethnic Leadership Development was important because every other strategy or methodology used in Language Missions was dependent on trained leaders.<sup>38</sup> In a conversation with Merry Romo, she said that “during Oscar’s forty-six years of service in Language Missions at the Home Mission Board, he was most proud of starting a program to train ethnic leaders. He nurtured Ethnic Leadership Development from the beginning to where it was in 1995 when he retired.”<sup>39</sup>

Was Ethnic Leadership Development necessary or was it a duplication of efforts?<sup>40</sup> Were not the six Southern Baptist seminaries, Baptist schools, and the Baptist state convention training ethnic leaders? The new efforts, in part, came out of the Bold

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<sup>37</sup>Joe Hernández, e-mail to author, 27 February 2013.

<sup>38</sup>See appendix 1 of this dissertation, “A Philosophy of Mission Training.”

<sup>39</sup>Merry P. Romo, e-mail to author, 30 January 2013.

<sup>40</sup>See appendix 1 of this dissertation, “A Philosophy of Mission Training.”

Mission Thrust goals.<sup>41</sup> Oscar Romo’s philosophical understanding of how best to reach the world also propelled him “to provide ethnic leadership development training to equip present and future leaders in language churches.”<sup>42</sup> Romo’s intent was never to replace seminaries or other educational entities. He realized, however, that what he envisioned was beyond the possibility of any individual or organization. He was looking for effective partnerships. He discovered ways in which the Home Mission Board’s Language Missions Division could partner with seminaries, colleges, agencies, state conventions, and associations to “help meet the needs for trained ethnic leaders of language churches.”<sup>43</sup> Merry Romo adds that “Oscar firmly believed that the contextualization of the Biblical message in the language and culture of the various ethnic groups was essential for the evangelization of the United States and its territories.”<sup>44</sup>

An initial examination of the leadership landscape in North America revealed great needs. A 1985 report described the leadership crisis that existed among the various ethnic groups. Seventy percent of the Laotian churches, fifty Indian churches, many European churches, and “100 Hispanic groups were pastorless.”<sup>45</sup> Grijalva, in the same report acknowledged a need for more than five thousand leaders for ethnic churches. As the Hispanic population continued to steadily flow into the United States, the need for new churches, as well as new leadership, increased.

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<sup>41</sup>“Although it was not called Bold Mission Thrust until 1979, this convention-adopted mandate to unite all SBC agencies in a massive effort of ‘bold mission’ set the agenda for SBC missions work for years to come. Contrary to popular perception, Bold Mission Thrust was not constructed as a single set of goals for the 25-year period. Instead, it developed in stages. Convention messengers set a goal [in 1976] ‘that every person in the world shall have the opportunity to hear the gospel of Christ in the next 25 years . . . and can understand the claim Jesus Christ has on their lives.’” Mark Wingfield, “Bold Mission Thrust Comes to an End with a Few of Many Goals Realized,” *Baptist Standard*, 25 June 2001 [on-line]; accessed 27 February 2013; available from [http://assets.baptiststandard.com/archived/2001/6\\_25/pages/sbc\\_bold.html](http://assets.baptiststandard.com/archived/2001/6_25/pages/sbc_bold.html); Internet.

<sup>42</sup>Grijalva, “Grijalva Manuscript–Ethnic Baptist History,” 834.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Merry Romo, e-mail to author.

<sup>45</sup>Grijalva, “Grijalva Manuscript–Ethnic Baptist History,” 834.

The Ethnic Leadership Development program established the initial centers in the West, American Samoa, and Hawaii because of the geographical location of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary. The development of these centers was fast during the decade of the 1980s. Classes were taught in “eight different languages to 225 students representing twenty ethnic groups.”<sup>46</sup> Six years after the Ethnic Leadership Development partnership started, other centers east of the Mississippi River and in Puerto Rico brought the number of “ethnic theological centers related to several Southern Baptist Convention seminaries to 70.”<sup>47</sup> Joe Hernández, director of the Home Mission Board’s Language Resource Correlation Department, stated in 1991 that “about 1,300 students study at more than 90 Ethnic Leadership Development centers across the country.”<sup>48</sup> Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, although not the only institution, has been the one institution that has made the Ethnic Leadership Development Centers part of their mission-giving national leadership.

Despite the initial growth of the centers one should ask: Were the ELD centers helpful in the development of leaders? Joe Hernández responds positively to this question:

Helpful? It met so many needs, for bivocational church planters, for lay church planters, in addition to those that were going into full time ministry. . . . I would say so. It also created a means by which persons could start their academic work that, though considered near credit for the early certificates, they could advance to the diploma programs. Though not all continued beyond the certificate level nor the diploma level, they found that they could take their near credit work to colleges and work toward fully accredited bachelor level work. The Koreans, Haitians and Vietnamese probably made the most advancement through the degree levels.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 833.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Sarah Zimmerman, “Indigenous Leaders Called Essential to Ethnic Church Growth,” 21 May 1991, *Baptist Press* [on-line]; accessed 27 February 2013; available from <http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/7149,21-May-1991.pdf>; Internet.

<sup>49</sup>Joe Hernández, e-mail to author, 27 February 2013.

The Ethnic Leadership Development Centers in New Mexico started in 1982. Dalton Edwards directed the program for five years. Joe Hawn, who was the Baptist Convention of New Mexico Deaf consultant, became the second director of the ELD. Thomas Eason directed the centers in Southern New Mexico, in Las Cruces, and in Alamogordo. Benjamin Bedford gave leadership to the Albuquerque Center, while Wes McAfee gave leadership to the Northwest Center, primarily among the Native Americans.

Eason's observations related to the impact of Ethnic Leadership Development upon the Hispanic churches of southern New Mexico are very encouraging and similar to Hernández' comments. Eason said that "every Hispanic pastor except two among the churches of southern New Mexico has been trained by either the Las Cruces or the Alamogordo centers. The Associational Director of Missions, James Underwood and the Catalyst for Western Texas, Mario Gonzalez, both graduated from the Hispanic School of Theology of Las Cruces."<sup>50</sup>

Ethnic Leadership Development Centers began to flourish in California in 1982. According to Anthony Aheav,<sup>51</sup> the first center in California was started at the First Bilingual Baptist Church in Pico Rivera by Joe de León, pastor of the church. Aheav recalled that the initial group of students was limited in their Spanish-speaking ability and educational level. One important decision that needed to be made immediately was to determine if they were going to work with this group or with a more promising group of students. Joe de León and the leadership of the new center chose to work with the initial group of students. They also made the decision to be more practical than academic in their training.

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<sup>50</sup>Thomas Eason, telephone conversation with author, 1 March 2013.

<sup>51</sup>Anthony Ahaev served as the Language Missions Director for the California State Baptist Convention from 1989-2011. Since 2012, Aheav has served at the state office as the Church Planting Group Leader. Joe de León retired as the Church Planting Group Leader in 2011.

In a couple of years, Aheav observed, “new churches were started by many of these students.”<sup>52</sup> He added that a great contribution of the Ethnic Leadership Development center was that it produced many candidates for church planting. In fact, Aheav adds, “When I came to the state office in 1989, I was surprised to see that many of my former students at the Center were now serving as church planters in Southern California.” As these centers multiplied throughout the State of California so did the number of students and the new church plants. Aheav gives credits to Oscar Romo and William Pinson and concludes that, indeed, “ELD produced more leaders and more churches in California.”<sup>53</sup>

Today, the California State Baptist Convention has 2,200 congregations. The breakdown of these congregations are: 900 African American (40.9 percent), 900 Hispanics (40.9 percent), and 400 Anglos (18.2 percent).<sup>54</sup> It is very difficult with such diversity to maintain mission momentum without adequate contextual leadership. These ethnic congregations would require a number of new ethnic leaders. In addition to the existing congregations, new churches will also require new ethnic leaders. The Ethnic Leadership Development Centers (now CLD) play an important role in training effective leaders for contextual ministry.

The precursor to the formation of an Ethnic Leadership Development program was a partnership formed between the Florida Baptist Convention, the Home Mission Board, and the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary on September 30, 1977. David Lema added that, “This venture launched the NOBTS into a new model of delivery of theological via an extension center. This ethnic branch was the first seminary extension center for any SBC seminary.”<sup>55</sup> Referring to the contributions of the ethnic center

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<sup>52</sup>Anthony Aheav, telephone interview by author, 5 March 2013.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>David Raúl Lema Jr., “Southern Baptist Hispanic Missions in the State of Florida, 1960-2005” (Ph.D. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), 110.

amongst a growing Hispanic and Haitian population, Lema added:

The impact it had in developing leaders within their contextual base was significant. Quality theological education was available to ethnic students through fully accredited undergraduate and graduate degree programs. The content was delivered in the native language of Spanish for Hispanics and French for Haitians. This Ethnic Branch began with the delivery of theological education in Spanish and French. Soon the need and opportunity to start classes in English became obvious as well.”<sup>56</sup>

Eleven years after the Ethnic Branch started, “78 students had graduated with an associate of divinity degree. There were 90 students enrolled in 1988 with 13 scheduled to graduate in May.”<sup>57</sup> The importance of leadership development cannot be underestimated.

**National Language Strategy.** A struggle the Home Mission Board historically has experienced over the years is the difficulty in coordinating strategies with the Baptist state conventions. From the time of Lloyd Corder’s “Houston Experience” to the present North American Mission Board the struggles between the state conventions and the sending board usually centered on autonomy.<sup>58</sup> The “Houston Experience” was a change in philosophy in which the Home Mission Board moved from a direct mission to a partnership approach to ministry. In recent years, the North American Mission Board has also experienced a change in philosophy, perceived by some, as moving from partnerships to a more direct mission approach to ministry.

In contrast to the struggles of the past, Oscar Romo found a way to partner with Baptist state conventions, associations, agencies, and seminaries to strategically plan to reach the growing diversity of people groups in the United States. The Home Mission Board had a cooperative agreement with each state convention that regulated how they worked together. Therefore, it was no easy task for a national agency to be able

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Hubert O. Hurt, “The History of Florida Baptist Language Congregations,” address presented at the Annual Directors Meeting of the Florida Baptist Historical Society, Stetson University, May 1988.

<sup>58</sup>See “Lloyd Corder” section in chap. 2 of this dissertation, beginning on p. 27, for more information about the “Houston Experience.”

to accomplish their plans with the diversity in leadership and strategic directions of each state convention. Oscar Romo was able to do this effectively by working in partnerships with each of the state conventions for nearly twenty years.

Oscar Romo taught and expected the missionaries to be conversant with demographical data in their mission context. It was not unusual for Romo to visit the field and say to the missionary, “tell me about your area of ministry.” Language missions information was always accompanied with extensive supportive information. One example of this extensive research material was the America’s Ethnicity Series. These yearly-published materials gave ethnic-specific demographical data and information on certain interest topics such as immigration, internationals, and refugees. The America’s Ethnicity Series also provided helpful information on ethnic media such as radio, TV, and Spanish magazines.

The Language Missions Strategy was not a top-down strategic plan from the Home Mission Board to the state conventions. Rather, it received input from the mission field. The detailed strategy template helped the Language Missions director gather the necessary information, which was shared with the Home Mission Board. The information received from each Baptist state convention then became an important source of input for a national strategy. The strategy permeated different levels of denominationalism and geographical boundaries. Grijalva observed that “Language Missions Strategy has the following dimensions: national, state, associational, urban, and reservation—areas with special peculiarities.”<sup>59</sup>

The National Strategy, in keeping with Oscar Romo’s philosophy of missions, recognized that America is a mosaic of peoples of divergent cultures and languages. Romo’s philosophy of language missions further called for people to worship in their own ethnolinguistic context and for the utilization of indigenous principles. The following is the basic outline for a Baptist State Convention Language Missions Strategy:

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<sup>59</sup>Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 148. See also appendix 2 of this dissertation.



Design—The strategy design should consider various factors in light of the “anthropological study as well as data gathered from the particular urban area.”<sup>60</sup>

The seven factors considered in the formation of a strategy were geographical, denominational, anthropological, socioeconomic, historical, relationships, and responsive quotient.<sup>61</sup>

Resources—Mission strategy is all about people. People are our most important resources. One cannot do ministry without people. These people are those who have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and have been called to “Go” and tell the good news of the gospel to others. Mission strategy must have both a human and financial resources in order to be implemented. Financial resources may come from outside the target group. Over a period of time, however, these resources ought to diminish while the investment from the target group ought to increase.

Personal Deployment<sup>62</sup>—There are several considerations one must consider as missionaries are deployed to target areas. The missionary must speak, or at least have a working knowledge of, the language of the people he or she is trying to reach. One of the expectations of the missionaries is to evangelize the lost, gather a group of people, develop leadership from among the people, and guide them to “assume leadership responsibilities.”<sup>63</sup> Some of the most common categories of language missionaries were:

First, Messenger of the Word—These are lay bivocational pastors.

Second, Pastoral Missionary—These were missionaries assigned to a church. This type of missionary was more common in the early 1970s. Many of the Cuban pastors that emigrated to the United States were under this category.

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<sup>60</sup>Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 151.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>See appendix 3 of this dissertation, “Deployment of Personnel: Category of Language Workers.”

<sup>63</sup>Grijalva, “Grijalva Manuscript—Ethnic Baptist History,” 933.

Third, General Missionary—This missionary provides general leadership in areas or state conventions for work among a specific or multiple language/cultural group.<sup>64</sup>

Fourth, Catalytic Missionary—This person serves a specific cultural group within an assigned geographical region.<sup>65</sup>

Measurement—Strategic progress is measured based on achievement of the objectives of the strategy. These measurements are both quantitative and qualitative. Grijalva includes among the tangibles measurements “numerical, financial, outreach activities, types of ministries, organizational structures, programs, and actual growth.”<sup>66</sup>

Analysis—The analytical section seeks to clarify strategies and extend our knowledge by evaluating specific areas within an area of study. This analysis should give attention to “programming achievements, anthropological pluralism, data update, personnel development, Church Growth patterns, invested resources, [and] cooperation evaluation.”<sup>67</sup> Each of these areas, although considered separate, is part of the whole.

Romo’s important contribution in the area of strategic planning was the development of a five-year plan designed to assist in providing a field design for strategy implementation. Everyone who served in an administrative role in a state convention during those years remembered the strategy plan. Tim Hill, Ethnic Church Planting leader for the Tennessee Baptist Convention and a former staff person serving with Oscar Romo, recalled the importance of that book. He said, “I kept my strategy plan book and it has helped me greatly in my thinking and planning during my years in the state convention.”<sup>68</sup> The Language Church Extension Division had a “strategy design for each state since the mid-1970s.”<sup>69</sup> Strategic planning is not a promise for growth. A good

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 793.

<sup>65</sup>For a more extensive explanation, see p. 40 of this dissertation, n. 65.

<sup>66</sup>Grijalva, “Grijalva Manuscript—Ethnic Baptist History,” 827.

<sup>67</sup>Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 153.

<sup>68</sup>Tim Hill, telephone interview by author, 27 August 2010.

<sup>69</sup>Romo, *American Mosaic*, 177.

strategy plan, however, can “provide a sense of direction for making disciples, planting new congregations, ministries, and future growth.”<sup>70</sup>

**Ethnic Fellowships.** The growing diversity in the United States contributes to the natural homogeneous gathering of people called Ethnic Fellowships. When diverse groups of people become part of the larger family known as the Southern Baptist Convention, sometimes the lack of English-language proficiency limits opportunities for fellowship and training, thus creating unmet needs. Ethnic Fellowships are defined as “an organization of language/culture ministers, co-workers and lay leaders to share mutual interests, feelings, experiences and faith for edification and for the work of the Kingdom.”<sup>71</sup> Additionally, Ethnic Fellowships exist primarily “to meet needs of a language/culture group.”<sup>72</sup>

More than one hundred years ago, Ethnic Fellowships existed in Oklahoma. Immigration resulting from economic and political reasons produced an influx of people of diverse cultures and languages to the United States. As new ethnic congregations were started, the need for fellowship, training, and strategic planning in their own ethnolinguistic context became evident. Ethnic Fellowships are founded upon philosophical, sociological, structural, and missiological reasons.

The Choctaw-Creek-Seminole Baptist Association was in existence in Oklahoma before the Civil War. Later, this association formed two different associations, the Choctaw Association and the Seminole-Creek Association, primarily because of language usage. In fact, these two ethnic associations merged with the Oklahoma Baptist State Convention to become the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma in 1906.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 153.

<sup>71</sup>Peter Kung, “Ethnic Fellowships in Southern Baptist Life: A Perspective” (Nashville: Home Mission Board, Ethnic Ministries Collection, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, n.d.), 1.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

Similarly, the Convención Bautista Mexicana de Texas was organized in 1910.<sup>74</sup> Like the Indian fellowships, “language, culture, economics, education, and social acceptance were some of the reasons for organization.”<sup>75</sup> In 1964, a “Plan de Unificación” was finalized between the Mexican Baptist Convention of Texas, and the Baptist General Convention of Texas was finalized.<sup>76</sup>

The Convención Bautista Hispana de Nuevo Mexico was organized in Las Vegas, New Mexico, on November 6, 1923.<sup>77</sup> C. W. Stumph was corresponding secretary of the Baptists in New Mexico from 1922 to early 1931. He was very instrumental in the formation of the Spanish Convention of New Mexico. During his message, on the evening of the organizational meeting for a new Spanish convention, he said,

I am here to promote the cause of our Lord, and I feel responsible, in part, for this work. We are here today to encourage each other of the need to evangelize our Spanish speaking people. Jesus is so dear to us that He wants us to take the simple gospel of salvation. . . . What we need is that the Spanish people preach the gospel to their own people, instead of the Anglos doing it. We need determination and if we are not ready to suffer, we need not begin the journey; but if you have a resolve you also have the support of the state convention to accomplish your task and I believe that God has called us to this work.<sup>78</sup>

Presently, there are three Spanish associations in New Mexico. While the Convención Bautista Hispana de Nuevo Mexico has always been an autonomous organization, it works in cooperation with the Baptist Convention of New Mexico. Pedro Escobar, Hispanic missionary in New Mexico, speaks of the advantages of a Spanish convention:

I believe that one of the greatest benefits of the Spanish convention are the regional trainings, held in the associations and programmed by the convention each year

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<sup>74</sup>See p. 57 of this dissertation, under the “Texas” section.

<sup>75</sup>Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 170.

<sup>76</sup>See p. 57 of this dissertation, under the “Texas” section.

<sup>77</sup>Luis F. Gómez, *Historia de la Obra Bautista Hispana en Nuevo México* (San Antonio: Casa Bautista de Publicaciones, 1981), 38.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*

in each of the regions, such as family camp, pastor's retreat and the themes that together [Spanish associations and Spanish Convention] are developed in these events. Additionally, there is a sense of fellowship that strengthens and identifies us as Hispanics; considering the fact that pastors and leaders preferred the Spanish language.<sup>79</sup>

As a result of the Immigration Act of 1965,<sup>80</sup> the immigration tide was changed allowing more Asians and Latin Americans to come to the United States, thus changing "the face of the nation."<sup>81</sup> The growing cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity of the immigrants almost required the coming together of affinity groups for fellowship and effective communication.

In 1969, there were 1,100 workers among seventeen language/cultural groups supported by the Home Mission Board.<sup>82</sup> In 1979, the number of workers supported by the Home Mission Board was 1,054 serving among "77 language/culture groups."<sup>83</sup> The ministry of these missionaries resulted in sixty-six new works in 1969 and three hundred new works in 1979.<sup>84</sup> The number of ethnic works has increased rapidly. Peter Kung reported that in 1983 "there were 2,030 Hispanic, 798 deaf, 734 Asian and 442 American Indian units among 4,659 Southern Baptist language missions units."<sup>85</sup>

Although the existence of Ethnic Fellowships may be viewed by some to be unnecessary and even negative, their purpose is to "encourage and maintain a spirit of fellowship, meet the needs of churches, [and] encourage churches to undergird and participate in Southern Baptist programs, including gifts to world missions through the

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<sup>79</sup>Pedro Escobar, "Pregunta," e-mail to author, 11 March 2013.

<sup>80</sup>See p. 1, n. 1, of this dissertation for more explanation.

<sup>81</sup>Kung, "Ethnic Fellowships in Southern Baptist Life," 3.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

Cooperative Program.”<sup>86</sup> Kung points out that in 1983, “4,659 congregations, among 84 ethnic group using 87 languages in worship and Bible study, contributed an estimated 3 million dollars to missions.”<sup>87</sup>

Some may still question the need for an ethnic association. Other leaders may feel threatened by ethnic associations as part of the associational or state convention structure. Many experienced leaders may welcome Ethnic Fellowships as a channel for effective ministry in the ethnolinguistic context of the people. Whatever the reader’s view may be on the topic, it is important to understand the basis for Ethnic Fellowships in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Ethnic Fellowships were rooted and grew out of Oscar Romo’s philosophical understanding and cultural experiences. As was stated earlier in chapter 2, Romo refused to embrace the idea of the United States as a “Melting Pot” and recognized that ethnic Americans have the right to retain their unique self-identities and heritages. Romo’s belief, combined with the growing number of ethnic groups speaking many different languages, created the need to form groups that would effectively communicate within their own ethnolinguistic context. The philosophical belief among Language Missions at the Home Mission Board also assumed that every person needed to hear the message of salvation, found exclusively in the person of Jesus Christ, in their own language. The components of this diversity are sociologically complex.

Ethnic Fellowships are a sociological organization. New immigrants usually seek other people who preferably are from their own country, speak the language, eat the same food, and understand political and social concerns within their culture. Ethnic Fellowships, then, become a primary group where members share close, personal, enduring relationships. Oscar Romo recognized that factors such as “language, culture, economics, education and social acceptance contribute to the organization of ethnic

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<sup>86</sup>Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 171.

<sup>87</sup>Kung, “Ethnic Fellowships in Southern Baptist Life,” 3.

fellowships.”<sup>88</sup> These primary groups, however, must discover ways to network with a secondary group—the Southern Baptist Convention structure.

Ethnic Fellowships develop structures that facilitate effective contributions to a secondary group. The cultural dissonance that exists between a new immigrant’s culture and the culture in the United States can be very frustrating. Ethnic congregations feel isolated, sometimes being the only ethnic church in the city. Ethnic Fellowship provides a place where, in their language, people are trained to effectively strategize and minister to their own group. Ethnic Fellowships provide channels helpful in facilitating partnerships with Southern Baptists. Examples of these channels are ethnic congregations participating in the life and ministry of the local association, gifts to the Cooperative Program, and cultural events that add understanding of their worldviews.

Ethnic Fellowships have missiological implications. When missionaries go overseas, they have a commitment usually to a particular ethnic group. They learn the language, culture, history, and churches. They work in partnership with the national convention. They have been through cultural training. In the United States, the missionary, pastor, or church member sometimes may be totally unprepared to minister to an ethnic group who now resides in the United States. A church may allow an ethnic group to meet in their facility, but the lack of intercultural communication may inhibit the effectiveness of the relationship. Presently, there are forty Ethnic Fellowships related to Southern Baptists.

### **Secondary Language Missions Strategies**

Four secondary language missions strategies are considered. The leadership conferences strategy had a twofold purpose. First, it presented an awareness of language missions needs in the United States to denominational leadership. Second, it provided apposite training to catalytic missionaries. The Office of Immigration and

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 10.

Refugee Services provided help not only to the refugees, but also provided guidance to churches desiring to sponsor refugee families. The Language Material Consortium group centralized the different language materials produced by Baptist state conventions and agencies. The ethnic church-planting models present various models used in the establishment of new Hispanic congregations.

**Leadership Conferences.** Oscar Romo believed enthusiastically in creating an awareness of language missions needs in the United States and providing effective training to language missionaries. He used two primary conferences to accomplish this task: the Language Missions Leadership Conference and the Catalytic Missions Conference. The time, energy, and resources placed into these two conferences produced multiple fruits as catalytic missionaries spread the gospel and started new congregations in the United States and “to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8; 13:47). An educational thread dominated both conferences.

Oscar Romo assumed responsibility for the Language Missions Leadership Conference in 1971. The Leadership Conference became the largest sponsored by the Home Mission Board. The target group for the conference was primarily administrative state leaders in missions. Representatives of various agencies, however, also attended “in order to gain a better awareness of the language groups and to participate in various aspects of the conference.”<sup>89</sup>

Oscar Romo established the Catalytic Conference in 1965. The purpose of this conference was to bring together those missionaries assigned with special responsibilities to seek to initiate work among several ethnic groups in their area of responsibility. This conference has facilitated the “development and implementation of creative approaches to the various phases of language work, especially in the urban areas of the nation.”<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>Merry Romo, e-mail to author.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid.



Three important components of the conferences were educational, praxis, and networking. The educational aspect of a conference centered on presentations of selected topics by missiologists, pastors, and practitioners from among Southern Baptists and also from other denominations. These lectures were presented to the larger group. Smaller groups, sometimes divided by ethnicities or affinity, further deliberated on the presentation. Often, it was in these small groups where creativity and strategic thinking resulted in new and unique ways to reach language/cultural people. A second component was practical training. On Sunday of the conference week, every participant would visit with his/her assigned group in an ethnic church in the city. The visit exposed the participants to a new culture and worship experience. Normally, after worship, participants ate a meal with the host church. The third component is the important relational networks that developed among missionaries, state, and agency leadership.

Fermín Whittaker, Executive Director-Treasurer of the California Southern Baptist Convention, adds that these conferences effectively equipped ethnic leaders to equip others, to think strategically, and to make Southern Baptists aware of language missions opportunities in the United States.<sup>91</sup> Whittaker further argues that “SBC ethnic leaders surfaced as a direct result of lessons learned.”<sup>92</sup> Thomas Eason, retired longtime catalytic missionary to Southern New Mexico, echoes Whittaker’s assertions and points to the Catalyst’s leadership abilities to discover, train, and unleash people for the harvest, many of whom were immigrants.

**Ministry to Immigrants and Refugees.** Oscar Romo said, in the 1980s, that the “United States is a nation of refugees and immigrants.”<sup>93</sup> Since that time, many people have continued to migrate from non-Western countries to the United States. This

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<sup>91</sup>Fermín A. Whittaker, e-mail to author, 12 March 2013.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

<sup>93</sup>Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 176.

was significant then and is even more significant to us today. Globalization has indeed made our world smaller and the challenge greater to the church. God is moving people from nation to nation. According to J. D. Payne, “we are constantly being reminded that the peoples of this world are on the move.”<sup>94</sup> Romo saw that these people represented some of the world’s unreached ethnic groups and continually challenged Southern Baptists to see this migration as an opportunity for missions.

The legal interpretation of persons entering the United States during Oscar Romo’s time came under one of the following classifications.<sup>95</sup> First, immigrants were those who came on a permanent basis to reside and may seek citizenship. Second, non-immigrant status was given to persons who entered on a temporary basis. Third, refugees were those who requested asylum. Another group that historically has been present in the United States since its inception is the undocumented person. This dissertation, however, will not deal with this category because it will distract from the main focus of this section.

The Home Mission Board created the Office of Immigration and Refugee Services in 1965 and “assigned it to the Language Missions Division for administration.”<sup>96</sup> In the next twenty years, seven men served as director of Refugee Services at the Home Mission Board. L. D. Wood, who served as assistant secretary of the Language Missions Department, became the first director and served from 1965 to 1973. Irvin Dawson became associate director of the Language Missions Division and the director of the Office of Immigration and Refugee Services until 1978. Gene Tunnell was named in 1978 as “manager and consultant for refugee service.”<sup>97</sup> Both Dawson and

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<sup>94</sup>J. D. Payne, *Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration, and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 94.

<sup>95</sup>Oscar Romo, “Manual on Ministry and Witness among Immigrants and Undocumented,” Home Mission Board, Grijalva Refugee Ministries, 1975-1990 (Nashville: Ethnic Ministries Collection, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives), 2.

<sup>96</sup>Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 177.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid.

Tunnell served at a time of much restlessness in the world, which also provided great opportunities for missions to Southern Baptists.

The fall of Saigon to the Communists on April 30, 1975, accelerated the work of the Office of Immigration and Refugee Services. In the next eight years, as a result of the influx of Indochinese refugees to the United States and the efforts of “individuals and churches,”<sup>98</sup> Southern Baptists established “281 ethnic congregations.”<sup>99</sup> Taking advantage of these mission opportunities characterized Oscar Romo.

The Home Mission Board was partnering with a refugee camp in Fort Walton, Florida, where language missionary David Lema was providing leadership. At the same time, Oscar Romo and Gene Tunnell were negotiating involvement in a second refugee camp at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. The resettlement of refugees was “arranged through Church World Service.”<sup>100</sup> The partnership with Church World Service allowed the Southern Baptist Convention to maintain the separation between church and state.

In April of 1980, south Florida experienced a mass exodus of the “Cuban Flotilla” when Fidel Castro agreed to grant exit visas to anyone wishing to leave the country. The situation was further intensified with “a mass influx of Haitian refugees.”<sup>101</sup> Four month later, “70% of Cubans had been resettled. Many other Cubans, however, were in refugee camps in Florida and Arkansas. Looking for political freedom, many Cubans found themselves in another type of prison in a foreign land. The *Arkansas Times* described how the crisis at Fort Chaffee turned from hope to despair:

Refugees of Castro’s infamous Mariel Boatlift, over 19,000 Cubans were detained at Fort Chaffee that spring, making the camp the 11th largest city in the state (Fort Chaffee’s history had often seen it used to hold detainees and prisoners, from

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid. See also p. 77, n. 177, of this dissertation.

<sup>100</sup>Joshua Grijalva, “The Refugee Program” (Nashville: Home Mission Board, Ethnic Ministries Collection, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, n.d.), 1.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 178. An estimated 2,000 Cubans and 2,000 Haitians were entering south Florida daily.

German POWs during WWII to refugees from the fall of Saigon). Brought to the fort in early May, the Cubans had been promised a quick processing by immigration and medical authorities and then resettlement with their families, many of whom had been separated during the exodus from Cuba. Plagued by bureaucratic setbacks and rumors that Chaffee was full of Cuban criminals released from prison by Fidel Castro, however, camp life ground on for a month, with few Cubans released. Then, on Sunday, June 1, the frustrated detainees rioted, clashing with State Police and National Guard troops, destroying 4 barracks, and turning the eyes of the world on Arkansas for the first time since 1957.<sup>102</sup>

Donoso Escobar came as director of the Office of Immigration and Refugee Services in November of 1980. He served until June 1983, when he accepted a faculty position at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Delbert Fann served one year as interim director. William Rutledge came as director in 1984 and, upon his retirement, William Fulkerson became the new director.

The ministry to immigrant and refugees produced many indigenous leaders for Southern Baptists. The Office of Immigration and Refugee Services made significant contributions to language missions best seen in the life and ministry of these heroes. The list of heroes is long and incomplete. Chapter 2 of this dissertation attempts to give a detailed overview of the extensive missionary work done by the different ethnic groups in the United States. These are all people who came either as immigrants or refugee to this country and reached out to their own kind of people, sometimes even crossculturally. The contributions made by these were many and the fruits still remain today. Yet, the ultimate result of “having a refugee office is that people have come to know Jesus Christ, and churches have been born that will continue to expand the Kingdom of Christ on earth.”<sup>103</sup>

The expansion of language missions, however, created a need for materials in the language of the people. The need for trained indigenous leaders depended, to a

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<sup>102</sup>“1980–Crisis at Ft. Chaffee,” 23 September 2004, *Arkansas Times* [on-line]; accessed 10 May 2013; available from <http://www.arktimes.com/arkansas/1980-crisis-at-ft-chaffee/Content?oid=964922>; Internet.

<sup>103</sup>Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 178.

<sup>104</sup>Fermin A. Whittaker, e-mail to author, 14 April 2013.

great extent, on contextualized materials. Romo was instrumental in creating awareness, among the various Southern Baptist agencies, of the need to produce agency materials in the language of the people.

**Language Material Consortium.** Oscar Romo needed to develop contextual materials in order to accomplish his goals to identify, train, and deploy people for ministry within the American Mosaic. The complexity of both the Southern Baptist Convention and the growing diversity of language groups demanded the development of contextual materials in the language of the people. The creation of a Language Material Consortium, representing different ethnicities and agencies, to develop contextualized materials helped language leaders understand the ministries of Southern Baptist agencies.

Fermin Whittaker recalls that “the Consortium began as the Language Materials Consortium. To my knowledge, BSSB, WMU, Guidestone and HMB were the small group which met once a year to review needs [for contextual materials] among ethnics.”<sup>104</sup> This group, over a period of time, grew to include key language personnel from the various state conventions. The primary emphasis was to influence the SBC agencies to provide intentional support for language/cultural congregations. Daniel Sánchez supports Whittaker’s observations and adds the following:

Often for the Language Missions Conferences Oscar [Romo] and his staff would put together what he called a “Language Contextual Materials Catalog” which had a listing of the materials that were available in the various languages. In addition to obtaining this information from the members of the Consortium, he would get the Catalytic Missionaries and others to send in the information they had so that it would be included in the catalog. Through this consortium, Oscar [Romo] was able to communicate to the agencies what materials were needed. At the same time there were times when the Language Missions Division took the lead in providing needed materials.<sup>105</sup>

The Consortium’s chief contribution to Southern Baptists, and Hispanic churches in particular, was the production of materials in Spanish. The various

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<sup>105</sup>Daniel R. Sánchez, e-mail to author, 14 April 2013.

publications were helpful in at least three ways. One, Hispanic leaders were able to read and learn, in their own language, about the purpose and ministries of Southern Baptist agencies. Two, Spanish training materials allowed churches to contextualize training to meet the needs of the people. These materials helped train leaders in areas such as church planting, discipleship, evangelism, Cooperative Program, Sunday school, the Baptist Faith and Message, and Mission Service Corps (MSC). Three, since language is critical in effective communication, publication of materials in the language of the people helped bridge any ethnolinguistic differences between Hispanics and Anglo Southern Baptists. The various contextualized Spanish materials assisted Hispanic leaders to discover different church-planting strategies and models that have proven effective in reaching the diverse populations in the United States.

**Hispanic Church-planting Strategies and Models.** Ethnic church-planting models were not mandated by a particular strategy. Rather, they were expressions of the language missions philosophies. Different methodologies have been evolving from bilingual services, common in the 1970s, to experimenting with English-speaking Hispanic-culture churches in the 1990s. Immigrants coming to the United States presented churches not only with great opportunities for outreach, but also with church-planting opportunities. Some of the most common strategies used include evangelistic outreach, ministries, and Hispanic church planting.<sup>106</sup>

The evangelistic opportunities presented to Southern Baptists as a result of the movements of refugees and immigrants to the United States were significant. Language missions challenged Southern Baptists to creatively reach out to their international neighbors. Many of these refugees and immigrants were coming to the United States looking for political freedom, yet they were still in bondage of sin. Some evangelistic

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<sup>106</sup>Much of the material in this section is taken from Gustavo Suárez, “Hispanic Americans,” in *Many Nations Under God: Ministering to Culture Groups in America: A Compilation from Persons Representing Various Cultures*, ed. Ele Clay (Birmingham: New Hope, 1997), 50-51.

outreach practices used by both Anglo and Hispanic churches include sponsorship, conversational English classes, job opportunities, immigration papers and citizenship classes, and Adopt-a-Student.

An important function of a sponsor was to teach an individual or a family about life in the United States. Another important function of the sponsor was the reciprocal sharing about culture and food in the United States and also learning about the culture and food from the other person's native country.

The new immigrant needed to learn the English language in order to do routine tasks and manage independently. Many churches were able to spend quality time with individuals and families to converse in English. Other churches were more formal by developing English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

Many times, both churches and individuals would help the new immigrant find new employment. The ultimate goal of many of these people was to make a positive contribution to life in the country.

Two important ministry opportunities were helping families become residents and citizens of the United States. Church members provided help filling out the complicated papers needed to become legal residents of the United States. Additionally, churches provided necessary instructions for those interested in becoming a citizen of the United States. The purposes of the citizenship classes were primarily twofold: to serve as an outreach to the Hispanic community and to help prepare immigrants to pass the citizenship test.

There are many Hispanic students in colleges and universities in the United States. During vacation time, such as Fall and Spring break, Thanksgiving, and sometimes Christmas, many of these students could not return to their homeland. Many of these students would be without any family and feel lonely during holiday times. Inviting students into your home provided an opportunity to share the gospel with them.

Two basic ministries helpful to Hispanics and also to other ethnic groups were tutoring and leadership training. Because Hispanics lagged behind other groups in education,<sup>107</sup> churches and individuals helped by tutoring young students in the local schools. Another ministry opportunity was in the area of leadership training. Since Hispanic churches lacked strong leadership, a local church could “join forces with the local association and/or language missionary to help train leadership from the Spanish-speaking churches.”<sup>108</sup> Training leaders has always been a challenge among Hispanic congregations, perhaps because of the diversity of cultures and worldviews.

The church-planting models that were used during the period discussed in this dissertation (1970-1994) were, as mentioned earlier, expressions of the language missions philosophy of the Home Mission Board.<sup>109</sup> One key ingredient of this philosophy was that “all efforts must permit every person the opportunity and the privilege of using his own language, in an appropriate cultural context, to discover the reality of Jesus Christ.”<sup>110</sup> Each of the following church-planting models was influenced by the needs of the contextual ministry setting. The reader will notice not only a relationship between these models, but also a gradual development from one model to another.

During the early 1970s, it was common to start a new congregation by first gathering a group of people into a Sunday school class. The class was typically associated with an English-speaking sponsoring church and usually would develop into a mission church. As the class grew numerically, the next step was to decide the type of relationship they were to have with the sponsoring church. Some questions that needed

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<sup>107</sup>See, for example, Randy Ferguson, ed., *Reaching Hispanics in North America: Helping You Understand and Engage One of God's Greatest Mission Fields* (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board, 2009); and Clay, *Many Nations Under God*.

<sup>108</sup>Suárez, “Hispanic Americans,” 51.

<sup>109</sup>See the six philosophical beliefs under “Philosophical Basis” on p. 91 of this dissertation.

<sup>110</sup>See the fourth philosophical belief mentioned under “Philosophical Basis” on p. 91 of this dissertation.



to be address included, Is the new church to be a separate church, a mission church, or a Hispanic ministry? Each of these methodologies would require different strategies and relationships.

A second model used during this period (1970-1994) was called “Hispanic Ministry.” Since many English-speaking congregations provided financial support to the Hispanic group, they saw it more as a ministry, similarly to the youth ministry or Senior Adults ministry. Generally, the Hispanic Ministry was funded out of a general budget line item. This relationship tended to create good partnerships between two different cultures. In time, however, this relationship could create a sense of dependency from the Hispanic group.

The option of separate services is mostly appealing, but not exclusive, to first-generation Hispanics who prefer to worship in their native tongue. Some variations of the separate service model exist. One alternative is to have one church membership worshipping in two languages. This model requires coordination for effective partnership. Imagine the numerous possibilities for confusion when many cultures worshipping in two languages within one building conduct a myriad of separate ministries. The one church membership variation works well when the language pastors are bilingual and bicultural and are able to communicate effectively with both groups.

Another option to the separate service model is two autonomous churches worshipping in two languages in one church building. Each church has its own government, membership, finances, leadership, and ministries. This model also requires coordination in order to maximize the use of the building. The two autonomous churches variation works best when the language pastor is limited or cannot communicate well with the English-speaking congregation.

Each of the variations of the separate service model usually had a combined service two or three times during the year. The purpose of these fellowships was to nurture fellowship between different cultures, to learn from each other, and to worship

God together. Both of these options were effective in evangelizing and starting new language/cultural congregations.

Many Hispanic churches, concerned about the growing numbers of second-generation children, started bilingual services in order to minister to both first- and second-generation Hispanics. Typically, if the pastor was bilingual, he would translate his own message. He would preach a few sentences in one language and then translate it to the second language. While this method was effective, it was also distracting to those who were fluent in both languages. Another weakness of bilingual services was that the message was longer because it was repeated.

Some churches determined that it was more effective for them to have services in Spanish and an English-speaking Sunday school for second-generation members. The advantages of this model are that one hears the message all in one language and the second-generation youth are taught the Word of God in English. Disadvantages of this model, however, are that some of the youth may not understand the message and the worship experience may not be contextual to the culture of the younger generation.

The English service model grew out of a philosophical position that new immigrants needed to learn English. Although this model was appropriate in some areas where Hispanics spoke English well, such as some areas in Texas and California, it was not effective in reaching first-generation Hispanics. This model placed more priority on assimilation than in meeting the cultural needs of the new immigrants. Most first-generation Hispanics like to worship in their own language and among their own people, and to read Scriptures in Spanish.

Related to the English service model is the translated service. This is different from the bilingual services. In a translated service, the Anglo pastor would preach the sermon in English and a bilingual person would translate the message into the Spanish language. Many churches provided translation equipment to those that needed to hear the message in their language. Although translation was one way to solve the linguistic

problem within the church, it did not translate culture, thus making translation a poor methodology.

### **Conclusion**

The American Mosaic not only presented a challenge to the local church, language missions, and the Southern Baptist Convention, but it also helped to give structure to the strategic thinking, methodologies, and direction that language missions was to take. Both primary and secondary strategies were effective in facilitating the communication of the gospel to Hispanics using their language and culture as means to accomplish the task of reaching the lost and starting churches.

While this chapter described each of the strategies, the next chapter analyzes, evaluates, and critiques the strengths and weaknesses of both primary and secondary strategies. Significant effort is made to demonstrate that a detailed analysis of the development of Hispanic church-planting strategies in North America between 1970 and 1994 shows that those were both important and influential days for language missions among Southern Baptists.

CHAPTER 5  
ANALYSIS, EVALUATION, AND CRITIQUE  
OF THE CHURCH-PLANTING STRATEGY

**Introduction**

The previous chapter introduced the reader to the most salient strategies used by the Language Missions Division during the years 1970-1994. Both primary and secondary strategies contributed to the discovery, development, and deployment of Hispanic personnel across the United States. The synergistic efforts of these strategies provided extensive and diverse ministries to the Hispanic population working in partnership with the local associations and state conventions. Nevertheless, the program of Language Missions “works with and assists churches, associations, and state conventions in their efforts to bring persons identified with ethnic groups, other than English, into a right relationship with God, to establish language-culture congregations and bring them to self-support.”<sup>1</sup>

A cursory look of twenty-five years of Language Missions ministries in the United States shows some contributions they made to the cities, theological education, the development of a national language strategy, and also assistance to the various ethnic fellowships. Additionally, many missionaries, associational and state convention workers, and agency leaders received training through the Language Missions Leadership Conferences. The Home Mission Board, in partnership with World Relief, has ministered to immigrants and refugees from various countries of the world. A missionary was assigned to the Diplomatic Corps in Washington, DC, and also to the United Nations in New York.

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<sup>1</sup>Program assigned to Language Missions by the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Home Mission Board has been under scrutiny almost from its inception. The first annual report of the Domestic Board of Missions to the Southern Baptist Convention in 1846 revealed an almost prophetic declaration that would shadow this agency for years. Sometime after the resignation of both the President of the Board and the Corresponding Secretary,

D. P. Bestor of Alabama was induced to engage in the work. In November last, he presented to the Board a report of his labors, accompanied with the following note of resignation: "And now, dear brethren, I resign the office which your partiality induced you to confer upon me. You remember; I doubted the propriety of accepting it. The short experience I have had satisfies me that it is my duty to resign. I have learned by visiting many, and by an extensive correspondence, that our brethren prefer carrying on their domestic missionary operations, through their Associations and State Conventions. They approve, invariably, of our Southern organization; but I cannot persuade them to act efficiently in its support. Some one should be employed who can be more successful than I have been; who can induce the churches and Associations to unite with the Board, and to pour their resources into a common treasury."<sup>2</sup>

In his article "Turning Points in the History of the Home Mission Board," Charles L. Chaney reflected on the accomplishments and difficulties faced by this agency over 150 years. Chaney articulates:

For 150 years these mission agencies have functioned. Today, the Home Mission Board (formerly the Domestic Mission Board) in partnership with state and regional conventions, has almost 5,000 cooperative missionary personnel working in all 50 states. They serve among 100 ethnic and racial groups, at every socioeconomic level of American society. The first focus, however, is on the unchurched people groups to be found in the great urban areas of the United States and Canada. The road from 1845 to 1995 has often been hard and sometimes narrow. The almost stillborn agency has been reborn at least twice. Its road has taken turns, often the key to longevity, renewed vigor, and growth, and sometimes to despair and decline.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Jesse Hartwell, "First Annual Report Board of Domestic Missions," in *First Triennial Meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention Held in Richmond, June 10-15, 1846* (Richmond, VA: Southern Baptist Convention, 1846), 29-30.

<sup>3</sup>For more information about the Home Mission Board's accomplishments and difficulties, read the following articles found in *Baptist History and Heritage*, April 1995: Larry L. Lewis, "Southern Baptists and the Home Mission Challenge"; Francis M. DuBose, "Home Mission Board Contributions"; J. C. Bradley, "Profiles of Home Mission Board Executives"; and C. Thomas Wright, "The Work of Home Missionaries, 1970-1995." Charles L. Chaney, "Turning Points in the History of the Home Mission Board," *Baptist History and Heritage* 30, no. 2 (April 1995): 7.

The previous chapter presented the reader with two important questions: What were the challenges presented by the American Mosaic? and What were the most salient language missions strategies? This chapter analyzes, evaluates, and critiques the strengths and weaknesses of both primary and secondary strategies. It is the goal of this chapter to demonstrate that a detailed analysis of the development of Hispanic church-planting strategies in North America between 1970 and 1994 shows that those were both important and influential days for language missions among Southern Baptists. While chapter 4 was descriptive, chapter 5 presents supportive evidence of the outcome of these strategies. The twenty-five years of Language Missions covered in this dissertation illustrates the important role Language Missions played in the expansion of missionary work among Southern Baptists.

### **Primary Strategies**

Four primary strategies contributed to the growth of language missions among Southern Baptists from their initial ministry to 17 language/cultural groups and 40 Indian tribes in 1970 to 102 language/cultural groups and 97 Native American tribes in 1994.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, from 1970 to 1992, the number of ethnic churches, missions, and preaching points catapulted from 674 to 6,023.<sup>5</sup> During the 1973 Language Missions Leadership Conference, Oscar Romo reported that there were “approximately 1,000 Spanish

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<sup>4</sup>*Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, June 1-4, 1970* (Nashville: Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1970), 139; *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, June 20-22, 1995* (Nashville: Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1995), 241.

<sup>5</sup>During these early years, churches, missions, and preaching points were often reported in terms of the total number of ethnic churches rather than specific language groups. Additionally, during the years 1970-1979, the language missions annual reports to the Southern Baptist Convention only reported new congregations started by ethnic groups and not the total number of congregations per ethnic group. Delbert Fann’s study of “Ethnic Church Growth Patterns” covers the years 1980-1989. Delbert Fann, comp., *Ethnic Church Growth: A 10-Year Study of Language-Culture Congregations (A Concentrated Study of 1980-1989)* (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, Language Church Extension Division, SBC, 1989). Oscar I. Romo, “Heirs of the Faith,” *MissionsUSA* 63, Supp. 92 (July-August 1992): 2-3.

congregations.”<sup>6</sup> This chapter seeks to explore the strengths and weaknesses of these strategies.

### **Strategy 1–Ethnic Church Growth Concept**

The Ethnic Church Growth Concept consisted of three individual components: the Catalytic Church Growth Concept, the Laser Church Growth Concept, and the Kaleidoscopic Church Growth Concept. The cities became the training grounds where missionaries put into practice each of these three concepts. Thus, the cities became clusters of diverse communities or microcosms “where eighty percent or more of the ethnic population lived.”<sup>7</sup> The interrelatedness of the church growth concepts and the cities called for the development of a plan or a Microcosmic Urban strategy, which is included under this first strategy.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses**

Among one of the most creative church growth concepts created by Oscar Romo was the Catalytic Missions concept.<sup>8</sup> Recognizing that most ethnics are city-dwellers, Romo developed a strategy to reach the ethnic populations of the cities. There were several strengths to the Catalytic Church Growth Concept. First, a single missionary that reaches out to several cultural groups was a benefit to the local church that may have been limited in both funds and personnel. Second, these catalytic missionaries discovered and developed local indigenous leaders before the missionary moved to a new project or field. Third, the catalytic missionary’s primary task was to discover and develop indigenous leaders and to start new congregations. Fourth, since catalytic missionaries represented different cultural groups in the city, it was not unusual to share

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<sup>6</sup>Oscar I. Romo, “Sharing across Culture,” in *Language Missions Leadership Conference Held in San Francisco, February 24-26* (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, SBC, 1973), 5.

<sup>7</sup>Joshua Grijalva, comp., *Ethnic Baptist History* (Miami: Meta Publishers, 1992), 148.

<sup>8</sup>For an explanation of the Catalytic Church Growth Concept, see p. 40 of this dissertation, n. 65, and p. 136, n. 23.

missionaries with other associations and state conventions in order to indigenously reach a specific language/cultural group. Fifth, Oscar Romo created a culture and an environment conducive to church planting. Yet, this culture was much more than starting new congregations; it was networking with people, agencies, and churches for ministry to Hispanics.

Although the Catalytic Missions Concept was effective it also had potential weaknesses. First, a catalytic missionary “can be so focused on serving as a catalyst that he neglects the important task of working through the existing structures of the Associations and State Conventions.”<sup>9</sup> Second, catalytic missionaries were perceived as working in isolation. The isolationism of some could possibly be due to two factors. One factor was a lack of communication with the existing structures fully explaining the role and function of catalytic missionaries. A second factor for isolationism could be explained by the “personality and leadership style of the catalytic missionary.”<sup>10</sup> Some missionaries were very relational with key leaders at the associational and state Baptist conventions. Others, on the other hand, did not see the value of developing relationships, giving the impression they did not value teamwork. Daniel Sánchez keenly observed that “those who had this spirit seldom saw continuation of their work upon their leaving that field.”<sup>11</sup> Third, it was difficult to find catalytic missionaries who understood their role and context or worked well within an Anglo structure. Some who would not fit the role of the catalytic missionary were sometimes assigned as pastor-consultant.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Daniel R. Sánchez, “Another Question,” e-mail to author, 12 May 2013.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>The pastor-consultant is a person who serves as pastor of an ethnic language-culture congregation and who also serves as a cultural consultant to provide a liaison relationship and interpretation between a specific ethnic group and the mission agencies in an assigned area. Fermín A. Whittaker, telephone conversation with author, 14 May 2013.



Another important component of the Ethnic Church Growth concept was the Laser.<sup>13</sup> The following are several strengths of the Laser Church Growth Concept. First, it was evangelism to your own cultural groups leading to the establishment of new congregations. Second, it was one week of intensive search to discover, evangelize, and congregationalize people from a specific language/cultural group. Third, its methods were simple, adaptable, and flexibly developed within the cultural structure of the target group. Fourth, the Laser Thrust efforts resulted in 393 new units in thirteen years of documented records, or an average of 30.2 units per year (see appendix 4).<sup>14</sup>

A weakness of the Laser Church Growth Concept was that if there were not enough people in the local association trained and involved in the process, the follow-up would be weak or nonexistent after the Laser Team left. Viewed from a twenty-first century perspective, at the time the Laser Church Growth Concept was developed, today's technology was nonexistent. Sánchez, who served with Oscar Romo in 1971, reflected on the intense preparation required before each Laser Thrust. He explored the details of events, saying that

in preparation for a Laser Team visit, personnel in the Language Missions Department had to read through endless pages of the Census Bureau publications to find statistical data for specific cities. Upon arrival on the field, the team had to look at large numbers of telephone pages to extract the names of ethnic persons (those whose heritage could be identified by their last names), write down their telephone numbers, and then start making phone calls to establish contact with them. The team also had to look through countless numbers of yellow pages in the telephone books to locate business places that were identifiable as being ethnic. With modern day technology much of this type of work can be done through the use of computers and in the light of the existence of electronic data that is available from the Census Bureau and many other agencies.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>For more explanation, see the discussion about the Laser Church Growth Concept on pp. 137-38 of this dissertation.

<sup>14</sup>In appendix 4 of this dissertation ("Laser Thrust Church Growth, 1978-1994"), some of the ethnic groups are the same each year. Since the report only mentioned the number and not the ethnicity, it is best to leave the total number blank. The important point for the reader to observe is the growth in number of different ethnic groups each year.

<sup>15</sup>Sánchez, e-mail.

The *Annals of the Southern Baptists Convention 1978-1994* show results of Laser Thrust conducted among Mega Focus Cities.<sup>16</sup> The Laser Thrust report is not consistent during the early years of 1978-1980 and is not reported in 1981. Beginning with the year 1982 to 1994, the annuals consistently report the number of cities where Lasers were conducted, new units started, and the number of ethnic groups reached.

A third component of the Ethnic Church Growth Concept was what Romo called Kaleidoscope Church Growth.<sup>17</sup> Since many Hispanics come from a Roman Catholic background, they usually expect to worship in a building rather than a home. Nevertheless, the church-planting philosophy of the Home Mission Board called for new churches to be started particularly in the urban areas of the United States. As mentioned in chapters 1 and 3, the Kaleidoscopic Church Growth Concept was the usage of one facility by several language congregations in an urban area. Some churches that effectively used this concept in transitional areas included Highland Baptist Church, New York City; South Main Baptist Church, Houston; First Chinese Baptist Church, Los Angeles; and Flagler Street Baptist Church, Miami. Several strengths are worth mentioning. First, it was easier for most ethnic churches to share the expense of a building than to individually purchase a church building. Second, the church was able to serve a mobile, transitional, and/or ethnolinguistic setting. As the different language/

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<sup>16</sup>The development from “Big Cities” to “Key Cities” to “Mega Focus Cities” was gradual over a period of twenty years. The Home Mission Board conducted a series of studies in 1960 that shaped the agency’s urban mission work for the next three decades. Warren Rust became leader of a new HMB initiative, “Key Cities,” in 1976. Over a three-year period, Key Cities attempted to develop mission work in twenty-five urban areas simultaneously. Don E. Hammer followed Rust as department director in 1978 and discontinued the Key Cities program. The following year, he and James W. Nelson, director of the HMB’s Associational Missions Division, published *Future Talk for Southern Baptists* (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, SBC, 1979) outlining the needs of North America at the end of the twentieth century. In that work, Hammer and Nelson laid the foundation for a “bold mission strategy” looking to the year 2000. Mega Focus Cities launched its initial pilot project in 1981 in New York and Miami, both of which had been planned for the final year of Key Cities. For additional historical information on Mega Focus Cities, read Jeff Walters’ unpublished paper. Jeff K. Walters, “Embracing the City: A Brief Survey of the North American Mission Board’s Engagement of America’s Urban Centers” (Louisville, KY: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008), 12-15.

<sup>17</sup>For more explanation, see the “Kaleidoscopic Church Growth Concept” section beginning on p. 15 of this dissertation.

cultural groups moved in and out of the city, the church was able to continue ministering to the community because it changed with the people. Third, language congregations shared facilities with a church in the area. For example, Crestview Baptist Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico, once a strong congregation, dwindled in size as the community around the church changed.<sup>18</sup> The small Anglo congregation found itself in the midst of a large building with high electric bills. The church formed partnerships with Hispanic, Vietnamese, and Chinese congregations. The partnerships allowed for the building to be maintained, while at the same time, four different congregations provided ministries in transitional urban communities. Fourth, leaders come from the people in the community; thus, it is indigenous from the beginning. Fifth, as a result of indigenous leadership, the kaleidoscopic concept breaks down language and cultural barrier between the church and the people in the community. Sixth, the crosscultural approach helped Anglo congregations better understand about doing ministry in the urban areas. Oscar Romo emphasized the importance “to propagate this [Kaleidoscopic] concept in communities where ethnic composition is changing, or where a neighborhood has a mosaic of ethnic peoples.”<sup>19</sup>

One potential weakness of the Kaleidoscopic Church Growth Concept was the coordination of schedules, agendas, and resources by the various congregations that used one building. Sánchez added that another

potential weakness of the Kaleidoscopic Church Growth Concept was that people in these congregations can have the tendency of focusing their particular groups and forgetting that they are a part of a broader expression of the body of Christ. This concern led Dr. Ebbie Smith to stress in his book, *Balanced Church Growth*, that the homogeneous unit principle should not be a *principle* (which applies to every situation in every setting) but a *strategy* that is employed when it is needed

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<sup>18</sup>The resident membership of Crestview Baptist Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico, declined by 76 percent. Crestview’s resident membership declined from 251 members in 1980 to 60 in 1994. Information from Southern Baptist Directory Services received from Cricket Pairett, e-mail to author, 13 May 2013.

<sup>19</sup>Everett Hulum, “Ethnics Are the Answer in Cities,” *Baptist Press*, 24 May 1977 [on-line]; accessed 9 May 2013; available from <http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/4420,24-May-1977.pdf>; Internet.

but always keeps an eye on promoting fellowship between the various cultural expressions of the body of Christ.<sup>20</sup>

The microcosmic urban strategy was an intentional master plan with components adaptable to the various cultural groups living in the urban centers of the United States. The three Church Growth Concepts described above, as well as in chapter 1, were methodologies used to reach the diverse language/cultural population in the cities with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The following are strengths of the microcosmic urban strategy. First, it created an intentional plan to reach the diverse populations of the urban centers. This is important because an urban language strategy was emphasized among the leadership of the associations and Baptist state conventions. Second, it applied New Testament Church Growth principles, recorded in the book of Acts, in the ethnolinguistic context of the people. Third, the strategy called for the deployment of five categories of mission personnel. These missionary personnel were: Messenger of the Word (laypeople), Bivocational Pastor, Pastoral Missionary, Catalytic Missionary, and Catalytic Coordinator. The deployment of these missionaries created a missionary force, making possible the coordination of the microcosmic urban strategy. Fourth, the Language Missions Division of the Home Mission Board encouraged and partnered with Baptist associations located in urban areas to develop a language missions strategy. Fifth, different approaches of the strategy helped strengthen various aspects of language/cultural church growth. Some of these approaches were: the establishment of new language/cultural congregations; indigenous leaders working in an ethnolinguistic context; development of materials in the language of the people; creating an awareness of both language people and language missions; emphasizing groups among which ministries may be developed such as internationals, refugees, and undocumented;

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<sup>20</sup>Sánchez, e-mail.

specific projects such as Bible distribution; and the development of language/cultural congregations.<sup>21</sup>

One apparent weakness of the microcosmic urban strategy was that not every association in urban areas had a language strategy to reach the ethnolinguistic groups. Perhaps several factors accounted for the lack of a language strategy. Some associational Directors of Missions did not thoroughly understand the need to contextualize ministries to specific language-cultural groups. On the other hand, others saw the need for the association to have only one associational strategy instead of many strategies accommodating each ethnic group. Another weakness for a lack of an ethnolinguistic urban strategy was the lack of communication that existed between Anglo leadership and the language pastor or missionary.

### **Analysis, Evaluation, and Critique of Church Growth Concepts**

Joshua Grijalva reported that the use of these church growth concepts encouraged the growth of churches among the American-ethnic population. Grijalva added that “these concepts contributed to more than 20,000 people experiencing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ annually, and more than 100 units a year being established for the past five years.”<sup>22</sup> These Ethnic Church Growth Concepts were methodologies that facilitated the communication of the gospel with language/cultural persons using their language and culture as a means to accomplish the task of reaching the lost and starting new churches.

Sarah Zimmerman wrote an article for the *Baptist Press* in June 1991 after interviewing Doyle Wetherington, Director of Missions for Miami Baptist Association; Jaime Prieto, Home Mission Board assistant director for Filipino church growth; and

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<sup>21</sup>Home Mission Board, Ethnic Ministries Collection, “Romo, Oscar I.–Microcosmic Urban Strategy,” photocopy (Nashville: Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archive, n.d.), 14-16.

<sup>22</sup>Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 147. The last five years of growth that Grijalva refers to are the years 1987-1991.

Ray Carvajal, associational language mission associate, concerning ethnic church development in the Miami Baptist Association. This article brings out the importance of church development and church planting in a changing community when three key leaders of the time state,

Without ethnic church development, the association's statistics would be shrinking. Since 1970, the association has experienced a net loss of more than 189,000 Caucasian residents, says Doyle Wetherington, associational director of missions. In the past 25 years, 28 English-speaking congregations in the association dissolved or merged.

"However, the great growth among the ethnic work has overcome that loss and has been the major reason we have almost tripled the total number of congregations in the association in the same period," Wetherington says.

More than half of the 116 churches in the association are ethnic congregations, though they do not represent half of the association's membership. The ethnic churches include 58 Hispanic, 16 black and 28 Haitian plus Russian, Chinese, Jamaican and deaf congregations. The association includes churches in 12 languages representing 36 nations.

In addition, Wetherington says most of the predominantly Anglo congregations have ethnic members and are "integrated racially, nationally and culturally on multiple levels."

The church diversity is reflective of the community. Children in Dade County schools represent 117 nations, only four less than the number of countries where Southern Baptists have foreign missionaries.

Hispanics account for at least 49 percent of the population. The largest Hispanic church in the Southern Baptist Convention is Primera Iglesia Bautista de Coral Park in Miami Association. It has more than 1,000 members.

Among the newest works in Miami is a Filipino ministry. Six Filipino adults and two children met in May to lay the groundwork for a future church. Jaime Prieto, Home Mission Board assistant director for Filipino church growth, says there are 15,000 to 20,000 Filipinos in Miami. Yet there is no evangelistic Filipino congregation in the city.

Since 1984, Miami Baptist Association has started an average of 10 ethnic congregations a year, says Ray Carvajal, associational language mission associate. Last year, 12 ethnic churches started in the association.

"In the year 2000, we will have 200 ethnic works in Miami if we continue at this pace," Carvajal claims.<sup>23</sup>

These statements confirmed Grijalva's recount of the effectiveness of the church growth concept upon ethnic America.

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<sup>23</sup>Sarah Zimmerman, "Ethnic Diversity Main Ingredient for Growth in Miami Association," *Baptist Press*, 21 June 1991 [on-line]; accessed 27 February 2013; available from <http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/7163,21-Jun-1991.pdf>; Internet, 5-6.

These concepts showed that Oscar Romo had a keen missiological mind. Sánchez observed that “in essence the Strategy Coordinator Concept that the International Mission Board is currently using to encourage the initiation and continuation of Church Planting Movements has many features in common with the Catalytic Missionary Concept.”<sup>24</sup> A critical part of the North American Mission Board strategy in the twenty-first century is the Church Planting Catalyst. Like the catalysts of Romo’s day, the Church Planting Catalyst’s main responsibility is to start new indigenous congregations. The Ethnic Leadership Development Program provided much needed contextualized and practical theological education to the indigenous leaders discovered through the implementation of these concepts.

### **Strategy 2–Ethnic Leadership Development**

The creation of the Ethnic Leadership Development Centers probably should rank very high on Oscar Romo’s list of accomplishments. Romo believed that effective contextualization of the gospel message in the ethnolinguistic context of the people was important for the evangelization of the United States. The growth of ELD from its inception to the present day Contextualized Leadership Development (CLD) shows the significant role it continues to play to train ethnic leadership. A recent study of Hispanic students enrolled in the six Southern Baptist seminaries shows the miniscule impact seminaries are making when compared to the growing Hispanic population.<sup>25</sup> Merry Purvis Romo affirmed that during “Oscar’s 46 years of service in Language Missions at the Home Mission Board, he was most proud of starting a program to train ethnic leaders. He nurtured Ethnic Leadership Development from the beginning to where it was in 1995 when he retired.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Sánchez, e-mail.

<sup>25</sup>See appendix 5 of this dissertation.

<sup>26</sup>This information was written by Norma Mouton and received by author in an e-mail from Merry P. Romo on 30 January 2013. Oscar Romo had asked Mouton to write his official biography. Norma

## **Strengths and Weaknesses**

The Ethnic Leadership Development program was important for the training of ethnic leaders and the establishment of new congregations. Romo's ambitious goals to reach the diversity of cultures with the gospel of Jesus Christ in the United States depended, in large part, in the multiplication and deployment of ethnic leaders.

There were many strengths of the ELD program. The ELD program provided sound theological education. The time the Ethnic Leadership Development Program started in 1981 coincided with Southern Baptists' theological controversy. ELD provided sound theological education at a time when many of the six seminaries were drifting toward a liberal theology. Many Hispanic leaders, although influenced by Roman Catholicism, embraced conservative values and theology.

The ELD program was cost effective. Many of the ELD centers charged students between forty and eighty dollars per course. Additionally, associations and state conventions provided partial scholarships to students. The small financial investment, however, paid many dividends. ELD students and graduates started many of the new ethnic churches in California, in New Mexico, and in other states in the West.<sup>27</sup>

The ELD program provided contextual education. Theological training was conducted in the ethnolinguistic context of the students. Each student was able not only to hear biblical truth in their language, but also to make cultural applications of biblical truth in the context of their ministry.

The ELD helped raised cultural awareness among Southern Baptists. Pointing out the significant importance of religion on Hispanics, and the need to establish new Hispanic churches by the end of the twentieth century, Joshua Grijalva said,

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Adelfa Mouton, "Romo, Oscar Ismael," in *Great Lives from History: Latinos*, ed. Carmen Tafolla and Martha P. Cotera (Ipswich, MA: Salem Press, 2012).

<sup>27</sup>See "Ethnic Leadership Development" section on pp. 140-46 of this dissertation for additional information.



The church of the 20th century is challenged in injecting the teachings of the New Testament to Hispanics as well as other ethnics. Anglo churches need to have a sense of appreciation for their ethnic brothers . . . , and Hispanics need a continuing spirit of unity if 3,000 new units are to be established by the year 2000. . . .

Grijalva called for a “continuing examination of value relations, better communications and understanding among all cultures” and noted Hispanics number 18 million of some 119 million ethnics in the United States.<sup>28</sup>

Cultural awareness was important to the Anglo in order to effectively understand and reach the Hispanic with the gospel. For the Hispanic, cultural awareness was important in order to understand not only the Anglo, but also the different cultural groups among the Hispanic culture.

The ELD program removed geographical barriers. Since each ELD center served a particular ministry context, students did not have to relocate to another area to receive theological education. The decentralized delivery of theological education was a benefit for state conventions and associations and also for students.

The ELD program created new partnerships. Successful partnerships were created with seminaries, colleges and universities, Bible institutes, Southern Baptist Convention agencies, and state conventions. Many Bible schools, such as the Instituto Bíblico Bautista Mexicano, now known as the Baptist University of the Américas,<sup>29</sup> trained and deployed Hispanic leaders to serve in churches through the United States. Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary developed an ethnic Doctor of Ministry track with a concentration in Ethnic Missions.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>James Lee Young, “SBC Praised, Chided for Work among Ethnics,” *Baptist Press*, 27 April 1983 [on-line]; accessed 14 June 2013; available at <http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/5634,27-Apr-1983.PDF>; Internet, 1.

<sup>29</sup>In 1947, the Instituto Bíblico Bautista Mexicano was established in San Antonio. The name of the institution was later changed to Seminario Teológico Bautista Hispano. Under the leadership of Albert Reyes, who served as President from 1999-2006, the school changed to its current name, “Baptist University of the Americas.”

<sup>30</sup>I received a Doctor of Ministry degree with a concentration in Ethnic Missions from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary. This program, although in English, was a further expansion in the curriculum in order to provide theological education to Hispanics.

The ELD program provided recognitions to students. Various options were available for recognition of students' achievements. Upon the completion of successful studies, a student received a certificate or diploma from an accredited institution.<sup>31</sup> Other options were a diploma or certificate from seminary external education.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, ethnic students could receive CEU's from a seminary or Language Church Extension Division.<sup>33</sup>

While unquestionably the strengths of the ELD program were many, there were also some inherent weaknesses. Many Hispanics in the United States are very transient. Since employment is one important reason why many Hispanics come to the United States, it is reasonable that they also are motivated to migrate to areas where there is additional work. Thus, it is not unusual to frequently have ELD students move to other cities in search of better job opportunities.<sup>34</sup>

For some ELD centers, the combination of mobility and the need for jobs makes it more difficult to recruit and encourage Hispanics to complete the ELD curriculum of courses or encourage them to pursue organized training. Nevertheless, great strides have been made by Hispanics in education. A Pew Research Hispanic Center report affirmed,

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<sup>31</sup>Upon successful completion of all requirements set by the institutions, a student received either a certificate or a diploma. For example, someone who did not have a high school diploma or GED would receive a certificate. On the other hand, a student who had completed and received a high school diploma or GED would then receive a diploma.

<sup>32</sup>Joshua Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 165.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup>Pew Hispanic Center reports that Hispanics are relatively concentrated geographically. Nearly 80 percent live in California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, Arizona, New Jersey, New Mexico, or Colorado. But as the Hispanic population grew between 1980 and 2000, it also dispersed somewhat. As the Hispanic population grows and shows signs of becoming less immigrant-based, it is also starting to spread out. Although Hispanics are still concentrated geographically in California, Texas, and other states that have had large Latino communities for decades, this population has begun to disperse across the country, with very fast growth in states as scattered as Georgia, Nebraska, and Washington. Roberto Suro, "Hispanics: A People in Motion" (Washington DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2005), 8 and 10.

a commonplace claim that the education level of the Latino immigrant population is continually falling behind that of the U.S.-born population. However, the Pew Hispanic Center finds that the educational profile of the adult population of foreign-born Latinos has improved significantly during the past three decades. These gains, however, have not yet produced a notable convergence with the level of education in the native-born U.S. population. During the period 1970 to 2000 the native-born population also experienced improvements of education that outpaced the progress among Latino immigrants. Nonetheless, the trends identified in this report suggest that the gap between immigrants and natives will narrow in the future.<sup>35</sup>

Another weakness of the ELD program is the difficulty of recruiting students that reside legally in the United States. Because most ELD centers are affiliated with an accredited educational institution in the United States, each center must obey the law of the land. The sifting of people based on legal status, the explosive population of Hispanics in the United States, and the immense need to train new leadership creates abundant frustration.<sup>36</sup>

Students from various cultural and educational backgrounds can create a didactic challenge in the classroom. This cultural and educational dissonance can possibly develop in unmet expectations between instructor and students. Additionally, inexperienced instructors may find it difficult to unearth different teaching methodologies to communicate clearly in the classroom.

Despite scholarships provided by associations and state conventions, some students encounter difficulties in purchasing required textbooks or paying for part of the course. In order to help the student, some ELD centers provide students with scholarships

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<sup>35</sup>B. Lindsey Lowell and Roberto Suro, *Pew Hispanic Center Reports: The Improving Educational Profile of Latino Immigrants* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Research Center, 2002), i [on-line]; accessed 29 May 2013; available from <http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/reports/14.pdf>; Internet.

<sup>36</sup>The tremendous task before us to discover, develop, and deploy indigenous leaders to reach the growing population of Hispanics is daunting. While I am not advocating for the church to break the law of man, I also recognize that neither do I work for the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). I believe that I have a responsibility to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to all people without regard to legal standing. In the case, where undocumented students apply for formal enrollment into the ELD program, I must obey the law of the land. I am not opposed, however, to informal theological training of undocumented persons. NOTE: ICE is the principal investigative arm of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the second largest investigative agency in the federal government, created in 2003 through a merger of the investigative and interior enforcement elements of the U.S. Customs Service and the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

for the total cost of the course. Many of these students are more likely to drop the class than those who, at least in part, have some sort of financial investment in the class.

### **Analysis, Evaluation, and Critique of the Ethnic Leadership Development**

An integral part of Oscar Romo's strategy to reach the American Mosaic was theological training. The Ethnic Leadership Development Program was one way to effectively deliver theological education in the ethnolinguistic context of the people. The initial partnership between Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary and the Home Mission Board's Language Missions shaped the lives of many laypeople, pastors, and church planters. A casual perusal of the annuals of the Southern Baptist Convention shows the rapid and consistent growth of ELD centers. Starting with two centers among Korean and Spanish in 1982,<sup>37</sup> ELD developed to "One hundred nineteen Ethnic Leadership Development Centers [that] provided training to 1,235 ethnic leaders in 18 languages among 20 ethnic groups in cooperation with Golden Gate, Midwestern, Southern, and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminaries [in 1999]."<sup>38</sup>

The ELD effectively delivered theological education to ethnic leaders across the United States in the language and culture of the people. This program promoted new partnerships with seminaries, associations, state Baptist conventions, and agencies. These partnerships were of benefit both to the Anglo and also to the language/cultural person. Ultimately, the ELD program developed awareness to and challenge for missions among the Anglo churches and their leadership. For the language/cultural person, on the other hand, the ELD program was vital in maintaining the mission momentum for training ethnic leaders, starting new congregations, and proclaiming the gospel to the ethnic population. The ELD program encapsulated missiological, sociological, and

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<sup>37</sup>Don Beall, "The Romo Years at HMB-ELD," e-mail to author, 3 April 2013.

<sup>38</sup>*Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, June 14-16, 1994* (Nashville: Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1994), 253.

ecclesiological principles helpful in the discovery, development, and deployment of language leadership important to the goal of reaching the “American Mosaic.”

Reflecting on the impact ELD made in Southern California, Don Beall, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary CLD Director in Mill Valley, California, wrote,

I do know that the Hispanic ELD Center in San Diego trained several current pastors and denominational leaders. Richard Cano, NAMB missionary’s training is the two diplomas from GGBTS. Song Sik Kim started out as a High School graduate from Korea that did not speak English well and graduated with a Diploma in Theology (62 hours) from GGBTS and then California Baptist University gave him credit for much of this. He received a B.A. from CBU. He then received an M.Div. from GGBTS (Southern California Campus) and then a D.Min. from Talbot. Dr. Kim has served for many years as the Korean Catalytic Missionary for California.<sup>39</sup>

Oscar Romo’s vision, influence, and contributions to theological education are reflected in Beall’s story of “one Hispanic pastor in the Riverside, California area graduated from CLD and began a Spanish Southern Baptist Church that now runs 2,300 on Sunday, and is sending out other church planters.”<sup>40</sup> The creation of the Ethnic Leadership Development Center produced many leaders for new ethnic congregations. Beall recognized that this growth was “all because God gave Oscar Romo a vision to train men and women in their language, where they lived, starting where they were. What a vision!”<sup>41</sup>

### **Strategy 3–National Language Strategy**

Confronted with a growing population of people from many nations coming to the United States, Oscar Romo was faced with the challenge of developing a strategic plan to reach these people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The task was not an easy one. Romo had to work with different state conventions that had their own staff, strategies,

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<sup>39</sup>Beall, “The Romo Years at HMB–ELD,” e-mail.

<sup>40</sup>Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, “Oscar Romo, Golden Gate Seminary’s CLD Founder, Dies” [on-line]; accessed 10 March 2013; available from <http://www.ggbts.edu/news.aspx?item=41>; Internet.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

and regional convention culture. In the early part of his ministry with the Home Mission Board, Romo related mostly with Anglo staff, many of whom had never had crosscultural ministerial experience.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses**

A significant strength was the resulting unified strategy it produced between state conventions and the Language Missions division of the Home Mission Board. While this unified strategy did not mean uniformity, nor was it done in a few years, it was foundational for the strong partnerships that developed in later years.

Oscar Romo exhibited a contagious passion and a sense of urgency to reach the language/cultural population in the United States. Daniel Sánchez spoke about this passion when he said that

the national missions strategy designed by Dr. Romo was communicated with much passion and a sense of urgency. Dr. Romo's passion came through every time he spoke about reaching the ethnic population for Christ. This passion was also communicated through his personal lifestyle. He worked long hours every day and was always exceedingly well prepared while leading conferences and speaking about Language Missions.<sup>42</sup>

Oscar Romo sought to be a good steward of both human and financial resources by developing and implementing a national language strategy, yet provide a “witness and ministries so that every person may hear the gospel in his or her cultural context and language.”<sup>43</sup> The ELD program is a good example of this stewardship. Oscar Romo looked for ways to provide quality theological education to the different ethnic groups. He first worked with the Hispanic Baptist Theological Seminary (now Baptist University of the Américas) and the seminary in Puerto Rico. Although both of these programs provided theological training for Hispanics, the disparity in funding versus deployed leaders was not enough to meet the demand among Hispanics in the United

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<sup>42</sup>Daniel R. Sánchez, “National Language Strategy,” e-mail to author, 31 May 2013.

<sup>43</sup>Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 147.

States.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, Romo's partnership with the Miami Ethnic Branch of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary required less money to operate.<sup>45</sup>

The strategy plans called for selective deployment of missionary personnel rather than just a random choice or convenience by state conventions or the Home Mission Board. The deployment was based on several factors. The first factor was new churches; namely, ministry among new ethnic groups in the state. The second factor was responsive groups. These were ethnic groups "who in a judgmental evaluation were responsive to the Gospel."<sup>46</sup> The third influential factor in the deployment of missionaries was strategic cities selected "because of their ethnic and international population and their strategic location."<sup>47</sup>

Although these three factors were influential in determining missionary deployment, the national language strategy was based "on solid statistical data."<sup>48</sup> Romo's comprehensive cultural exegesis studies were shared in the "America's Ethnicity" series, which he distributed during the annual language conferences. According to the Language Missions Strategy Administrative Guide, there were broad categories that served as the database for the development of a language missions strategy. These broad categories were language/culture trends, international aspects, research projects, ethnic church growth analysis, and divisional input.<sup>49</sup> Sánchez reminds us that "while information from the Census Bureau was much more difficult to obtain than it is now (with electronic means) Romo and his staff went through great lengths

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<sup>44</sup>Joe Hernández, e-mail to author, 27 February 2013.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Oscar I. Romo, "Language Missions Strategy Administrative Guide," typed copy (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, SBC, 1980), 7. See also appendix 6 of this dissertation.

<sup>47</sup>Romo, "Language Missions Strategy Administrative Guide," 7.

<sup>48</sup>Sánchez, "National Language Strategy," e-mail.

<sup>49</sup>For additional explanation about these categories, see appendix 6 of this dissertation and Romo, "Language Missions Strategy Administrative Guide," 6.

to obtain demographic information that revealed growth patterns and projections. This information was utilized to pinpoint the areas of greatest need for evangelism and church planting.”<sup>50</sup>

The national language strategy was sociologically informed.<sup>51</sup> Romo recognized, like Donald McGavran that “conversion should occur within a minimal social dislocation.”<sup>52</sup> This controversial sociological principal was challenged during the time of Romo, as it is also challenged among missions strategists in the second decade of the twenty-first century. Sánchez recalled the struggles faced by Oscar Romo during the time of the development and implementation of a language strategy when he said that

at a time when most main-line denominations were seeking to integrate ethnic groups into their English-Speaking churches and programs, Dr. Romo recognized that most ethnic groups were moving in the direction of cultural revitalization (finding their roots). Cognizant of this, Dr. Romo led Southern Baptists in a strategy to start as many ethnic churches as possible throughout the country. This led to a significant increase in the number of ethnic persons that were reached with the gospel message over against what was being done by other denominations.<sup>53</sup>

The language missions strategy was comprehensive.<sup>54</sup> Romo was creative and strategic in his partnerships. Since the program assignment given by the Southern Baptist Convention did not comprehensively allow the Home Mission Board to meet all the needs of language/cultural people in the United States, Romo made strategic partnerships with the seminaries, SBC agencies, and government agencies in order to provide more effectively for the needs of ethnics. Sánchez best summarized this point when he said,

The primary areas assigned to the Home Mission Board related to Evangelism, Christian Social Ministries, and Church Planting. In light of the fact that the Home Mission Board did not have the program assignment nor the financial resources to relate to all of the ethnic needs, there were often significant areas that were not

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<sup>50</sup>Sánchez, “National Language Strategy,” e-mail.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), x.

<sup>53</sup>Sánchez, “National Language Strategy,” e-mail.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.



being addressed. Being aware of these needs, Dr. Romo wisely partnered with key SBC Agencies (Sunday School Board, Woman's Missionary Union, Brotherhood Commission, and Baptist Seminaries). Through mutual agreements, persons relating to Dr. Romo's staff were assigned to work in these agencies and to provide leadership in ministering to ethnic persons. It was as a result of this that the Ethnic Leadership Development program and numerous other ministries were established within the agencies.<sup>55</sup>

The language mission strategy emphasized leadership training. It is not difficult to follow throughout this dissertation the importance theological education played in the life of Oscar Romo.<sup>56</sup> From the early days as a child growing up in Lockhart, Texas, to informal gatherings with leaders to discuss strategies and training to the creation of the Ethnic Leadership Development Program and implementation of a national strategy, the important thread of leadership training was present.<sup>57</sup>

There are some inherent weaknesses in the implementation of the national language strategy. The transition of personnel in state conventions sometimes affected language strategies. For example, if the state Director of Missions or Language Missions Director transitioned to another position, it would certainly leave a vacuum in strategy implementation and communication channels.

One difficulty mostly during the early years of Romo's ministry was the lack of ethnics in key positions in the state conventions. As Romo began to implement his strategies, more state conventions placed ethnic leaders in key positions of leadership within the state convention staff.

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Chap. 3 of this dissertation, in particular, traces Oscar Romo's early years, his language missions philosophy, and his passion for providing theological education to language cultural groups.

<sup>57</sup>Daniel Sánchez points out some who were significantly influenced by Romo. He adds that Romo was instrumental in training a significant number of leaders who progressed to occupy positions in churches, associations, state conventions, and national SBC agencies. Among some of these are Fermin Whittaker, Executive Director of the Southern Baptist Convention of California; Bob Sena, a staff member of the North American Mission Board for many years; Gustavo Suárez, professor of Church Planting at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; Daniel Sánchez, professor of Missions at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; and numerous others. Romo personally mentored many of these leaders. In addition to this, the annual Language Missions Conference was a very effective instrument that he used to share valuable information and instruct persons serving in a variety of positions across the country.

Sometimes a person's strengths also become his weakness. Sánchez added: "it is ironic that some of the same characteristics that contributed toward Romo's effectiveness were at times perceived by some as weaknesses in the implementation of his strategies. Among these was the forcefulness and impatience that characterized his leadership style. This, at times, elicited negative reactions from persons in positions of leadership in SBC life."<sup>58</sup>

### **Analysis, Evaluation, and Critique of the National Language Strategy**

National Language strategy planning among Baptist state conventions grew from the embryonic stages of a few Southwestern states in 1967 to national Language Missions Strategies emerging among "90 percent of state [conventions]" in 1971.<sup>59</sup> These strategies developed among every Baptist state convention over the following two decades, resulting in very valuable research on the ethnicity of America.

Perhaps when each strategy is dissected individually one cannot easily observe the impact it had on ethnic America. It is undeniable the transformational influence these primary strategies had in changing ethnic America in the areas of church planting, theological education, and the formation and development of ethnic fellowships in the Southern Baptist convention.<sup>60</sup>

### **Strategy 4—Ethnic Fellowships**

There is abundant strength that results as Ethnic Fellowships gather, plan, and implement strategies together to effectively carry out the Great Commission. People like to gather together with other people who are like them. Southern Baptists theologians and

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<sup>58</sup>Sánchez, "National Language Strategy," e-mail.

<sup>59</sup>Grijalva, *Ethnic Baptist History*, 147-48.

<sup>60</sup>The national language mission strategy referred to in this chapter is one of four key components of what I call "primary strategies." The other components are the ethnic Church Growth Concept, the Ethnic Leadership Development Program, and the Ethnic Fellowship.

leaders receive encouragement as they gather together for fellowship, encouragement, and the affirmation of our confessional agreements while maintaining our joy and privilege of serving in the midst of the cultural diversity of the United States. Such were the reasons for the creation of the various Ethnic Fellowships in the Southern Baptist Convention. Ethnic Fellowships grew out of Oscar Romo's philosophy that the United States was a nation of many nations and each cultural group had the right to hear the gospel in its own language.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses**

Ethnic Fellowships allowed cultural groups to remove unnecessary barriers for the proclamation of the gospel. Two of these barriers were language and culture. Ethnic Fellowships enabled the communication of the gospel within the ethnolinguistic context of the people.

Ethnic Fellowships recognized linguistic patterns and cultural identities. For example, theological training in the language of the people was provided to many ethnic groups in different geographical areas at the same time. Since the training was delivered contextually, it was possible to train effectively more people in less time for ministry. This methodology was contrasted to other approaches of the time that provided training in English, with translation, to people of various language/cultural backgrounds.

Another strength of Ethnic Fellowships was that it was biblically rooted. The Ethnic Fellowships were to be a channel for encouragement to the people (1 Thess 5:11), to bring unity in doctrine (Rom 15:5), to highlight the uniqueness of that culture (Acts 10; 15), and for instruction (Matt 10:5-10). Yet, the greatest biblical motivation for the ethnic fellowship was the lostness of man and their need for a Savior. Everything else was secondary.

Ethnic Fellowships were sociologically informed. A point of controversy for some people was the idea of starting culturally-focused congregations. Romo recognized that new immigrants did not know the culture in the United States, many did not speak

English well, the educational system was unfamiliar, and many felt marginalized. Sociologically, like Donald McGavran, Romo sought to reach people within their own ethnolinguistic context.

Ethnic Fellowships promoted effective evangelism because the gospel is communicated to a group of likeminded people with similar interests. Ethnic Fellowships were able to effectively reach their own people groups by starting congregations in the language of the people, training indigenous leaders, and sending those leaders out to reach not only their own culture, but other cultures as well.

Ethnic Fellowships were missiologically driven and able to engage their culture. It is difficult to know how far one should go when engaging culture. Because Ethnic Fellowships served within the ethnolinguistic context of the people and knew the culture, they were able to determine their needs.

There are several weaknesses of Ethnic Fellowships. Some people perceived Ethnic Fellowships as a threat to the associations, the state conventions, and the Southern Baptist Convention. The lack of communication and partnership between the ethnic and the Anglo creates tension. Some Anglos see the Ethnic Fellowships as acting as small associations. The ethnic, on the other hand, sees the associational and state convention as insignificant and not able to provide for the needs of their churches.

Additionally, the same lack of communication and partnership described in the above paragraph may lead Ethnic Fellowships into an isolated, non-missionary organization. The same attitude sometimes can be used by churches to promote a spirit of separation between people. When a person makes a statement such as “let them go to their churches and stay out of ours,” it reveals an unbiblical and unacceptable attitude.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Gustavo V. Suárez, *Connections: Linking People and Principles for Dynamic Church Multiplication* (Friendswood, TX: Baxter Press, 2004), 86.

## **Analysis, Evaluation, and Critique of Ethnic Fellowships**

Ethnic Fellowships continue to develop as a natural response to Southern Baptist structures. Our denominational agencies and boards should recognize these fellowships as strengths and an important channel through which to do effective ministry as partners. Peter Kung provides a reminder that “the existence of ethnic fellowships in Southern Baptist life is a reality.”<sup>62</sup>

When Ethnic Fellowships are used wisely within the SBC structures, it can help further the Kingdom of God. Just imagine what would happen if an Ethnic Fellowship decided to strategically pray, plan, and position itself to work together for Great Commission advancements. The leadership of Ethnic Fellowships can work with associations, state conventions, and SBC agencies to discover ways to reach that people group with the gospel.

An example of cooperation could be working with GuideStone Financial Resources to translate materials into that language group. They could also work alongside LifeWay Christian Resources in translating some of the key titles that would be of benefit to that language group. Ethnic Fellowships could also assist our six Southern Baptist seminaries in recruiting students and providing names of qualified leaders in order to implement theological education in the language of that people group.

### **Secondary Strategies**

Secondary strategies played a supportive, yet as important, role to primary strategies. These strategies helped create awareness among associational, state convention, and SBC agency personnel. Secondary strategies helped strengthen and develop not only the missionary, but also the ministries of language missions. The four secondary strategies include the Leadership Conferences, the Ministry to Immigrants

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<sup>62</sup>Peter Kung, “Ethnic Fellowships in Southern Baptist Life: A Perspective” (Nashville: Home Mission Board, Ethnic Ministries Collection, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, n.d.), 13.

and Refugees, the Language Material Consortium, and the Hispanic Church-planting Strategies and Models.

### **Strategy 1—Leadership Conferences**

The leadership conferences were primarily made up of two strategic annual conferences, each having its unique audience. Oscar Romo assumed responsibility for the language missions leadership conference in 1971, which became the “largest [conference] sponsored by the Home Mission Board.”<sup>63</sup> This conference targeted administrative leaders in missions and also representatives of the various agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention. The Catalytic Mission Conference was started in 1965.<sup>64</sup> The targeted audience was the catalytic missionaries. The conference consisted of three essential components: educational, praxis, and networking.<sup>65</sup>

### **Strengths and Weaknesses**

The leadership conferences created awareness. Language missions was a relatively new topic among Southern Baptists in the 1960s. Oscar Romo was meticulous in providing participants with copious and current demographical information. The information rooted in research offered participants an arsenal of materials that they could use to share with their association and state conventions.

The leadership conference presented new research. Each year, the language missions staff prepared new research about a specific people group and usually an area with high concentration of ethnics. Oscar Romo normally would have an outside guest speak on a specific assignment related to the overall topic of the conference.

The leadership conference featured lectures about a particular culture. For example, the leadership conference in 1985 was held in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The

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<sup>63</sup>Merry P. Romo, “Oscar’s Bio,” e-mail to author, 10 September 2010.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>For more information about each of these conferences, see the “Secondary Language Missions Strategies” section in chap. 4, beginning on p. 154.

group studied was the Native American Indian and particularly the Navajos. In another conference, participants visited a mosque in Detroit.

The leadership conference provided a time for praxis and crosscultural experiences for the participants. Local and state conventions who hosted the conference as it moved around the country provided introduction and information about their context, ministry opportunities, and language church planting in their state. The visits to ethnic churches were a highlight on Sunday morning. Bible studies related to missions and church planting were presented during the conference. Many of the sessions included worship and ethnic musical groups.

The leadership conference provided updates on immigration and trends in language missions. During the years 1970-1994, the continuous influx of immigrants and refugees presented great challenges and also opportunities for ministries. The leadership conferences often provided updates on refugee resettlement, updates on immigration law, and practical ways a local church could be involved in refugee and immigration ministries.

The leadership conference provided a time for language directors to network and exchange information on resources and best practices. Language program leaders from state conventions met as a group during the conference. They shared the best practices used in their ministry context. The leadership conferences also provided an opportunity for language leaders to network and discover new resources.

The leadership conference exposed state leadership to language/cultural information and diversity. Many of the leadership at both state convention and local levels were exposed, usually for the first time, to cultural ministries at these two conferences. Jerry Baker, serving as language state missionary with the Georgia Baptist Convention, recalled his experiences as a participant in these two conferences. He stated,

For all of us, our understanding, vision and worldview were regularly and greatly expanded. There was an excitement generated in what was happening in church plants, ministry and missions. For me, I had fresh data each year from within SBC

and outside SBC for planning, training and communicating what was happening in our state.<sup>66</sup>

Baker commented on the lack of information or ethnic specificity he finds in Southern Baptist conferences, saying,

I have personally greatly missed the content and purpose of the conference as it was combined with Anglo and African American Church Planting and later with all aspects of NAMB ministries, diminishing the major benefit of the conference. I consider this a major loss. I have turned to the Ethnic America Network and Summits to fill part of the void.<sup>67</sup>

One State Executive Director referred to these conferences as “the greatest show on earth.”<sup>68</sup>

Several weaknesses of the leadership conference are to be noted. First, it appeared to some as inappropriate the way in which the highly qualified ethnic staff were not respected by the director publicly and at times from the platform. Second, the Home Mission Board was unable to require SBC/state leaders to attend the conference.

### **Analysis, Evaluation, and Critique of Leadership Conferences**

The two leadership conferences became probably the most significant conferences for those involved in ethnic ministries in the United States. The three components of the conferences mentioned above contributed to the development of both the ethnic and Anglo leadership in associational, state conventions, and SBC agencies. The educational component helped shaped the missionary in the theological, ecclesiological, and missiological foundations of language missions in the United States. The praxis component allowed the missionary to put into practice in the field what he had learned in the conferences. The networking component permitted the missionary

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<sup>66</sup>During Oscar Romo’s time at the Home Mission Board, Jerry Baker served as the Language Missions Director for the Georgia Baptist Convention. Jerry Baker, “Help! Need Some Info,” e-mail to author, 22 March 2013.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.



to network with other missionaries, associational, state conventions, and SBC agency leadership in order to discover effective ways to minister to the different and various language/cultural groups found in the “American Mosaic.”

Merry Purvis Romo said the purpose and target of the Language Missions Leadership Conference was

to create an awareness of language-culture people among the State Directors of Missions. In the early years, many states did not have Language Program Leaders. Some SDOMs were not even aware of the ethnicity of their states. The Catalytic conferences were designed to maximize the training of those sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with all language-culture peoples.<sup>69</sup>

Certainly the amount of information given during these conferences became informative and, over the years, priceless. Yet, it was not just “unloading information; it resulted in transforming the culture and attitude of many leaders, associations, state conventions, agencies, and ultimately the Southern Baptist Convention. Merry Romo expressed her reasons why these two conferences were successful when she said,

The SDOMs’ eyes were opened to the reality of the ethnicity of the United States. They all went home with statistical information showing where the ethnics were in their states. The number of language-culture people led to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ grew by leaps and bounds as did the number of ethnic churches. Goals were set and reached of starting work among at least one new ethnic group per year.<sup>70</sup>

The supportive secondary strategy of leadership conferences was one reason the years 1970-1994 were both important and influential for Southern Baptists in the United States. Much of what happened as a result of the primary strategies described in chapter 4 was undergirded by integrating knowledge to practical ministry and sharing the best practices among the national network of language missionaries.

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<sup>69</sup>Merry P. Romo, “Help,” e-mail to author, 11 April 2013.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

## **Strategy 2–Ministry to Immigrants and Refugees**

The immigration and refugee program of the Home Mission Board contributed to the growth of churches among the Southern Baptist Convention. Since the United States is a nation of immigrants, many have come in search of political freedom. Oscar Romo seized the opportunity and led Southern Baptists to minister to people fleeing oppression and persecution, coming to a new land, a new culture, and for many a new language. During the 1960s, many fled communist Cuba and flooded South Florida, but many spread to other states as well. The fall of Indochina to Communism in 1975 accelerated the “simultaneous migration of Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese” to the United States.<sup>71</sup> The 1980s brought a new wave of refugees from Cuba and Haiti that came to the United States. For some, the flood of foreigners into the country may be a point of contention. On the other hand, others see people from many nations, speaking different languages, representing many different cultures, and most without a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses**

The immigration and refugee program provided an opportunity to respond to human needs. The work of immigration and refugee resettlement started with the Cubans in 1965. The initial wave of Cuban immigrants was reported to have been 250,000 people. Although the enormity of the task was overwhelming, the initial “twenty-five Spanish-speaking congregations in Miami tried to meet the needs of the refugees.”<sup>72</sup> During the years of 1975 and 1980, Indochinese and Haitians also needed assistance, and Southern Baptists were there to help.

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<sup>71</sup>Joshua Grijalva, “Grijalva Manuscript–Ethnic Baptist History” (Nashville: Home Mission Board Ethnic Ministries Collection, AR 631-12, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, 1987), 883.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 881.

The immigration and refugee program provided an opportunity for the local church to be involved in missions. Many local churches became involved in sponsoring refugees and ministering to immigrants. Sponsorships included “helping the family get employment, food, housing, clothing, school, insurance and language instruction.”<sup>73</sup>

The immigration and refugee program allowed the Southern Baptist Convention to mobilize its missionary force to minister to immigrants and refugees. Home missionaries were “active both inside and outside the [refugee] camps.”<sup>74</sup> Many Baptists participated by teaching basic English and proclaiming the message of Jesus Christ.

The immigration and refugee program produced new congregations. Bill Rutledge reported that “by 1983, 281 congregations had been started as a direct result of SBC resettlement efforts.”<sup>75</sup> Four years later, Joshua Grijalva reported that “347 refugee congregations” were started.<sup>76</sup> It was important for the Home Mission Board to provide a ministry for the immigrants and refugees coming to the United States. Yet, more important for the immigrant and refugee than finding political freedom was the need for a Savior. The Home Mission Board intentionally started new congregations among this affinity group.

The immigration and refugee program brought people from different nations of the world who are now productive residents and in some cases citizens of the United States. Many of these who came to the United States as immigrants and refugees made considerable contributions to Language Missions among Southern Baptists.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>“SBC and Refugees: Sign of the Times?” *MissionsUSA* (January-February 1986): 48.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 885.

<sup>77</sup>For more information, see the “American Mosaic” section in chap. 2 of this dissertation, beginning on p. 34. Here, the reader will find the names of many who first came to the United States fleeing persecution in their country and were instrumental in spreading the gospel and starting new congregations.

Some weaknesses should be mentioned related to immigrants and refugees in the United States. First, some churches assume that missions is something we do outside of the United States and fail to see the opportunities God gives them at home to reach the many nations of the world coming to their neighborhoods. Second, sometimes people stereotype ethnic groups to the point that they fail to see their need for a Savior. Third, it is difficult for some to contextualize the gospel to the language and culture of Hispanics. They are guided more by the axiom, “they are in America so they need to learn English,” than the biblical mandate “to go and make disciples of all the nations (Matt 28:19).

### **Analysis, Evaluation, and Critique of Ministry to Immigrants and Refugees**

The idiom “being in the right place at the right time” could almost be applicable to Oscar Romo. His tenure as Director of Language Missions for the Home Mission Board coincided with the difficult decade of the 1970s: a decade filled with political scandal in the United States that led to Richard Nixon’s resignation, the United States pulling out of Vietnam, the fall of Saigon, and the rapid migration of Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese refugees to the United States.

Certainly Oscar Romo’s accomplishments were much more than just “being in the right place at the right time.” His missiological thinking and his passion for “the ends of the world” helped him develop an infrastructure to seize this opportunity for missions. Romo took five actions to respond swiftly to the rapid influx of refugees and immigrants. First, he wisely mobilized Southern Baptists to respond effectively to the needs of people who were fleeing oppression and in search of political freedom. Second, he used his relational and organizational networks to establish a plan to minister to the needs of the people. Third, Romo was particularly interested in presenting the message of Christ, discovering new leaders, and starting new congregations among these groups. Fourth, he deployed personnel to minister to the spiritual and physical needs of people at the various

refugee camps in the United States. Fifth, Oscar Romo judiciously staffed the Office of Immigration and Refugee Services with gifted people.<sup>78</sup>

The initial massive influx of refugees from Asia and Cuba and subsequent stream of immigrants, both legal and undocumented, became a defining moment for the Language Missions Department of the Home Mission Board and also for Oscar Romo. A leader is tested and defined by crisis. Romo was tested with an unparalleled influx of refugees, and he responded swiftly and effectively. Romo showed Southern Baptists that he was able to lead, and Southern Baptists demonstrated to the world that they cared for people in need.

The world's political situations of the 1970s brought immigrants and refugees to the United States. This migration provided a steady influx of people representing many nations, cultures, and languages. In essence, it became a channel or mission field for language missionaries to discover, develop, and deploy new language/cultural leaders to start new congregations.

### **Strategy 3—Language Material Consortium**

The Language Material Consortium was a natural result of Oscar Romo's philosophy of ministry. Since Romo rejected the idea of the "Melting Pot" and recognized the right of each person to retain his or her unique self-identities and heritage, it is only reasonable that each ethnic group also had the ability to read materials in their own native language. In the early years of Romo's ministry with the Home Mission Board, Southern Baptists had few materials in languages other than English.

The initial Language Material Consortium group consisted of representatives from the Baptist Sunday School Board, Woman's Missionary Union, Annuity Board, and the Home Mission Board.<sup>79</sup> The purpose of the annual meetings was to review needs

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<sup>78</sup>For a list of names of people who served as Director of the Office of Immigration and Refugee Services, see "Ministry to Immigrants and Refugees" section on p. 156 of this dissertation.

<sup>79</sup>Three of the agencies restructured and the names were changed to LifeWay Christian Resources, GuideStone Financial Services, and the North American Mission Board.

for contextual materials for ethnics. The Baptist Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources) and the Woman's Missionary Union began publishing material in Spanish. These two agencies also were among the first to include Hispanics as part of their staff. These efforts later expanded into other SBC agencies.

The efforts of the Language Material Consortium facilitated the development of language materials for stewardship, Cooperative Program, Church Development, and Kindergarten.<sup>80</sup> By 1993, there were materials in forty-seven different languages. While the number of materials was certainly impressive, more importantly, these resources created a solid bridge of communication between language/cultural groups and Southern Baptists. It is invigorating for a Hispanic person to read about the Cooperative Program in his heart language using material printed by Southern Baptists. Two obvious benefits are that he learns about the Cooperative Program and identifies with the larger Southern Baptist family. He also can teach others in his congregation.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses**

The Language Material Consortium engaged other agencies. One of the strengths of the Language Material Consortium was its ability to engage the various SBC agencies. The materials produced by some of the agencies were aesthetically attractive with great content.

The Language Material Consortium involved state convention personnel. The mission personnel from state conventions also participated in the Language Material Consortium. Although not everyone went to the annual meeting, everyone during the year could share suggestions. State conventions also shared any language material they used in the state.

The Language Material Consortium created awareness for contextual materials among Hispanics. The creation of new language materials by agencies and state

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<sup>80</sup>A curriculum was developed in Spanish to help equip Mexican-American children for public schools. Merry Romo, "Oscar's Bio," e-mail.

conventions produced new awareness about language/cultural groups in the context of ministry. It was common during the early days of language missions to translate from English to Spanish. This awareness encouraged some organizations to allow Hispanics to write in their ethnolinguistic context.

The Language Material Consortium resulted in new Spanish writers. Producing material that was written in Spanish by a Hispanic is both powerful and encouraging. For those reading the material in their language, it is very significant. And for the person writing the material in Spanish, it brings them hope and an incredible sense of contribution.

The Language Material Consortium was instructional. These language materials educated the Hispanics in subject areas related to Southern Baptist life. Some of these areas were theological, such as what Baptists believe. Other areas were ecclesiological, such as defining what is the church.

The Language Material Consortium created a family atmosphere. It is difficult for a family to live together if there is little to no communication. The publication of these materials created a sense of community. There was an ability to communicate ideas and methods in the language of the people. Hispanics felt they were part of the Southern Baptist family.

There were several weaknesses. First, not every agency was able to fund materials for language/cultural groups. Second, for some ethnic groups, materials were always translated rather than written by people from that culture. Third, it was one of the first things eliminated when faced with budgetary difficulties.

### **Analysis, Evaluation, and Critique of the Language Material Consortium**

When the Southern Baptist family is composed of different languages and cultures, the need for effective communication is unavoidable. There are several ways to deal with this challenge. One way is to realize that since we are living in a country where

the official language is English, everyone ought to learn English. Another way to handle this challenge is to understand that a person has the right to retain his or her unique self-identity and heritage. If you choose the latter option, then communication becomes important not only for relationships, but also for partnering together for Kingdom expansion.

The creation of an annual catalog of language materials was probably one of the greatest contributions the Language Material Consortium made to Hispanics and other language/cultural groups. It created a sense of community. State convention personnel, both Anglo and ethnic, had every known language material published in the United States, by agency and organization, at their fingertips.

The Language Material Consortium was the thread that permeated every strategy, primary and secondary. It was important because it supported each strategy. It was also important because it safeguarded the consistency of the message in the midst of a diverse culture.<sup>81</sup> It was also important because it was written in the ethnolinguistic context of each group.

#### **Strategy 4–Hispanic Church-planting Strategies and Models**

The church-planting strategies were expressions of the language missions philosophies. For simplification, Hispanic church-planting strategies and models have three central components: evangelistic outreach, ministries, and church-planting models. The evangelistic outreaches were strategies used to reach the immigrant, refugee, and first-generation Hispanics in the United States. Ministries were also strategies used by individuals and local churches to provide tutoring and also leadership training. The church-planting models expressed the different methods used for church planting. The

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<sup>81</sup>“Message” in this sentence refers to the consistency of the context being communicated. For example, if a piece deals with retirement or church planting, the message would be consistent in each translation. Each ethnic group will be reading the same information but in their own language.



models mentioned are not exhaustive, but are a good representation of the most common models used during the years 1970-1994.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses**

The church-planting strategies and models were evangelistic. Oscar Romo had a strong desire to see people come to know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Although many of the strategies served the immediate needs of language/cultural people, the fundamental outcome was the spiritual need of each individual.

The church-planting strategies and models helped new immigrants, refugees, and first-generation Hispanics to become good citizens. The desire of many who came to the United States was to make a positive contribution to society. Anglo and Spanish churches were encouraged to provide citizenship classes to prepare language/cultural people for the citizenship test. Some Hispanics eventually decided to become citizens.

The church-planting strategies and models mobilized churches for sponsorship. Imagine the cultural shock faced by someone coming to the United States from another country. For many, the language, food, customs, and educational system were foreign. Many churches sponsored people coming to the United States in partnership with the Home Mission Board. During the early 1960s, many churches sponsored Cuban refugees. In the 1970s, many churches sponsored refugees coming to the United States from Indochina.

The church-planting strategies and models encouraged churches to adopt a student. Some churches helped by adopting students, studying in local colleges and universities, into their home during short breaks. For example, students may not be able to visit their homeland during Thanksgiving break, so church families had the opportunity to host the students. These times were precious opportunities to share the message of Christ with the students.

The church-planting strategies and models were different but effective in their ministry context. The diversity that existed among Hispanics also provided a need to use

different models to reach a specific group of people within a particular ministry context. For example, if there were migrant workers in a geographical area of the country, it would have been counterproductive to start a new congregation. Since migrant workers are only in a place for a short time, it is much more practical to start a Sunday school class in Spanish.

There were several possible weaknesses to avoid. The first thing to avoid was emphasizing physical over spiritual needs. The relationship needed to move to the point where the gospel could be presented. Second, they could not ignore cultural issues. In the midst of doing crosscultural ministry, it was important to understand the culture of the person trying to be reached.

### **Analysis, Evaluation, and Critique of Hispanic Church-planting Strategies and Models**

The Hispanic church-planting strategies and models, as mentioned earlier, was an expression of Romo's language philosophy.<sup>82</sup> This strategy recognized, among other things, that the United States was a mosaic of people with different cultures and languages, and that any crosscultural missionary efforts must take into account the multilingual, multicultural dimensions of the society. The strategies and models of church planting described in this chapter were rooted in theological truth and were sociologically informed.

The Hispanic church-planting strategies and models were rooted on three significant theological truths: the belief in the lostness of man, the exclusivity of Christ, and the centrality of the local church. These strategies and models originated in the local church and within a specific ministry context. Ministry outreaches were evangelistic,

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<sup>82</sup>For a list of the six philosophical beliefs that formed the basis for the work of the HMB among the language/cultural groups in the United States, see p. 91 of this dissertation under "Philosophical Basis."

caring for the physical needs of people, yet not losing sight of the spiritual condition of each individual.

The Hispanic church-planting strategies and models were sociologically informed. These strategies recognized that the gospel must flow through the language and culture of people. For this reason, contextualization of the gospel message, in the ethnolinguistic context of the people, was essential in order to reach North America for Christ.<sup>83</sup>

### **Ethnic Church Growth**

Oscar Romo led the Language Missions for the Home Mission Board effectively for twenty-five years. These years were both important and influential years for language missions among Southern Baptists. The two primary strategies discussed both in chapter 4 and also in this chapter greatly contributed to extraordinary Ethnic Church Growth. On the practical side,

Stan Smith, state director of missions for the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania-South Jersey, adds that much of what he practices today in developing strategy was learned through working with Romo.

“Dr. Romo taught that while large meetings were important, it was sometimes far more important to spend time drinking a cup of coffee with someone to build a better relationship and find some common ground. There were times when more could be accomplished through working through the “gatekeepers” in a community, the people who made things happen behind the scenes, than working through established but ineffective bureaucratic processes. . . .” Smith said.<sup>84</sup>

The Home Mission Board did not start keeping records specifying racial composition until 1994. Before that time, the Language Missions Division compiled materials they received from each of the state conventions. According to Richie Stanley, team leader for the Center for Missional Research for the North American Mission Board, “the most reliable information would be found in the Annual Language Report

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<sup>83</sup>Merry P. Romo, e-mail to author, 30 January 2013.

<sup>84</sup>Mickey Noah, “Oscar Romo, Ethnic Ministry Pioneer, Dies,” *Baptist Press*, 19 January 2009 [on-line]; accessed 17 April 2012; available from <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=29692>; Internet.

to the Southern Baptist Convention.”<sup>85</sup> These reports are brief, at times do not address specific ethnic groups, and often the information excludes some years. Delbert Fann compiled the most comprehensive study for the period 1980-1989.<sup>86</sup>

In this Ethnic Church Growth section, four different snapshots of time periods are presented. First, the number of Hispanic churches started between the years 1972-1978.<sup>87</sup> Second, Delbert Fann’s more comprehensive five-year Hispanic study from 1980-1984.<sup>88</sup> These studies highlight Hispanic’s new church plants, baptisms, membership, Bible study, church training, Brotherhood, Woman’s Missionary Union, total receipts, total church income, mission gifts, and Cooperative Program gifts.<sup>89</sup> Third, an overview of Fann’s ten-year study 1980-1989 is presented.<sup>90</sup> The fourth and last snapshot is the period of time between 1990-1994.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>Richie Stanley, e-mail to author, 4 April 2013.

<sup>86</sup>The Annual Language Church Extension Division’s Ethnic Church Growth report forms from ethnic congregations receiving financial assistance for 1980-1989 served as the basis for 85 percent of the information compiled. In an effort to secure additional information related to every state convention and ethnic category, the other 15 percent of the data was compiled from Uniform Church Letters provided by self-supporting congregations. The study includes the eight language/cultural categories and every state convention. Delbert Fann, “Ethnic Church Growth: A Study of Language Culture Congregations 1980-1989” (Nashville: Home Mission Board Research Reports Collection, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, 1989), 1-29.

<sup>87</sup>See figure 2, “New Hispanic churches 1972-1978,” on p. 208 of this dissertation. The numbers of new Hispanic congregations were: 1972, 67; 1973, 50; 1974, 62; 1975, 64; 1976, 54; 1977, 125; and 1978, 65.

<sup>88</sup>Delbert Fann, “Ethnic Church Growth Patterns: A Five-Year Study of Language/Culture Congregations” (Nashville: Home Mission Board Research Reports Collection, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, 1984).

<sup>89</sup>The information found in tables 2-8 of this dissertation (pp. 208-11) and the observations are taken from Fann’s five-year Hispanic congregational study. Fann, “Ethnic Church Growth Patterns,” 134-53.

<sup>90</sup>See appendix 6 of this dissertation.

<sup>91</sup>See table 9 of this dissertation on p. 212. The first year that Southern Baptists recorded racial ethnic codes was 1990. In 1993 and prior years, the mother church completed the Uniform Church Letter.

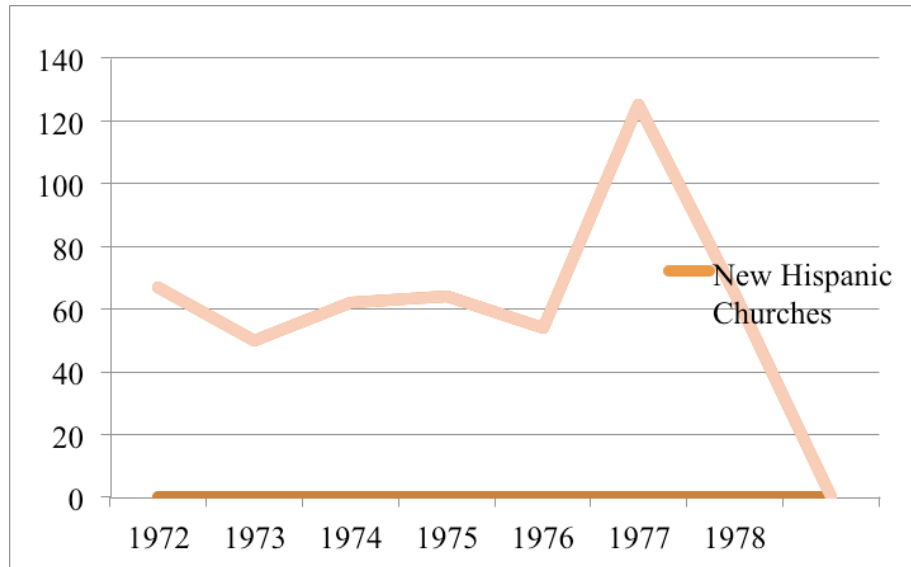


Figure 2. New Hispanic churches, 1972-1978

Table 2. New Hispanic congregations

Year	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Number of Congregations	1,400	1,522	1,694	1,822	2,030

### Observations about Table 2

1. Evangelism of Hispanics and mission strategy, particularly in the last twenty years, has resulted in new units.
2. Largely, the leadership element has been foreign-born. They have reached the immigrant groups. Having literature in their language is a strong support for building congregations.
3. Although Hispanic congregations total more in number than other ethnic groups, they grow at a slower rate (except for American Indians). However, their growth has been stable and constant in all areas. This indicates a balance in their church structure.
4. Hispanic growth from 1980-1985 was 45 percent, showing a positive responsiveness to the gospel.

Table 3. Hispanic baptisms

Year	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Number of Baptisms	9,142	13,157	13,378	10,907	12,404
Baptismal Ratio	1:10	1:8.2	1:9.8	1:11.6	1:11

**Observations about Table 3**

1. Baptism is a serious step in the life of the new language/cultural believer. The number of professions of faith far exceeds the number of baptisms.
2. Baptisms were the major source of increase in Hispanic church membership during the five-year period.
3. The 35.7 percent increase in baptisms may be attributed to evangelism clinics and study courses, the witness of professing Hispanics to win others, and the adherence to the Bible to tell the story to the unsaved.

Table 4. Hispanic total membership

Year	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Total Membership	90,958	107,408	121,570	126,710	136,739
Increase in Membership	--	18.1%	13.2%	4.2%	7.9%

**Observations about Table 4**

1. Although Hispanic persons were approximately 6 percent of the United States' population, only about 1 percent of Southern Baptists were Hispanics. This shows the need to increase efforts to reach this portion of the American population.
2. Additional assistance is needed in the area of evangelism and conservation of evangelistic results.
3. Hispanics need to be challenged to reach a greater percentage of the population and to target their community.

Table 5. Hispanic church program organizations

Year	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Bible Study Enrollment	103,124	130,240	147,031	153,590	167,106
Bible Study Attendance	74,102	83,112	90,466	95,676	105,229
Church Training Enrollment	39,508	48,163	49,218	52,296	56,434
Church Training Attendance	27,146	32,176	32,380	35,321	39,473

**Observations about Table 5**

1. Growth in Bible study is due to the development of leaders from among the people and of contextual materials.
2. Hispanic Bible study enrollment typically exceeded total church membership by 20 percent. This shows the desire of Hispanic people to study the Scriptures.
3. Hispanics take seriously the need for biblical study and doctrinal training. They have faithfully trained through camps, seminars, conventions, conferences, and church training emphases. The 42.0 percent increase in Bible study indicates the importance given to this matter.
4. The 42.8 percent growth in five years of Hispanic church training enrollment indicates the increased training Hispanic congregations were receiving. A contributing factor was the production of material by the Sunday School Board.

Table 6. Hispanic total receipts

Year	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Total Receipts	\$17,042,984	\$22,886,496	\$26,654, 496	\$30,282,422	\$32,479,614
Per Capital	\$187	\$213	\$219	\$239	\$238

**Observations about Table 6**

1. The increase of total church income of 90.6 percent and increase of per capita receipts of 27.2 percent attests to a healthy growth of Hispanic financial stewardship.
2. The Hispanic per capita giving increase showed increased self-support by Hispanic congregations.

Table 7. Hispanic mission gifts

Year	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Total Gifts	\$1,322,130	\$1,942,670	\$2,407,052	\$2,547,130	\$2,894,292
% Given to Missions	7.8%	8.5%	9.0%	8.4%	8.9%

**Observations about Table 7**

1. The most impressive growth of all areas is the increase in mission gifts (118.9 percent). The average Hispanic congregation gave \$1,425.
2. The increase in mission gifts is due to: (1) becoming aware of missions locally, statewide, and around the world; (2) serious observance of weeks of prayer for mission offerings involving the whole church for several days; (3) emphasis for young people to surrender to mission work; and (4) fundamental practice among Hispanic Baptists.

Table 8. Hispanic Cooperative Program gifts

Year	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
C.P. Gifts	\$698,460	\$988,804	\$1,250,692	\$1,210,333	\$1,433,023
% Given to C.P.	4.1%	4.3%	4.7%	4.0%	4.4%



### Observations about Table 8

1. The increase of 105.2 percent in Cooperative Program gifts indicates identification and participation of Hispanics in Southern Baptist life.
2. Gifts to the Cooperative Program remained approximately one-half of the total mission gifts of Hispanic congregations. This shows a need to give more explanation of the Cooperative Program to Hispanic congregations.

Table 9 presents a picture of the Ethnic Church Growth during the last five years of Oscar Romo’s ministry. The practice of breaking down congregations into churches and missions was common during these years. These years were characterized by a growth in the number of ethnic congregations and baptisms. The total and resident membership declined, however.

Table 9. Hispanic church growth, 1990-1994<sup>92</sup>

Year	Ethnic Congregations	Churches	Missions	Reported on the ACP/UCL	Total Members	Resident Members	Total Baptisms
1990	649	642	7	563	152,522	113,598	7,174
1991	684	674	10	500	104,194	81,864	5,364
1992	734	712	22	535	100,985	80,010	5,082
1993	742	738	4	499	92,704	75,556	4,005
1994	1,561	835	726	1039	126,268	105,399	7,638

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<sup>92</sup>Selected Annual Church Profile Data by Ethnic/Racial Group, Richie Stanley, NAMB. Prior to 1993, the Uniform Church Letter (UCL) was the primary source of gathering information by the Baptist Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources). Sponsoring churches usually reported for their ethnic congregations. The first year that the Annual Church Profile(ACP) was used, however, was 1994. This was also the first year that churches were reported according to their ethnic/racial group, thus explaining the increase in the number of congregations and missions.

## Observations about Table 9

1. The number of ethnic congregations between 1990-1994 grew by 140.52 percent.
2. One possible reason for this growth was Darrell Robinson's emphasis on "Total Church Growth." Robinson became the evangelism leader for the Home Mission Board in 1990. His material was translated to Spanish and churches trained.
3. The number of total and resident membership between 1990-1994 declined by 17.21 and 7.22 percent, respectively.
4. The decline in membership could be attributed to the transient nature of the Hispanic community. Some in the Hispanic population moved from place to place seeking employment. Others were in the United States undocumented and moved to another community or returned to their country.
5. The number of baptisms among ethnic congregations between 1990-1994 grew by 6.47 percent.
6. The slight increase in baptisms could be attributed to various evangelistic principles: (1) the evangelistic and mission strategy of Hispanic churches, (2) the lack of cultural barriers made the presentation of the gospel more effective, and (3) evangelism training was normally injected into every conference.
7. The number of missions shown in table 9 increased from 7 missions in 1990 to 726 in 1994. The increase in the reported number of missions is attributed to a similar increase in the number of churches that reported on the ACP/UCL.<sup>93</sup>
8. The number of new churches in the five-year period of 1990-1994 increased by 30.1 percent. A contributing factor for this growth possibly was the momentum created during the 1980s' "decade of growth." The average number of new churches per year for these seven years was 69.6 congregations.

The information compiled by the staff of the Language Missions Division of the Home Mission Board and presented in this chapter supports the thesis that the twenty-five-year period (1970-1994) of Language Missions ministry was both important and influential in the Southern Baptist Convention.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup>ACP stands for Annual Church Profile and UCL stands for Uniform Church Letter.

<sup>94</sup>Although there is no other known comprehensive study made, such as Delbert Fann's Ethnic Church Growth 1980-1987, the material presented in this chapter supports the thesis that the period 1970-1994 was both important and influential in the Southern Baptist Convention. Information was gathered from various reliable sources that helped me collect important data to piece together the Ethnic Church Growth material presenting in this chapter. Merry Purvis Romo, widow of Oscar Romo, served as administrative assistant during these twenty-five years. She has provided information on many of the topics discussed in this dissertation. Norma Mouton was Romo's niece. She was asked to write his official

## Conclusion

The four primary strategies were the Ethnic Church Growth Concepts, the Ethnic Leadership Development program, the development of a national language strategy, and the development of Ethnic Fellowships. These four strategies contributed to the explosive growth of new churches among Southern Baptists during the period 1970-1994. Although church planting was an emphasis among language missions, it was not disconnected from important supportive ministries described in chapter 4.

The four secondary strategies were the Leadership Conferences, the Ministry to Immigrants and Refugees, the Language Material Consortium, and the Hispanic Church-planting Strategies and Models. Secondary strategies helped strengthen and develop not only the missionary, but also the ministries of language missions. Secondary strategies played a supportive role to primary strategies.

The next chapter makes significant effort to draw conclusions from the historical, theological, missiological, sociological, and ecclesiological lessons learned during the period of 1970 to 1994. Additionally, current church-planting strategies examine the lessons learned in light of current church-planting practices in the United States. Finally, recommendations are offered to reach ethnic America and the chapter concludes with suggestions for further research in language missions in North America.

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biography. Mouton contributed a wealth of information as well. Fermín A. Whittaker served as Director of the Ethnic Church Growth Department. Whittaker has provided an abundance of information through times of personal conversations, telephone, and e-mail. He shared additional church growth data with me. Daniel R. Sánchez served on the staff of the Home Mission Board during the early years of Oscar Romo's ministry in Language Missions. Sánchez also has loaned me some of the administrative manuals of the time, and we have spent many hours conversing on the telephone, e-mail, and also face-to-face about much of the information included in this chapter as well as others. Richie Stanley, Team Leader Team for the Center for Missional Research for the North American Mission Board, has given me Hispanic demographical material, particularly since 1990. He has also shared some historical background related to the pattern of data collection of this time period. Delbert Fann, a masterful statistician whose love for detail I admired, presented a five- and a ten-year comprehensive study of Ethnic Church Growth. His material is clearly in view in this chapter. These people who served with Oscar Romo and have contributed much of the information that has been compiled and presented in this chapter are very reliable sources of information.

CHAPTER 6  
CONCLUSION

**Introduction**

This dissertation has guided the reader through a twenty-five year (1970-1994) journey of language missions ministries in North America. The exponential growth has changed the face of North America. Oscar Romo's leadership contributed to the rapid growth of new Hispanic congregations in the United States. Hispanics grew by 161.2 percent from the approximately 1,000 Hispanic congregations in 1973<sup>1</sup> to 2,612 in 1989.<sup>2</sup> The 1980s were known as the "Decade of Growth." During the years 1980-1989, the number of Hispanic churches grew from 1,400 to 2,412, or 72.3 percent decadal growth. During these years, the Hispanic population grew 442 percent,<sup>3</sup> making the United States a much diverse country.

In the midst of the growing diversity, one thing has not change: the spiritual condition of many of the language/cultural people coming to the United States. In the twentieth-first century, one still sees many who are seeking political freedom yet finding themselves in spiritual slavery. Moreover, the sound is heard of different languages representing many countries of the world. These demographical changes

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar I. Romo, "Sharing across Culture," in Language Missions Leadership Conference Held in San Francisco, February 24-26 (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, SBC, 1973), 5.

<sup>2</sup>Delbert Fann, "Ethnic Church Growth: A Study of Language Culture Congregations 1980-1989" (Nashville: Home Mission Board Research Reports Collection, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, 1989), 1-29.

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Census Bureau, "Hispanic Americans by the Numbers," Fact Monster [on-line]; accessed June 22, 2013; available from <http://www.factmonster.com/spot/hhmcensus1.html>; Internet.

have implications not only for the local church, but also for the Southern Baptist Convention. The opportunities for reaching a growing diverse population with the gospel are endless.

This concluding chapter seeks to coalesce the material presented in the dissertation and to propose practical applications to ministry. Three important areas will help the readers navigate through a time of discovery, reflection, and application. The first area allows the reader to discover lessons learned from the past. The second area reflects key current church-planting practices of the North American Mission Board. Finally, the third area answers an important and practical question: What are key recommendations to reach Ethnic America in the twenty-first century?

### **Lessons Learned**

George Santayana, the Spanish philosopher, spoke the often-quoted words, “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”<sup>4</sup> It is important to understand how language missions emerged among Southern Baptists. Additionally, it is also vital to understand Oscar Romo’s philosophy and theology of language missions, and both primary and secondary strategies instrumental in the development of language missions in the United States. Conversely, making practical applications of the material presented in the dissertation to present day context of ministry is significant.

### **Historical Lessons**

From the earliest days of the Southern Baptist Convention, language missions has expanded both geographically and linguistically. Three men played key historical roles from the creation of a language cooperative missions agreement to the recognition of reaching the American Mosaic.

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<sup>4</sup>George Santayana, *Life of Reason, Reason in Common Sense* (New York: Scribner, 1905), 284.

**The SBC's historical roots.** The Southern Baptist Convention, from its beginnings, has been involved in ethnic outreach. Arthur Rutledge writes about this historical role of the Domestic Board of Missions, saying that “from earliest days home missionaries gave major attention to evangelism. This was the primary thrust in work among the Negroes, the frontier people, and the Indians, as well as the work in the older states.”<sup>5</sup>

The geographical expansion that occurred during the first century of the Southern Baptist Convention also contributed to new linguistic expansion. For example, language mission opportunities took place among the Germans, French, Italians, and Slavic people living in the East, while work among the Chinese was started in California.

**The importance of a strong Domestic Board of Missions.** It is obvious to students of missions that a strong foreign mission presence is dependent on a strong domestic missions emphasis. The job of a missionary is to take the gospel of Christ to a group of peoples across racial, linguistic, social, and religious barriers. Since the founding of the Domestic Board of Missions in 1845, Southern Baptists have been actively and intentionally reaching out across these barriers at home through a well-organized missionary force working in partnership with state conventions and local associations for the benefit of the local church.<sup>6</sup> Three men were instrumental in leading Southern Baptists during these foundational years.

**Three makers of ethnic history.** Three men made significant contributions to language missions. Lloyd Corder's greatest contribution was laying a foundation

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<sup>5</sup>Arthur B. Rutledge, *Mission to America: A Century and a Quarter of Southern Baptist Home Missions* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1969), 212.

<sup>6</sup>For more information on the importance given to the task of the Domestic Board of Missions, see Jesse Hartwell, “First Annual Report Board of Domestic Missions,” in *First Triennial Meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention Held in Richmond, June 10-15, 1846* (Richmond, VA: Southern Baptist Convention, 1846), 35.

for language mission work that would mobilize churches to reach out to the growing international population in North America. Gerald Palmer initially planted the seeds for the development of indigenous leaders and the need to contextualize the gospel among language/people groups. Among the many contribution of Oscar Romo, the Ethnic Leadership Development program was probably his greatest and most effective strategy.

**Language cooperative missions.** In 1941, Lloyd Corder created initial partnerships to work cooperatively among the local churches in the associations. Until this time, most language work was planned, and missionaries were employed and supervised, by the Home Mission Board. This was a significant change in the Home Mission Board's philosophy from direct missions to partnerships. These language agreements were the precursors of the cooperative agreements between state conventions and the HMB.

**Cooperative missions agreements.** The language cooperative mission agreement between the BGCT and the HMB worked so effectively that in the 1950s the Board began to converse with other state conventions about similar partnerships. In 1969, the Home Mission Board had a cooperative mission agreement with thirty of the thirty-one state conventions.<sup>7</sup> These cooperative agreements helped in carrying out the unified missions work between the Home Mission Board and state conventions. Larry Lewis, speaking from his experience as president of the HMB, adds that the "Cooperative agreements spell out in detail exactly what mission projects and personnel will be cooperatively funded and what percentage each entity will contribute. In each case, the amount is carefully researched and agreed to by both entities."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Rutledge and Tanner, *Mission to America*.

<sup>8</sup>Larry Lewis, "GCRTF Viewpoint (Larry Lewis): Task Force Recommendations Not Good for SBC," *Baptist Press*, 7 May 2010 [on-line]; accessed 13 May 2013; available from <http://bpnews.net/BPnews.asp?ID=32900>; Internet.

**The recognition of the American mosaic.** The United States is a cultural mosaic of mankind reflected in the different cultural and linguistic peoples. Oscar Romo proposed that America's diversity called for strategies that are contextualized to the particular language group. Each person has the right to worship in his or her own language and among those of a similar cultural background.

**Seizing missions opportunities.** From the time Fidel Castro established communism in Cuba and into the 1980s, a steady stream of refugees came to the United States. The mid-seventies brought the fall of Saigon, enlarging the opportunities for missions for the HMB. Additionally, the undocumented aliens and internationals also augmented Southern Baptists' opportunities to reach a diversity of peoples living in our neighborhoods. Language missions seized the opportunity to reach out to these groups through evangelism that resulted in church planting.

The United States of the twenty-first century is much more diverse than it was in the years 1970-1994. "The 2010 Census counted 50.5 million Hispanics in the United States, making up 16.3% of the total population."<sup>9</sup> Today, it is clear that a study of missions in the United States is not complete without looking at ethnic America.

### **Theological Lessons**

During the twenty-five years covered in this dissertation, the ethnic diversity of the United States expanded rapidly. Yet, the theological position of language missions remained practical, sound, and contextualized to each language group.

**A practical Theology.** The Great Commission of Jesus Christ was at the heart of the language missions theology. Oscar Romo believed that every person was lost and needed to come to a saving knowledge of Christ as their personal Savior. Another

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<sup>9</sup>Jeffrey Passel, D'Vera Cohn, and Mark Hugo Lopez, "Census 2010: 50 Million Latinos: Hispanics Account for More Than Half of Nation's Growth in Past Decade," 24 March 2011, *Pew Research Hispanic Center* [on-line]; accessed 24 June 2013; available from <http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/reports/140.pdf>; Internet.



important theological foundation for language missions was the belief that only truth revealed in Jesus Christ becomes real and binding. Language missions was also guided by a theology that believed in the unity and diversity of the body of Christ. These truths motivated language mission to develop strategies to maximize the evangelistic and church-planting efforts among the various ethnic groups of the American Mosaic. The practical application of these theological truths are lived out in the acknowledgment of a multilingual and multicultural population in North America and acceptance of strategies that allow persons to retain their cultural identity and expression as part of their life.

**A theology of contextualization.** Oscar Romo used the phrase Theology of Pluralism to refer to people of diverse cultures and backgrounds.<sup>10</sup> While the people were very diverse (what he called pluralism), they also presented theological challenges to the HMB and the context of ministry. One challenge was to reach persons of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, and social backgrounds without compromising the gospel's message. In these days of increasing secularism, it is best to use the phrase Theology of Contextualization. Romo believed in contextualizing the gospel message to the ethnolinguistic context of the people.

**Language missions philosophy was theologically sound.** The philosophy of language missions assumed that every person without Christ was lost and needed to hear the message of salvation found exclusively in the person of Jesus Christ. The philosophy also recognized, like the first century church, the existence of linguistic and cultural barriers and explored ways to reach ethnolinguistic groups in the United States. The HMB's language mission philosophy acknowledged that a plurality of cultures would naturally result in worship experiences relevant to their cultural and linguistic context.

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<sup>10</sup>See section "Oscar Romo's Theology of Pluralism" beginning on p. 84 of this dissertation.

**The challenge of global hermeneutics.** The interpretation of Scripture, or hermeneutics, among peoples of many diverse cultures becomes a challenge to churches and denominations in the United States. Culture influences the way a person interprets Scripture. Yet, in the end, any biblical interpretation is subordinate to and guided by the Word of God. The HMB's Language Missions Division worked, in the latter days of the period 1970-1994, with 102 language cultural groups and 97 Native American tribes. It was significant that Oscar Romo, in the midst of many world cultures, represented in the American Mosaic, some of whom embraced unscriptural beliefs, and gave leadership that guided each group to remain theologically sound in their ethnolinguistic content.

Some theological reflections for those ministering among diverse cultural groups during the second decade of the twenty-first century are What are some practical applications of the Great Commission for Christians in a very diverse world? What are some effective ways to contextualize the gospel message in the ethnolinguistic context? Does the theological beliefs of the North American Mission Board and the church in the United States allow for intentional church planting among the different ethnolinguistic groups? Will a significant number of ethnics have an integral role as Catalysts, denominational leaders and church planters in order to help fulfill the SEND North America strategy? How will the North American church responds to the multiplicity of cultures present in our ministry context today? What is the most effective ways to reach the American Mosaic? What are effective ways to penetrate the different cultural groups in the United States?

### **Missiological Lessons**

The language missions philosophy was missiologically comprehensive. Oscar Romo gave leadership to the development of contextual missiological principles such as the catalytic missionary, Kaleidoscopic Church Growth Concept, Laser Church Growth principles, and the Ethnic Leadership Development Centers. Moreover, the practical application of Romo's missiological principles impacted the local church, associations,

and Southern Baptist agencies. One example of Romo's missiological principles was identifying and placing ethnic leadership in Baptist agencies such as the Baptist Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources), the Annuity Board (now GuideStone Financial Resources), and seminaries, which helped implement strategies with missiological implications.

Two missiological principles became foundational to language missions strategies and methodologies. Melvin Hodge's indigenous Church Growth Principle influenced the HMB's language missions philosophy and emphasized the development of workers from within the cultural context to extend the church to unreached areas. The second missiological principle important in language missions strategies and methodologies was contextualization. Two practical expressions of this missiological principle are the Ethnic Leadership Development Centers and the production of contextual materials for the indigenous church principle. The ELD centers provided theological training to indigenous leaders within their ethnolinguistic context. Romo's work with the state conventions, associations, and agencies provided contextual materials for the language cultural congregations.

### **Sociological Lessons**

The language missions philosophy was sociologically informed. Two decades have passed since the end of Oscar Romo's ministry as the Director of the Language Missions Division of the HMB in 1994. The United States experienced many changes during these twenty years. One of the changes has been the decline of the first generation and the growth of the second generation of Hispanics. Yet, one thing that has not changed is the increasing need to reach the different language cultural groups in North America.

As the ethnic growth continues to grow exponentially, it is perceived by some that the deliberate efforts to identify, develop, and deploy ethnic leadership are evaporating from Southern Baptist strategies. There are several reasons that could possibly explain this phenomenon. One possible explanation for the apparent lack of

intentionality is that some seminaries are not preparing students to face the cultural realities in the United States. Some would argue, however, that they are preparing students for crosscultural ministries globally. The implication here is that language/cultural issues are the same both in the United States and also in the foreign mission field. This assumption could not be further from the truth. For example, some Hondurans may tend to act differently and pursue different interests in their country than in the United States. A second reason is that there may not be a clear understanding of the sociocultural background of the people. A final reason may be that pastors and people alike may underestimate the importance of language, hermeneutics, thinking patterns, and the expression of thoughts in crosscultural ministries.

Everyone does not assimilate the same way. Oscar Romo recognized the existence of different stages of assimilation among the diverse cultures. An understanding of sociocultural issues helps a person see the different stages of assimilation and thus become a more effective communicator of the gospel message.

A problematic sociological principle has been Donald McGavran's Homogeneous Unit Principle, which he defined as "a section of society in which all members have some characteristic in common."<sup>11</sup> In the late 1960s, people were calling for assimilation. Part of Romo's philosophical change to language missions was to move away from assimilation to the recognition that every person had the right to retain his or her own cultural characteristics.<sup>12</sup> These historical, theological, missiological, and sociological lessons were lived out through the local church.

### **Ecclesiological Lessons**

The language missions philosophy was ecclesio-centered. A person's belief about the church influences his methodologies. Oscar Romo's missiological thinking

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<sup>11</sup>Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, "Lausanne Occasional Papers (LOPS), LOP 1: The Pasadena Consultation—Homogeneous Unit Principle," The Lausanne Movement, 1978 [on-line]; accessed 28 June 2013; available from <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lops/71-lop-1.htm>; Internet.

<sup>12</sup>The Homogeneous Unit Principle is further explained on p. 84, n. 7, of this dissertation.

reflected his ecclesiological belief. The churches that were planted needed to express themselves in ways that were biblically based and culturally contextualized. The indigenous strategies that were implemented were analogous to those advocated by Donald McGavran, Allan Tippet, and Melvin Hodges.

Three important ministries emerged as a result of Romo's ecclesiological belief. First, personal evangelism that developed into new congregations was very effective among Hispanics. Second, church planting became a priority for the Home Mission Board. The work of the language catalytic missionary was primarily church planting. A third important ministry was the emphasis on leadership training largely done through the Ethnic Leadership Development Centers.

### **Current Church-planting Practices of the North American Mission Board**

Since this dissertation explores Hispanic church-planting strategies in North America, it is appropriate, perhaps even necessary, to consider the current church-planting practices of the North American Mission Board, the successors to the Home Mission Board. This consideration is not intended to be exhaustive of the NAMB church-planting strategy for that is not the topic of this dissertation. Neither is it intended to be critical, but rather to provide a critical analysis.

Many organizations are effectively planting churches in the United States and globally. Some of these church-planting networks are ACTS 29, Redeemer City to City, and New Thing, just to name a few. This section intends to briefly look at the current church-planting strategy of NAMB, the five regions, its ministry assignments, and Hispanic population in SEND cities.<sup>13</sup> The NAMB has made massive changes since

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<sup>13</sup>The information for this section on the SEND strategy, regions, and SEND cities has been taken from the website at [namb.net](http://namb.net). The church-to-Hispanic population ratio was gathered by compiling information from the 2011 ACP. This information includes all congregations, both reporting and non-reporting. The emphasis upon Hispanic churches rather than the percentage of ethnic diversity in the city is purposely done since this dissertation treats the subject of Hispanic church planting in North America. The reader should not lose sight of the percentage of ethnic diversity in each of the cities, however. "SEND North America: Why Every Church Must Plant," North American Mission Board [on-line]; accessed 2 July 2013; available from <http://www.namb.net/overview-why-send/>; Internet.

2011, but it has also made significant contributions in the area of church planting during that time.<sup>14</sup> Time has changed since the inception of NAMB in 1997. The context of ministry during the period of 1970-1994 was much different than it is today. Therefore, one needs to recognize that changes in both times and circumstances will also require changes in strategies and methodologies.

Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Phoenix, Arizona, on June 22, 2010, approved changes of assignment to the North American Mission Board. These assignment changes were part of the implementation of the Great Commission Research Task Force. The original mission statement of the HMB said the entity existed to proclaim the gospel, start churches, minister to people, and assist churches. The new mission statement refocused NAMB “to work with churches, associations and state conventions in mobilizing Southern Baptists as a missional force to impact North America with the gospel of Jesus Christ through evangelism and church planting.”<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, “one of the assignment changes by the Southern Baptist Convention also directs the IMB to ‘provide specialized, defined and agreed upon assistance to the North American Mission Board in assisting churches to reach unreached and underserved people groups within the United States and Canada.’”<sup>16</sup> The question that naturally surfaces as one reads the new assignment given to NAMB and IMB is, Is NAMB releasing its responsibilities for reaching the language/cultural people in the United States?

The SEND North America strategy is about penetrating lostness in North America, bringing existing churches together with church planters, and putting churches

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Kevin Ezell, “2013 North American Mission Board Ministry Report,” 11 June 2013, North American Mission Board [on-line]; accessed 1 July 2013; available from <http://www.namb.net/annualreport/>; Internet.

<sup>16</sup>Erich Bridges, “NAMB and IMB Partnership to Transcend National, Geographic Borders,” 1 July 2011, North American Mission Board [on-line]; accessed 1 July 2013; available from <http://www.namb.net/nambblog1.aspx?id=8590116839&blogid=8589939695>; Internet.

where they are needed. According to NAMB's statistics, "83 percent of North America lives in metropolitan areas."<sup>17</sup> Yet, fewer than 4 percent of SBC churches are engaged in church planting as a primary sponsor. Undoubtedly, the task of reaching North America is great.

A part of the strategy is to decentralize NAMB into five regions.<sup>18</sup> This philosophical change allows "NAMB to be more strategic and responsive to the diverse needs across North America, factoring in demographics, geographical challenges and spiritual realities."<sup>19</sup> Technological advances certainly facilitate and support the decentralization of NAMB into five regions, as well as the framework for the strong emphasis on mobilization of missions personnel.

The six North American Mission Board new ministry assignments are

1. Establishment of New Congregations
2. Evangelism
3. Appointment and Support of Missionaries
4. Missions and Missions Education
5. Leadership Development
6. Disaster Relief<sup>20</sup>

Four significant differences between this ministry assignment and the previous one are worth pointing out.<sup>21</sup> First, there was a reduction of assignments from nine to six. Second, the appointment and support of missionaries moved from first to third place, making the establishment of new congregations a priority. Third, a previous ministry assignment related to Christian social ministry was merged into an assignment that will enable NAMB to assist churches "in the ministries of evangelism and making

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<sup>17</sup>"SEND North America Cities," North American Mission Board [on-line]; accessed 2 July 2013; available from <http://www.namb.net/cities/>; Internet.

<sup>18</sup>The five regions are West, Midwest, South, Northeast, and Canada.

<sup>19</sup>"SEND North America."

<sup>20</sup>Ezell, "2013 North American Mission Board Ministry Report."

<sup>21</sup>Lonnie Wilkey, "Messengers Okay New Assignments for IMB, NAMB," *Baptist Reflector*, 22 June 2011 [on-line]; accessed 1 July 2013; available from <http://www.tnbaptist.org/BRARArticle.asp?ID=3883>; Internet.

disciples.”<sup>22</sup> Fourth, the assignment to communicate the gospel through the use of technology and to strengthened and service associations was eliminated.

The narrowing of assignments is not all bad. Certainly, it communicates a focus reflecting the new assignment of starting new congregations, evangelism, and mobilizing missionaries. Some have argued that evangelism is no longer a priority. NAMB leadership would say that the heart of the SEND North America strategy is to penetrate lostness by starting churches. Indeed, it is difficult to start churches and penetrate lostness without intentional evangelism. NAMB promotes evangelism that leads to new congregations.

### **SEND Cities Population**

The North American Mission Board strategy to penetrate lostness by reaching the cities continues to be not only great, but also complex and urgent.<sup>23</sup> The diversity found across the United States is a missiological test for any denomination. NAMB has experienced many administrative and personnel changes since 2011 in order to make the necessary alignments to reach North America with the gospel. Certainly, this has not been an easy task for state conventions, associations, or the North American Mission Board. Table 10 highlights the population of each SEND region in four of the five regions.<sup>24</sup>

### **Observations of Current Church-planting Strategies**

The following observations present strengths and weaknesses of current church-planting practices. These assessments are made from an ethnic perspective and

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>See appendices 7-10 of this dissertation.

<sup>24</sup>The information for this table was taken directly from the NAMB website [www.namb.net](http://www.namb.net) and also the U.S. Census Bureau, “Table 18: Resident Population by Hispanic Origin and State: 2010” [on-line]; accessed 6 July 2013; available from <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2012/tables/12s0018.pdf>; Internet. The information for Hispanic churches was obtained from the ACP reports. I calculated the Hispanic church to population ratio of each SEND region based on the information provided by both the NAMB website and the state conventions. I did not include the region of Canada because they did not have specific demographics like the other four regions on the website. Additionally, most of the dissertation deals specifically with language missions in the United States.



Table 10. Population of four SEND regions

Region	Total Population	Church-to-Population Ratio	SBC Churches (Hispanic Churches)	Hispanic Population and (% of Total Population)	Hispanic Church to Population Ratio <sup>25</sup>
West	73,327,003	1:15,889	4,615 (573)	20,558,000 (28%)	1:35,888
Midwest	69,014,199	1:12,736	5,419 (155)	4,683,000 (6.8%)	1:30,213
South	108,837,952	1:2,758	38,734 (2,353)	38,166,000 (35%)	1:16,220
Northeast	66,686,983	1:36,561	1,824 (150)	7,592,000 (11.4%)	1:50,613

thirty-four years of relationship with both the HMB and NAMB. The circumstances faced by NAMB today are different than the ministry context of the HMB during the years 1970-1994. Yet, while circumstances continually change, principles remain constant.

### **Strengths of Current Church-planting Strategies**

One of the greatest contributions of NAMB to mission work is their excellent use of technology. The use of Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, video, and other technological tools enable missionaries to be in touch with one another in real time. NAMB has used technology to effectively communicate the message and tell its story to Southern Baptists. In contrast, one of the greatest weaknesses of the Home Mission Board was the difficulty of telling the story of how God was working in the mission field. Technology has also facilitated the follow-up of persons mobilized. In fact, the application process, as well as assessment of church planters, can be done on-line.

The national emphasis given to church planting has been significant in several ways. First, it has elevated the interest of many in church planting. Second, it has also

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<sup>25</sup>This information is from the 2011 ACP. It includes all congregations, both reporting and non-reporting. Richie Stanley, e-mail to author, 10 July 2013.

created new partnerships with stronger and larger churches in the United States. Third, the deployment of mission personnel is focused on church planting as a priority.

NAMB personnel, both in Alpharetta and on the field, are intentionally focused on mobilization. This mobilization would include both personnel and local churches interested in partnerships. There seems to be a contagious excitement generated by grassroots people about reaching North America by planting new congregations, particularly in the cities.

NAMB recognizes that church planters need to be developed. The new “farm system” takes individuals at different stages of life and helps them explore church planting. Students, both high school and college, have the opportunity to serve alongside church planters for six weeks to a year. The Church Planting Interns are individuals who commit for one year to serve in different aspect of church planting alongside other church planters. Church Planting Apprentices are persons willing to commit to serve for one year in a learning environment while developing competencies and skills and actively preparing for planting a church. The Church Planter is the person called by God to take the lead in starting a new congregation.

New assessment processes for church planters have only strengthened the selection process. This is very significant because it allows denominations and future planters to determine the probability that a person may be successful in church planting. The first assessment used by the Home Mission Board was the Charles Ridley Church Planters Behavioral Assessment in the late nineties.<sup>26</sup> The North American Mission

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<sup>26</sup>Charles Ridley studied church planters from several Protestant denominations. Based on his research, he developed an assessment process for determining the probability that a person would succeed as a church planter. Ridley concluded that most successful church planters share certain behavioral characteristics. The Ridley Assessment explores thirteen vital areas of a candidate’s ability based on his or her experiences, strengths, and knowledge. Two trained assessors conduct a five-hour, face-to-face interview that includes the candidate’s spouse if he or she is married. Charles Ridley, “13 Essential Characteristics of a Church Planter” [on-line]; accessed 6 August 2013; available from [http://ministryformation.com.au/attachments/047\\_13-essential-characteristics-of-a-church-planter.pdf](http://ministryformation.com.au/attachments/047_13-essential-characteristics-of-a-church-planter.pdf); Internet.

Board uses a combination of assessments that helps the church-planting candidate discover his readiness and develop his gifts and abilities for effective church planting.

Large organizations have the tendency to become bureaucratic. The decentralization of the North American Mission Board has given each regional vice president the ability to make decisions on the field more rapidly than before. Additionally, regional mobilizers and city coordinators have much more flexibility to make quick changes as they implement the SEND city strategies.

The wife of the church planter is an integral part of the church-planting team. Nevertheless, the planter's wife is also one of the most neglected parts of the church-planting team. The North American Mission Board has been very diligent in providing staff to support both the church planter and also his wife. This care is provided through the church-planter support network. The network helps establish support teams for planters in cities throughout North America.

### **Weaknesses of Current Church-planting Strategies**

The North American Mission Board appears to have departed from the historical emphasis of ministering to ethnics as Southern Baptists have done since 1845. While there are activities that include Hispanics and other ethnics, and some new churches are started among specific people groups, it is perceived that no intentional efforts are made to reach particularly first generation Hispanics. Jerry Baker expressed the absence of intentional training for ethnics when he said, "I consider this a major loss. I have turned to the Ethnic America Network and Summits to fill part of the void."<sup>27</sup>

The implementation of the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force (GCRTF) by the North American Mission Board gives the impression to some that the agency moved away from partnership with state conventions to an emphasis on direct

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<sup>27</sup>Jerry Baker, "Help! Need Some Info," e-mail to author, 22 March 2013.

missions. Randall Adams, writing specifically about the GCRTF recommendations, advocates for the historical cooperative partnership that has existed with NAMB. Adams writes, “The cooperative agreements have been significant to this partnership, but it has not been a one-way-street with NAMB supplying and Oklahoma Baptists receiving. Oklahoma sends over three times as many dollars to NAMB as we receive, as we should. And we are not opposed to sending more and receiving less.”<sup>28</sup>

Larry Lewis, the last president of the Home Mission Board, also reacting to the GCRTF recommendation on cooperative agreements, declared,

I believe their recommendation that we scuttle the cooperative agreements with state conventions and do missions independently with regional offices to deploy and supervise mission personnel would be a strategic nightmare. It would return us to the 19th century and the days prior to Isaac Tichenor and the chaos and disarray characteristic of home mission work at that time.<sup>29</sup>

Another perceived weakness is the lack of Hispanic representation in key missions leadership positions. Only one Hispanic serves as vice president in the financial area of the NAMB. An African American serves as one of the regional vice presidents. No Hispanic serves as a regional coordinator. Only one Hispanic serves as city coordinator among the thirty SEND cities.<sup>30</sup> The Hispanic population makes up 31.1 percent of the total population of the nine SEND cities of the West. A closer observation of five of these cities reveals a high ethnic diversity and also a high percentage of Hispanic population.<sup>31</sup> For example, Las Vegas’ ethnic diversity is 51 percent and the Hispanic population 30 percent. Los Angeles’ ethnic diversity is 66 percent with a Hispanic population of 45 percent. Phoenix’s ethnic diversity is 42 percent, while the

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<sup>28</sup>Randall Adams wrote this article when he was the leader of the Church Outreach Team of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma. Presently he serves as the Executive Director of the Northwest Baptist Convention. Randall Adam, “GCRTF Viewpoint (Randall Adams): Okla. Baptists’ Great Commission Resurgence,” *Baptist Press*, 8 June 2010 [on-line]; accessed 22 June 2013; available from <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=33092>; Internet.

<sup>29</sup>Lewis, “GCRTF Viewpoint.”

<sup>30</sup>These statistics are true as of July 2013.

<sup>31</sup>See appendix 10 of this dissertation.

Hispanic population is 31 percent. San Diego and San Francisco have 51 and 55 percent ethnic diversity, respectively. San Diego's Hispanic population is 33 percent, while San Francisco's Hispanic population of 1.815 million people makes up 24 percent of the total population. None of these five SEND cities have a Hispanic as city coordinator.

Strategies appear to be more general than they are specific to a particular language group. The church-planting infrastructure that NAMB is developing has been presented effectively to an Anglo or second-generation Hispanic context. No specific language training is regularly conducted targeting first-generation Hispanics. This indicates more of an emphasis on a multiethnic church-planting strategy than one guided by a "homogeneous unit" strategy.<sup>32</sup>

The lack of Spanish materials does not help establish clear channels of communications with Hispanics because of their lack of understanding of the English language. Consequently, it is difficult for a Hispanic to even understand the church-planting philosophies that are being implemented. The fact that some may not understand the English language well, combined with few language resources, may create, in some, a feeling of isolation and rejection.

The North American Mission Board is acting more as a church-planting network than a missions agency. One state convention Executive Director emphatically stated that "we in the 'new work' states need a 'missions agency' not a church-planting network that promotes church planting and develops 'exponential' or 'catalyst' type gathering to rally the troops."<sup>33</sup> Although this is not a statement that represents all state conventions, it is indicative of the type of strained relationships between NAMB and state conventions.

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<sup>32</sup>For more information about the Homogeneous Unit Principle, see p. 84, n. 7, of this dissertation.

<sup>33</sup>Thomas Law, "State Conventions Deal with NAMB Changes: A State Executive's Analysis," *SBC Voices*, 29 May 2012 [on-line]; accessed 8 July 2013; available from <http://sbcvoices.com/state-conventions-deal-with-namb-changes-a-state-executives-analysis-by-thomas-law/>; Internet.

Some have argued that more is being done for ethnics today than ever before. The historical perspective presented in chapter 2 of this dissertation gives a detailed description of the expansion of language missions in the United States during 1940-1994. Chapter 4 describes the language missions strategies used by the Home Mission Board. The intentional discovery, development, and deployment of language leadership that specifically took place during those years and the broadness of its ministries far surpasses what has been done today at the national level among Hispanics in the United States. The practical question for local churches, state conventions, associations, national agencies, and ethnic leaders continues to be, How can the gospel penetrate lostness among the growing ethnolinguistic diversity of the United States?

### **Recommendations**

The philosophical changes that have occurred since the inception of the North American Mission Board seem to have gradually placed less emphasis and fewer resources among the Spanish-language population.<sup>34</sup> In contrast, the Hispanic population is not only growing exponentially, it is also experiencing a leadership crisis at a time when the NAMB is implementing its “SEND North America” church-planting strategy.

### **Trends That Could Affect Language Outreach**

Today, the plurality of Hispanic people in the United States includes not only the foreign-born population, but also the growing native-born population. As the face of the United States continues to change, how will Southern Baptists deal with the emerging trends that could thwart the effectiveness of language church growth? Here are six current trends that could affect effective growth of Hispanic churches.

The first trend is the promoting of uniformity in ministry. The consolidation of ministry units, policies, and procedure that treats everyone the same for the sake

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<sup>34</sup>I mentioned Hispanics because they play a central role in this dissertation. It is a more accurate statement to substitute Hispanics with ethnolinguistic population.

of economic existence also reduces the effectiveness and strengths of churches. The reduction or elimination of contextualized materials is perceived by some Hispanics as abandonment by the denomination. Publication of translated material, or even English-language materials for the native-born generation that is not contextualized, will elicit a lack of response.

Second is the use of the same methodologies and a disregard for the ethnolinguistic context. A person's theological understanding influences his or her methodologies. Many today assume that the same methodological approach will work in every situation and among every cultural group. These people fail to consider the sociocultural influences that overpower practices that disregard cultural heritages.

The third trend is policies that are not culturally sensitive. Every organization should have policies and guidelines that protect and define a person's role within the system. In a multicultural agency, sometimes these policies and guidelines are restrictive because they fail to consider the importance of cultural background. This is not to say that an organization needs to be "politically correct" or "inclusive," but it should contextualize policies that will give freedom rather than restrict missionaries. For example, a policy that demands that an employee must speak "English Only" restricts rather than gives freedom to an ethnic whose first language is not English.

Fourth is ineffectual contextual communication of the gospel message. The tendency is to use only one way of communicating the gospel message. The spectrum of a diverse Hispanic population, spanning from foreign-born to native-born, requires a clear cultural and theological understanding in order to communicate effectively the message of Christ. Every Hispanic is not alike.

Fifth is a paternalistic attitude from partners. Many Anglo churches have the tendency to relate to all churches the same way. Sometimes, the unrealistic expectations of a sponsoring church lead to frustration with both the Hispanic pastor and the church. This frustration, consequently, encourages the partner church to take more of a

paternalistic approach to ministry. Since some Hispanics have experienced authoritative and controlling governments, they tend to react negatively to any paternalistic partnership.

Sixth is the motivation to assimilate. The tendency of many today is to return to the philosophies of the 1960s of “Americanizing” rather than evangelizing Hispanics. Both language and culture are barriers to the gospel message for those who are foreign-born. Those who are native-born may feel comfortable in an English-speaking setting, but still insist on not losing their cultural characteristics.

Southern Baptists should understand that the Great Commission is the mandate for each follower of Christ to evangelize, disciple, baptize, and teach people groups. In order to penetrate lostness, one needs to understand and relate to the cultures living in one’s neighborhood. What are some ways Southern Baptists can reach ethnic America?

### **Reaching Ethnic America**

The following suggestions for ministry are applicable for reaching the growing ethnolinguistic peoples in the United States in the second decade of the twenty-first century. While it is focused on Hispanics, the principles are appropriate to most ethnic groups.

First, Southern Baptists ought to recognize the diversity of people groups in the United States. The outcome of not recognizing the American Mosaic is devastating. Experience has shown that it is difficult to reach that which one cannot see. Our international missionaries spend a considerable amount of time studying the culture they are going to serve before they go to the field. Will the home missionary reaching various people groups in the United States do any different? The diversity of people groups in the United States demands that Christians have a racial, linguistic, social, and religious understanding of those they want to reach for Christ.

Second, Southern Baptists need to understand the cultural characteristics of the Hispanic. Spanish-speaking people come from twenty-one different Spanish-speaking



countries. They are more likely to be family-oriented, usually from a Roman Catholic background, and some are more event-oriented than they are time-oriented. Knowing cultural characteristics is significant in order to reach Hispanics effectively.

Third, Southern Baptists should be aware of the different generations of Hispanics. The year 2000 was a turning point for the first and second generations. In 2000, second-generation Hispanics began “slow but steady growth.”<sup>35</sup> That same year, first-generation Hispanics started a gradual decline. The Pew Hispanic Center reports that between the years 1970-2000, first-generation Hispanics grew by 45 percent, while second-generation Hispanics grew by 28 percent. Their projections for the years 2000-2020 are impressive and also significant for ministry. During these years, first-generation Hispanics will only grow by 25 percent, while the second generation will grow by 47 percent.<sup>36</sup> Despite the growth of the second generation, the Pew Hispanic Center reports that “some 68% of second-generation Latinos consider it very important for future generations to be able to speak Spanish.”<sup>37</sup> Knowing the two generations is important in order to properly contextualize the gospel message.

Fourth, Southern Baptists need to work through the existing national and state ethnic fellowships. Ethnic fellowships provide Hispanic congregations a natural channel for expression, cultural awareness, and focusing denominational ministry in a contextual way. Working through the existing ethnic fellowships helps language congregations to understand and participate in Southern Baptist life. It may be quite frustrating, from an Anglo perspective, to see the process a Hispanic fellowship may follow. Nevertheless, remember that a missionary helps facilitate the communication of the gospel of Jesus

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<sup>35</sup>Roberto Suro and Jeffrey S. Passel, “The Rise of the Second Generation: Changing Patterns in Hispanic Population Growth,” 14 October 2003, *Pew Hispanic Center*, 3 [on-line]; accessed 9 July 2013; available from <http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/reports/22.pdf>; Internet.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>“Most Second Generation Hispanics Put Importance on Ability to Retain Spanish,” *Pew Research Center*, 20 March 2013 [on-line]; accessed 9 July 2013; available from <http://www.pewresearch.org/daily-number/most-second-generation-hispanics-put-importance-on-ability-to-retain-spanish/>; Internet.

Christ across racial, linguistic, and social lines. Ethnic fellowships can do that better than someone who may not understand the culture. In March 2013, the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention named Ken Weathersby as vice president for convention advancement.<sup>38</sup> One of Weathersby's responsibilities was to work with ethnic fellowships, which in the past was done by NAMB personnel. Like the discussion about changes in assignments recommended by the GCRTF and mentioned earlier in this chapter, one must naturally wonder what NAMB's responsibility is for reaching ethnics in the United States.

Fifth, Southern Baptists must discover indigenous leadership. The list of missionaries such as J. Waskom Pickett, Donald A. McGavran, Melvin Hodges, Gerald Palmer, and Oscar Romo who successfully used the indigenous church principle in their missionary context is impressive. One effective way to reach people of a particular ethnolinguistic group is to discover, develop, and deploy leaders from within the culture to go and evangelize their own people.

Sixth, Southern Baptists should provide theological education in the ethnolinguistic context. In order to reach Hispanic America, new leadership must emerge. Seminaries and Christian universities have incredible opportunities to train the next generation of leaders in the United States and the world. There are several things, however, that must take place, particularly in training first-generation Hispanics. First, various educational entry ramps such as a certificate level, associate's degree, or bachelor's degrees should be offered in the language of the people and should consider the different levels of education. Second, courses should be affordable. Third, it is important that each course is contextualized and are not just translations.

Seventh, Southern Baptists should provide contextual materials. The complexity of both the Southern Baptist Convention and the growing diversity of

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<sup>38</sup>Diana Chandler, "Ken Weathersby Named EC Vice President," *Baptist Press*, 18 March 2013 [on-line]; accessed 9 July 2013; available from <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=39902>; Internet.

language groups necessitates the development of contextual materials in the language of the people. Materials in the language of the people are very significant for ethnics. It is one way to establish communication and also disseminate information across ethnolinguistic barriers. When a denomination produces materials in the language of the people groups, they are showing interest in establishing effective channels of communication. Another benefit is that printed materials in the language of the people are effective ways to communicate with another culture.

Eighth, Southern Baptists should provide contextual training. A common ineffective practice seen when training people of other cultures is to teach ideas or concepts that are foreign to the Hispanic culture. While it may be easier to translate concepts or access translated materials, it does not necessarily communicate effectively in the culture of the people. It is important to understand that it is not just about language, but culture should also be considered. The effective training of indigenous leaders requires that the training be practical and be understood within the ethnolinguistic context.

Ninth, Southern Baptists should start contextual churches. The encounter of two generations is much more complex than just language and programs, it is also cultural. Starting a new congregation among first-generation Hispanics looks different than would a second-generation Hispanic church. Pastors need to understand that worship should be contextualized, integrating Latino-flavored music even if the language is English. The church must preach and model a holistic gospel in the barrio. Many evangelical churches make a clear distinction between evangelism and social justice. For Hispanics, it is difficult to separate evangelism from social justice.

And, finally, Southern Baptists must be inclusive of all people. The Southern Baptist Convention is known as a diverse and multicultural denomination. There are few Hispanics or other ethnics, however, who are elected as trustees or to key leadership positions of state conventions or agencies. Southern Baptists should reflect the American Mosaic.

## **Recommendations for Further Studies**

This dissertation analyzed church-planting strategies in North America during the period 1970-1994. These are other possibilities for further studies:

The Korean population in the United States has increased since the 1970s. A study is needed that would detail the development and influence of Korean church planting in the United States and globally. Significant attention should be given to pastoral characteristics, leadership style, ministry context, and education.

Hispanics have resided in the United States for many centuries. For many years, the first-generation Spanish speakers were greater in numbers than the second generations. Approximately in the year 2000, there was a gradual increase in the number of second-generation Hispanic English speakers. Further study is needed showing effective strategies to reach Hispanic culture English speakers in the United States.

One of the greatest barriers for Hispanic ministry in the United States is the lack of theologically trained leaders. An interesting and helpful study would examine institutions that provide theological education for Hispanics in the United States. Particular focus should be given to the educational levels of Hispanics, the training provided by institutions, cost, scholarship availability, and recruitment methodologies.

Recognizing the increasing immigration to the United States of various ethnolinguistic people, one could select a few megacities and determine the percentage of ethnics found in them as compared to the ethnic percentage found in Southern Baptist churches in those megacities. One could present practical strategies helpful to the Baptist churches that would stimulate church growth. Some megacities that could be foundational for such a study are Houston, Atlanta, and Chicago.

The North American Mission Board made radical changes in 2011. The implementation of the new church-planting strategy, SEND North America, has impacted state conventions, associations, and missions personnel across the United States. A helpful study would be to critically evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy in North

American. The evaluation should include, but not be limited to, the number of new churches, including ethnic churches, the survival rate, the impact of the strategy on the church-to-population ratio, and church growth. This study should not be conducted earlier than 2017 to allow for adequate time for implementation of the strategies.

### **Conclusion**

It is acknowledged that the ministry context in the twenty-first century is different than the ministry context of 1970-1994. Some of the changes require the North American Mission Board to respond with urgency and with a clear crosscultural missions understanding. These are some of the changes that highlight that urgency. First, a rapidly growing language cultural/racial population in the United States has increased and now contributes to more than one-third of the total population. Second, the number of lost language/cultural people continues to increase. Third, the church-to-population ratio in the largest cities continues to increase. Are there possible applications of the lessons learned from the history of Southern Baptist language missions efforts to current practices?

We can glean several important practical lessons from language missions that are applicable to our present ministry context of North American missions. First, since the United States' racial and ethnic population reached 36.6 percent, it is essential for Southern Baptists to recognize the importance of reaching the American Mosaic.<sup>39</sup> Second, language and culture are vital to the communication of the gospel message. Third, any missionary effort in North America must take into account the multilingual, multicultural dimensions of the society. Fourth, every person should have the opportunity and the privilege of using his or her own language, in an appropriate cultural context, to discover the reality of Jesus Christ. Sixth, contextualization of the biblical message in the

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<sup>39</sup>Doris Nhan, "Census: Minorities Constitute 37 Percent of U.S. Population," 17 May 2012, *National Journal Magazine* [on-line]; accessed 30 June 2013; available from <http://www.nationaljournal.com/thenextamerica/demographics/census-minorities-constitute-37-percent-of-u-s-population-20120517>; Internet.

language and culture of the various ethnic groups is essential for the evangelization of the United States and its territories. Seventh, there needs to be an intentional emphasis to discover, develop, and deploy indigenous leaders. Eighth, contextual leadership training in the ethnolinguistic context of the people is indispensable for the growth of language churches and ultimately for reaching North America.

Some voices from the past recalled the work and acknowledged the advancement of the Home Mission Board's language missions efforts to people groups in the United States. Recounting the beginning of Arthur B. Rutledge's ministry as executive secretary of the HMB on January 1, 1965, Charles L. Chaney said, "the first, and to this point, the most telling transformation had to do with language missions. From the first, the HMB had been committed to reaching non-English-speaking peoples in the South."<sup>40</sup> Chaney adds, "the chief architect of the shift to a new indigenous missions approach was Oscar I. Romo. An American Hispanic, he came to the HMB in 1965, after the shift from direct missions to cooperative missions in Texas. He became director of the Language Missions program in 1971."<sup>41</sup>

Francis M. DuBose, writing about the contributions of the HMB, articulates that "the board's most extensive work, which has called forth the greatest number of missionaries, has been Language Missions."<sup>42</sup> This extensive work that DuBose described resulted in

over 1,800 home missionaries serve in language work among over 100 ethnic groups not counting American Indian tribes. Under the Language Missions sponsorship in 1992, 515 new ethnic church units were started, ethnic churches resettled 838 refugees from 14 countries, some 950 volunteers assisted in deaf ministry, 300,000 scriptures were distributed, and some 200 ethnic students

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<sup>40</sup>Charles L. Chaney and Francis M. DeBose, "Turning Points in the History of the Home Mission Board and Home Mission Board Contributions," *Baptist History and Heritage Society* 30, no. 2 (April 1995): 14.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>*Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, June 15-17, 1993* (Nashville: Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1993), 219.

received college or seminary scholarships. Some 1,300 ethnic leaders received special training in 13 languages in 105 Ethnic Leadership Development Centers.<sup>43</sup>

Larry Lewis summarized the importance and influential impact language missions played among Southern Baptists when he said,

The success of Southern Baptists in America in the last half of the 20th century is a source of admiration of religious leaders around the world. Since the 1950s, while all other mainline denominations were decreasing annually in members and number of churches, Southern Baptists have doubled in members and nearly so in churches and church-type missions. We have grown from a backwoods denomination into the largest Protestant denomination in America, and from a home missionary force of 754 in 1950 to a present count of over 5,000. We are now planting over 1,500 new churches every year, far more than any other denomination now or perhaps ever in history. As already stated, half of these are ethnic and African American. You might argue that God has blessed Southern Baptist [*sic*] more than any denomination in the history [*sic*] our nation.”<sup>44</sup>

The effectiveness of language missions was the broad scope of ministries. While church planting was the chief priority, it was not the only one. Alongside the church-planting efforts was an important supportive strategic framework. Some of these supportive strategies were leadership and professional development, national strategies, sound missiological principles, materials in different languages, and outstanding leadership training in the ethnolinguistic context of the people.

The Southern Baptist Convention stands at a significant juncture in history. On one hand, recent reports sadly show a decline in total membership (0.7 percent), baptisms (5.5 percent), and worship attendance (3.1 percent); the number of new churches increased slightly (0.6 percent); and the Cooperative Program is flat.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, the state of Hispanic Southern Baptists is also discouraging. Between the years 2010 and

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Lewis, “GCRTE.”

<sup>45</sup>Marty King, “Baptisms in SBC Down to Lowest Number in 64 Years,” *The Baptist Standard*, 6 June 2013 [on-line]; accessed on 9 July 2013; available from <http://www.baptiststandard.com/news/baptist/15156-baptisms-in-sbc-down-to-lowest-number-in-64-years>; Internet.

2011, Hispanics declined in membership (2.12 percent), baptisms (10.4 percent), and the number of new churches (4.6 percent).<sup>46</sup>

The Southern Baptist Convention must find her identity. The opportunities are too great and the challenges very complex. According to NAMB statistics, 82.3 percent of the population of the United States and Canada does not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. If Southern Baptists desire to be a kingdom-minded people, they must answer critical questions as they come to this historical juncture. Will Southern Baptists see the American Mosaic? Will Southern Baptists learn from the history of language missions? Will Southern Baptists' theology result in the elaboration of strategies aimed at maximizing evangelistic and church-planting efforts among ethnic groups? Will Southern Baptists develop contextual strategies to reach Hispanics in the United States? Will NAMB assign the ministry of language missions to IMB? Will NAMB assign the work with ethnic fellowships to the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention?

While it is not effective to move forward looking through the rearview mirror of history and holding on to the past, one must study and learn from the lessons of the past. Reflecting on the leadership of Oscar Romo, someone made this statement: "The further we get from Oscar Romo, the less the SBC agencies seem to have a focus on language missions."<sup>47</sup> How will Southern Baptists respond to the great opportunities and challenges ahead?

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<sup>46</sup>This information is from the 2011 ACP. It includes all congregations, both reporting and non-reporting. Richie Stanley, e-mail to author, 1 March 2013.

<sup>47</sup>Bobby Sena quoted this statement to me, but he did not identify his source.



## APPENDIX 1

### A PHILOSOPHY OF MISSION TRAINING

#### **CONTEXTUALIZED LEADERSHIP TRAINING**

The program statement for seminaries, according to the 1972 SBC Annual is “to provide theological education, with the Bible as the center of the curriculum, for God called men and women to meet the needs for trained leadership in the work of the churches. The seminaries utilize scholarship with reverent concern and they depend upon the Holy Spirit’s guidance. They are Baptists institutions, witnessing to the truth revealed in Holy Spirit. They help the SBC by studying its life and being involved in its programs.”

#### **Ethnic Leadership Development**

Language Missions Division’s subprograms, one of which is Ethnic Leadership Development, are component parts identifiable--each with a distinct purpose, yet an integral part of the whole—and intertwined with each other to formulate the Program of Language Missions.

Ethnic Leadership Development (ELD) has a fourfold purpose:

1. To equip people to serve effectively in ethnic/language-culture settings.
2. To provide specialized training opportunities for the development of future leaders.
3. To coordinate leadership development programs directed at ethnic/language-culture people.
4. To certify people uniquely prepared to contribute to Language Missions.

#### **National Scope**

The cooperative missions endeavor of the HMB and state conventions provides the basis for development of contextual opportunities. The involvement of seminaries in this endeavor will permit their programs to complement each other in providing leaders for the ethnic mission field in America.

#### **Target Groups**

Leaders in various areas of the denomination, representing diverse ethnic groups, must be equipped if an impact is made upon ethnic America. Each person equipped will

require a different approach in training. These leaders will focus their efforts toward the contextual, pluralistic mission field. These categories of leaders are in need of equipping:

1. Language Missions personnel
  - Messengers of the Word (lay leaders).
  - Ethnic pastors (full-time, bivocational, HMB-related, self-supporting).
  - Missionaries (catalytic, general, not otherwise classified).
  - State Language Missions directors/language program leaders.
  - Ethnic ministerial students.
2. Others
  - State directors of missions.
  - Associational directors of missions.
  - Anglo pastors.
  - Agency personnel.
  - Seminary students.

### **Participating Entities**

Diversity in approach, yet cooperation in accomplishing the Great Commission, is a Southern Baptist uniqueness that has proven effective in meeting the missionary challenge. The cooperative participation of these entities will make possible the equipping of ethnic leaders:

1. Language Missions Division, HMB.
2. Southern Baptist seminaries.
3. Southern Baptist colleges and universities.
4. Southern Baptist Bible Institutes.
5. Southern Baptist Convention agencies.
6. State conventions.

### **Approaches to Leadership Development**

The socio-religious background of diverse ethnic groups calls for a variety of approaches to equip leaders to serve in contextual, changing patterns.

#### **SEMINARIES**

People equipped in Baptist seminaries acquire a theological base, and also an understanding of Baptist history, polity, evangelism and missions. These and other disciplines serve as cohesive factors leading to participatory involvement in the denomination. These will equip leaders:

1. Ethnic Leadership Development (ELD) centers—programs in language other than English, taught in off-campus centers, for earning of:
  - Certificate in Christian Ministry.
  - Diploma in Theology/Religious Education/Music
  - Associate of Divinity.
2. Curriculum enrichment—infusing Language Missions’ concepts, information, programs, etc. into existing courses, especially missions and evangelism.
3. Language Missions courses—including Language Missions courses in the seminary curriculum.
4. Modern Language courses—teaching modern language(s) to help future leaders in ministering to language-culture people.
5. Degree exchange/upgrade—developing curriculum for people, who acquire a theological education in other parts of the world (especially non Southern Baptist), to participate in selected disciplines to become knowledgeable in Southern Baptist history, polity, denominational program, etc.
6. Graduate programs—developing an ethnic track in the Doctor of Ministry and the Doctor of Philosophy programs.
7. Continuing Education—developing seminars in conjunction with various entities for which Continuing Education Units (CEUs) would be granted.

#### BAPTIST COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Baptist institutions of higher learning should seek to create an awareness of the nation’s ethnic diversity. The equipping of future leaders, either Ethnic Americans or American Ethnics, should be initiated at the undergraduate level. Institution can have a vital role by providing the setting or programs to equip future leaders for all areas of life. Institutions also can undergird leadership development in these areas:

1. Language Missions courses in undergraduate program
2. Associate degrees in language ministerial program
3. Graduate degrees to enhance missions efforts among Ethnic Americans.

#### SEMINARY EXTERNAL EDUCATION

Involving language-culture people in Seminary External Education has proven beneficial to the work. The need exists for programs beyond these areas now receiving attention.

1. Preparation and translation of language courses.
2. Coordination of resource people for extension centers.

## LANGUAGE MISSIONS DIVISION CONFERENCES AND SEMINARIES

The Language Missions Division seeks to provide guidance in initiating and developing language-culture congregations. Numerous training opportunities are available through state conventions. Also, the HMB equips, orients, updates leaders, and creates an awareness of America's mission field. Some conferences and seminars offered are:

1. Annual Language Missions Leadership Conference
  - Continuing Education Units (CEUs) may be granted by the Language Missions Division.
  - Some presentations may be conditionally approved for the Doctor in Ministry in Ethnic Missions independent study program.
2. Glorieta and Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Centers conferences
  - CEUs are offered through seminaries and the Language Missions Division for approved conferences involving catalytic missionaries, pastors, language program leaders and consultants.
  - Certification seminars are conducted for improving skills of field personnel involved in language work.
3. Special Seminars—Certification credit and CEUs—are offered with this content:
  - State strategy design.
  - Missions administration.
  - Ethnic research.
  - Ethnic church growth.
  - Ethnic missions concepts.
  - Linguistics.
  - Southern Baptist doctrine and polity orientation.
  - Some seminars may qualify for the Doctor of Ministry in Ethnic Missions independent study program.
4. Special training programs in immigration, dactylology, seamen's ministry, ministry among internationals and refugee resettlement ministry are offered.
5. State Language Missions Leadership Conferences—with approved content, CEUs may be granted through the Language Missions Division and/or seminaries.
6. Language Pastors' Seminars
  - Provides CEUs to pastors for basic studies in Southern Baptist polity and organization, evangelism, ethnic church growth, doctrine and Bible study in their language.
  - Seminars are currently offered for Korean, Hispanic, Chinese American, Indian, and Laotian pastors.
  - Future seminars are projected for deaf, Arabic, Vietnamese, Europeans and others.

7. Missiology for Ethnically Transitional America (META) provides guidance for churches with facilities located in transitional communities and churches that desire to minister among language-culture people living in the area. Participants may be granted CEUs. A seminar participant may qualify for independent study as part of a graduate program.
8. Reading program in ethnic missiology.
9. Internships.
10. Language training done in cooperation with other entities.

In order to undergird these seminars, libraries with language materials would be established and placed in appropriate settings.

### **Recognitions**

Participants in training may receive various types of recognition.

1. Certificates and diplomas from an accredited institution or, when not possible, local recognition may be considered.
2. Degrees from accredited entities.
3. Seminary external education diploma or certificate.
4. CEUs from seminaries or Language Missions Division.
5. Ethnic Missiologist certification based on a combination of seminars, CEUs or other training components developed to assist pastors, missionaries, and denominational personnel to become better equipped to provide leadership in multiple contextual settings.

People may be certified in these three categories:

- Ethnic Missiologist
- Associate Ethnic Missiologist
- Specialist in Ethnic Missiology, such as immigration, dactylology, seamen's ministry.

### **Location**

Traditionally the training of leaders has been in an institutional setting. Pragmatically it has not always been possible to locate these institutions in the population centers, especially those with a high ethnic density.

The development of centers in existing facilities that are located in the areas with a high ethnic density will provide the arena for contextual training, the initiation of new work and the development of ethnic/language-culture congregations. In addition, this will permit participants to live and work alongside of the people among whom they serve.

## Resources

Special efforts should be taken if leaders are to be contextually trained. Resources to equip leaders may come from numerous sources. Some sources are:

1. Location—existing congregational facilities provide the location for contextual training.
2. Financial—training funds may be available from these sources:
  - Participants’ fees and expenses.
  - “Seed” money for books, library, etc.
  - Scholarships.
  - In-Service Development funds.
  - Participating entities.
3. Human—Baptists must be challenged to share their talents on the mission field. Some human resources are:
  - Home Mission Board-related personnel.
  - Seminary and Institute faculty.
  - State staffs.
4. Programs—present programs should be evaluated and/or new ones developed to provide contextual training in various languages, if necessary.  
These may need evaluation:
  - Seminary specialization—seminaries *might* train particular groups based upon their geographic location and ethnic concentration.
  - Seminary curricula and programs.
  - Seminary External Education curricula.
  - Continuing education programs.
  - In-Service Guidance Programs and Seminars.

## APPENDIX 2

### NATIONAL STRATEGY

The United States has often been called the “Melting Pot” of the world; a concept that sought to submerge new Americans and minority ethnic groups into the “American way of life” and resulted in the loss of their unique self-identity and their heritage. Yet, the search for identity, the desire to achieve, and the right of ethnic Americans to be themselves have brought about the acknowledgement that our nation is indeed a pluralistic society.

A pluralistic society may be defined as an aggregation of peoples of different groups characterized by their own heritage, culture, language, and lifestyle. Ethnic America indeed conforms to this definition. Therefore, any appropriate missions endeavor must take into account the multilingual, multicultural dimensions of the society.

Those who have genuinely sought to respond to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have been conscious of pluralism and have sought to minister and witness in that context.

#### I. PROGRAM STATEMENT

To work with and assist churches, associations, and state conventions in their efforts to bring persons identified with ethnic groups, other than English, into a right relationship with God, to establish language-culture congregations, and to bring them to self support.

#### II. NATIONAL STRATEGY

##### A. Overarching

1. Home Mission Board
  - a. Guidelines
  - b. Objectives (Target: A.D. 2000)
2. Language Missions Division, Role of Language Missions
  - a. Awareness

To create among Southern Baptists an awareness of the language-culture persons in our nation and the opportunity to minister in the name of Christ.

b. Ministries

To lead Southern Baptist agencies and churches to provide for persons with unique cultural and linguistic backgrounds who have various needs and live in unusual circumstances.

c. Church Related

To lead churches to minister to ethnic persons in their community through cross-cultural outreach.

To establish units and congregations within the ethnolinguistic, cultural context of the people.

To undergird language-culture congregations in their efforts to reach ethnic persons on behalf of Jesus Christ.

d. Catalytic

To serve in a catalytic role among Southern Baptist agencies, etc., leading them to focus their programs to undergird the ministries and growth of language-culture congregations.

e. Advocacy

To research, verify, and seek to correct circumstances of the various ethnic groups and to serve as an advocate in their behalf.

f. Worldwide Influence

To work with other agencies, worldwide organizations, and other Baptist bodies in sharing experiences related to efforts achieved as a part of the program statement.

B. Divisional

The various divisional programs provide the basic thrusts to accomplish the task assigned by the program statement.

1. Transcultural Outreach (20 01 00)

To provide leadership and assistance to Baptist churches in ministering to language-culture persons who are within reach of the church through its programs, organizations, and facilities, although these may be adapted to meet specific needs.

2. Ethnic Church Growth (20 02 00)

To provide leadership and assistance in the establishing and developing of ethnic/language-culture congregations.

3. Ethnic Resource Correlation (20 03 00)

To serve as a resource center and channel for churches, associations, state conventions, and agencies in their efforts to focus various programs at ethnic/language-culture congregations and persons.



4. Immigration and Refugee (20 04 00)  
To provide leadership and assistance to immigrants and refugees who are seeking to reside and/or enter the United States.
5. International Ministries (20 05 00)  
To provide leadership in ministry and witness to internationals (non-immigrants) who visit or reside in the United States for a specific period of time.
6. Ethnic Leadership Development (20 06 00)  
To seek to discover, equip, and use laypersons, ethnic youth, and/or secularly employed ministers, messengers of the word, to lead a local language-culture unit of work.
7. Ethnic Studies (20 07 00)  
To provide leadership and assistance in the study of ethnic/language-culture groups' characteristics for effective witness and ministry; in studying factors related to ethnic church growth; and in studying cultural and anthropological factors related to mission strategy.
8. Cross-Cultural Communication (20 08 00)  
To provide leadership and assistance to churches, associations, and state conventions in the area of effectively communicating across cultures.

### C. Program Description

#### 1. Program Emphasis

The sub-programs of the division are the basis for the development of concepts focused at penetrating, nourishing, and developing Baptist churches in a pluralistic society in America.

#### 2. Program Concepts

The concepts provide the opportunity for expression, creativity, thought, participation, implementation, and evaluation of the various divisional programs that are essential in the development of a viable national strategy focused at persons living in changing ethnic patterns.

##### a. Laser Thrust

To penetrate selected areas, communicate the gospel, discover natural leaders, establish new units, and strengthen churches in transitional areas.

##### b. Catalytic Missions

To inject the gospel in a contextual setting, continually developing relevant methodology, equipping leadership, and strengthening existing units.

- c. Kaleidoscopic
    - To permit proclamation, worship, leadership development, ministry, and missions in changing ethnic patterns; yet retaining the identity, language and cultural uniqueness of the transitional community.
  - d. Consortium for Ethnic Leadership Development
    - To focus various denominational efforts to equip leaders to serve effectively among ethnic Americans.
  - e. Microcosmic Urban Strategy
    - A pragmatic strategy design in an ethnolinguistic contextual approach that is multidimensional in an urban setting.
  - f. Ethnic Resource Center
    - The location and availability of information to assist the various denominational agencies to focus their programs in meeting the needs of ethnic/language-culture persons and congregations.
3. Program Services
- To provide support to the total program of Language Missions.
- a. Consultative
    - The interpretation of the various language-culture groups and their needs to Southern Baptist agencies and other interested groups.
  - b. Supportive
    - The undergirding of various aspects and needs of language-culture groups and congregations.
4. Program Development
- To study trends, provide strategy guidelines, develop materials, communicate and analyze the effectiveness of the total program of Language Missions.
- a. Research
    - To secure factual data and study trends on language-culture groups.
  - b. Materials
    - To lead in the development of materials for use in an effective ministry among language-culture persons.
  - c. Communications
    - To develop methodology for effective communication with language-culture persons and the denomination.

#### D. America's Ethnicity, Data Base

America's Ethnicity '80 is a compilation of data on ethnic Americans – persons other than American Blacks and Anglo Americans who identify themselves as language-culture persons (Target: A.D. 2000, p. 16). The information is gathered from numerous sources, such as the Census Bureau, universities, and ethnic organizations. Every effort is made to verify the source and authenticate its validity. It is not exhaustive; yet to our knowledge, it is the only compilation of this type of an evangelical denomination.

The following are the broad categories by which information is secured. This information serves as the database for the development of a language missions strategy.

1. Language-Culture Trends
  - a. Numerical
  - b. Cultural
  - c. Linguistic
  - d. Educational
  - e. Economic
  - f. Employment
2. International Aspects
  - a. Immigration
  - b. Refugees
  - c. Tourism
  - d. Research
  - e. Exchange
  - f. Economic
  - g. Political
  - h. Geographical
3. Research Projects
  - a. Ethnic groups
  - b. Ethnic movements
  - c. Mass media
  - d. Role of ethnics in American life
4. Ethnic Church Growth Analysis
  - a. Numerical growth
  - b. Cultural factors
  - c. Linguistic usage
5. Research Projects
  - a. Salary studies
  - b. Missionary ratios
  - c. Investment of mission funds
  - d. Selected studies

## E. Priorities

Priorities are established on the basis of a formula that includes the use of data and provides for input from the mission field, as well as the leadership of the Holy Spirit; this is a formula that is factual, active, and flexible.

1. Factors for National Priorities
  - a. Ethnic population – the total number of ethnics in the state.
  - b. Missionary ratio – the ratio of missionaries per ethnic person in the state.
  - c. Per capita expenditure – combined state and Home Mission Board spending on ethnic work in relation to the number of ethnics in the state.
  - d. Ethnic percentage of population – the percentage of ethnics in the state as compared to the total population.
  - e. Available resources – states that appear in Category II. These have resources for the establishment of language work with a small Home Mission Board investment.
2. Factors for Priorities within the State
  - a. New work – ministry among new ethnic groups in the state.
  - b. Responsive groups – ethnic groups who in a judgmental evaluation are responsive to the gospel.
  - c. Strategic cities – cities selected because of their ethnic and international population and their strategic location.
3. Categories
  - a. States with limited resources.
  - b. States with available resources.

## F. National Strategy Design

The development of a national strategy, a predetermined plan, is the result of experience on the mission field as well as an effort to be good stewards of resources, both human and financial. It is seeking to be sensitive to God's leadership, as well as responsive to the gospel. Such strategy calls for a twofold approach: contextual and geographical.

### 1. Contextual

A national strategy designed to penetrate the nation's 200 plus ethnic groups calls for studies of the historical, social, cultural, linguistic, family and kinship, behavior, religious, education and political heritage of these groups.

The unique characteristics of these groups will provide the channel for communication of the gospel. The Wycliffe Translators have said that "no man has ever effectively been reached with the gospel until he has been reached in the language of his soul." The great missiologist and translator

Dr. Eugene Nida has said that “when people learn to love and hate in a language, it is this language that will most probably be the language in which the gospel can be communicated.”

The diversity of our nation calls for the development of a strategy of the various ethnic groups within the following broad categories:

- a. American Indians
  - b. Asians
  - c. Caribbeans
  - d. Deaf
  - e. European
  - f. Hispanic
  - g. Immigrants
  - h. Internationals
  - i. Refugees
2. Geographical

The national field design utilizes the contextual information as well as the data base for the development of a strategy. Each state considers the following factors in designing its strategy. These designs, in turn, contribute to the development of a national strategy that includes the following factors:

- a. National priorities
- b. Historical information
- c. Ethnic data base
- d. Program emphasis
- e. Deployment of personnel
- f. Facilities
- g. Investment of financial resources
- h. Growth analysis/measurement

#### G. Analysis

Analysis develops guidelines for implementation and evaluation of a national Language Missions strategy.

##### 1. Contextual

A national strategy designed to penetrate the nation’s 200 plus ethnic groups

### III. STATE STRATEGY DESIGN

The design of a strategy for work in each state convention is a priority in the implementation of a national strategy. Done in cooperation with state leadership, the design incorporates the Home Mission Board planning process and state goals and objectives. The following elements are included:

#### A. State Priorities

1. Conform with HMB objectives and guidelines
2. Established in cooperation with Language Missions Division
3. Compatible with national strategy

#### B. Historical Information

1. Chronology of work among various groups
2. Information on significant leaders in development of work
3. Growth factors by ethnic/language-culture groups
4. Receptivity

#### C. Data Base

1. Ethnicity by county/city/census tract
2. Factors and trends affecting future strategy
3. Ethnic organizations
4. Ethnic congregations of other denominations

#### D. Program Emphasis

The eight sub-programs of the Language Missions Division are incorporated into the planning of the state strategy to maximize correlation of efforts and resources.

1. Transcultural Outreach – reaching across cultural differences to provide witness and ministry through local congregations.
2. Ethnic Church Growth – establishing and developing ethnic/language-culture congregations.
3. Ethnic Resource Correlation – centralizing data, materials, and other resources directed at assisting ethnic/language-culture congregations.
4. Immigration and Refugee – provides direction to local congregations in resettling refugees and assisting in immigration matters.
5. International Ministries – equipping congregations for ministry to persons in the U.S. for a brief period of time.
6. Ethnic Leadership Development – coordinating a comprehensive training program for messengers of the word, pastors, missionaries, and others for more effective ministry in ethnic/language-culture context.
7. Ethnic Studies – preparing culture-specific studies for use in ministry and mission strategy development.

8. Cross-Cultural Communication – developing effective means of communicating the gospel across cultural distinctives.

#### E. Classification of Each Field

Each unit of work is classified in one of the following categories:

1. Transcultural outreach
2. Cross-cultural communication
3. Language-culture ministry
4. Class
5. Department
6. Mission congregation
7. Combined fields
8. Ethnic church
9. Multiethnic church
10. Area – geographical/culture
11. State

#### F. Growth Potential of Each Field

Ethnic Church Growth Analysis serves as the basis for the classification of fields as to their growth potential.

1. Ministry – continuous
2. Preaching point – continuous
3. Mission congregation – 10 years plus
4. Slow developing church – 5-10 years
5. Potential church – 5 years

#### G. Personnel

1. Categories of personnel

The tasks of Language Missions personnel have been categorized as follows:\*

- a. Messengers of the Word
- b. Language Pastor
- c. Pastor Missionary
- d. Missionary Pastor
- e. Catalytic (regional)
- f. General Missionary
- g. Program Leader
- h. Consultant
- i. Specialized Worker

---

\* See appendix 3 for definitions of these terms.

2. Deployment of personnel

Personnel are deployed according to the following criteria:

- a. Expertise
- b. Task to be accomplished
- c. Types of field
- d. Geographical needs
- e. Resources available

3. Prospective personnel

The sources for securing personnel are these:

- a. Language-culture congregations
- b. Scholarship recipients
- c. Academic institutions
- d. Field recommendations
- e. International contacts
- f. Department of Missionary Personnel

H. Facilities

1. Acquisition/construction/rental

- a. Local resources
- b. Grants
  - (1) Local
  - (2) State
  - (3) Home Mission Board
- c. Package
  - (1) Home Mission Board – grants/loans (capital needs)
  - (2) Church Loans Division
  - (3) Commercial

2. Ownership

- a. Local
- b. Home Mission Board
- c. Repairs
  - (1) Local responsibilities
  - (2) State – loans/grants
  - (3) Home Mission Board – loans/grants
- d. Taxes and insurance
  - (1) Local responsibilities
  - (2) Home Mission Board assistance



## I. Investment of Resources

1. Local
  - a. Congregation
  - b. Sponsor church
  - c. Associational
2. State
  - a. Budget
  - b. Designations
3. Home Mission Board
  - a. Budget
  - b. Designations

## J. Measurement/Growth Analysis

1. Tangible
  - a. Numerical
  - b. Financial
  - c. Outreach
  - d. Ministries
  - e. Organizations
  - f. Program
  - g. Growth
2. Intangible
  - a. Acceptability
  - b. Growth

The state strategy is visualized through the production of color-coded maps that show:

1. Ethnic group concentrations
2. Existing ethnic/language-culture work by category
3. Projected new work
4. Existing missionary personnel and area of responsibility
5. Projected shifts in responsibility or re-deployment of personnel and resources

The color-coded map provides a visual comprehension of the strategy plan for sharing the gospel with language-culture persons in that state.

#### IV. ASSOCIATIONAL STRATEGY DESIGN

In cooperation with the state, a similar process is initiated with local associations to plan for Language Missions' involvement on the local level. Local data is examined, as are personnel, fields, facilities, and resources. A plan is then formulated to address the ethnic dimension of the association in cooperation with state/HMB strategy implementation.

The associational strategy is visualized through the production of color-coded maps that show:

1. Ethnic group concentrations
2. Existing ethnic/language-culture work by category
3. Projected new work
4. Existing missionary personnel and areas of responsibility
5. Projected re-deployment of personnel and resources

The polychromatic maps of the association, state, and nation depict the mosaic nature of our land and of our work. The Language Missions Division, through its strategy planning process, seeks to realistically approach the multi-dimensional facets of America's ethnic populations.

The Home Mission Board Objectives and Guidelines direct the process as in conjunction with state and local leaders Language Missions seeks to let all people in our land

- hear the Good News in the language of their soul,
- worship with New Testament congregations of believers, in an ethnolinguistic setting.

## APPENDIX 3

### DEPLOYMENT OF PERSONNEL: CATEGORY OF LANGUAGE WORKERS

Category of Language Workers  
Language Missions Division  
Home Mission Board

These definitions are designed to describe the type of work performed by persons who work in Language Missions. The use of the word “congregation” may refer to a church, a mission or a chapel or a department. The asterisk \* indicates those workers who have a missionary or missionary associate relationship to the Home Mission Board. The term “mission agencies” refers to the Home Mission Board and/or the state convention. It is recognized that there is an overlapping of definitions and that a person’s work may partake of the nature of more than one category.

#### 1. Messenger of the Word

The messenger of the word is a layperson or minister who serves on a voluntary basis in the initiation of new work, as a leader of a congregation, or in other missionary or pastoral capacities. His workers may be invited to conferences sponsored by the Home Mission Board or the state conventions. He does not receive financial assistance toward his salary for his services.

#### 2. Language Pastor

The language pastor serves a self-supporting, self-sustaining, or locally-supported congregation or congregations. The congregation(s) he serves receives no financial assistance from the mission agencies. The congregation(s) extends the call and provides salary and benefits in keeping with its own resources. He may be invited to attend conferences sponsored by the state conventions or the Home Mission Board. The churches served are defined as follows:

##### a. Self-supporting

A self-supporting congregation is one that provides salary, housing, and other allowances for a full-time pastor.

##### b. Self-sustaining

A self-sustaining congregation is one that does not receive financial assistance from the mission agencies and uses its own resources to project a program but whose pastor does not serve on a full-time basis. He may work secularly or serve two or more churches in order to have adequate living expenses.

c. Locally-supported

A locally-supported congregation is one that does not receive assistance from the mission agencies but does receive assistance from sponsoring churches, sister churches, or other sources in the support of its pastor and the implementation of its program.

3. Field Personnel Assistance

Field personnel assistance is provided to an ethnic/language-culture congregation with a part-time or bi-vocational pastor. The congregation calls the pastor, establishes the salary increases and allowances. The mission agencies provide assistance as requested by the congregation in accord with established policies. The congregation adopts a plan for self-support achievement including a definite schedule for reduction of assistance from the mission agencies.

4. Language Pastoral Assistance

Language pastoral assistance is provided to an ethnic/language-culture congregation with a person who serves as a full-time pastor. The congregation calls the pastor, establishes the salary according to the salary guidelines of the Home Mission Board, and provides salary increases with other allowances. The mission agencies process the pastor for approval and provide assistance as requested by the congregation in accord with established policies. The congregation adopts a plan of self-support achievement including a definite schedule for reduction of assistance from the mission agencies.

5. Language Missionary Pastor \*

The language missionary pastor is a person who serves as a full-time pastor of an ethnic/language-culture congregation or congregations who receives assistance from the mission agencies. The congregation (or congregations) calls the pastor, establishes the salary according to the salary guidelines of the Home Mission Board, and provides salary increases with other allowances. The mission agencies provide salary assistance as requested by the congregation(s) in accord with established policies. The congregation(s) adopts a plan of self-support achievement including a definite schedule for reduction of assistance from the mission agencies.

6. Language Pastoral Missionary \*

The language pastoral missionary is a person who serves as pastor of an ethnic/language-culture congregation with a specific assignment for starting new work and providing a witness to unreached areas as part of his responsibilities. The outreach is to be provided through the resources of the church and through the discovery, enlistment and training of leaders in the areas to be served. He works with Messengers of the Word as part of the method of outreach.

The congregation participates in the call of the pastor with an agreement established between the church and the mission agency as to the ministry to be provided to the church and the time to be given to mission outreach. The salary is jointly established according to the salary schedule of the Home Mission Board. The congregation participates in an agreed-upon portion of the salary and provides an appropriate

portion of the salary increase. The congregation adopts a plan of self-support achievement including a definite schedule for reduction of assistance for an agreed-upon portion of the salary and allowances.

7. Pastor Consultant \*

The pastor consultant is a person that serves as pastor of an ethnic/language-culture congregation and who also serves as a cultural consultant providing a liaison relationship and interpretation between a specific ethnic group and the mission agencies in an assigned area.

8. Language Missions Coordinator

The language missions coordinator provides leadership to the person of language missions within the local association(s); serves under the leadership of the Director of Associational Missions, in most cases surveys the needs; assists in long-range planning and implementation; enlists, trains, and undergirds ethnic/language-culture leaders; serves as liaison with the ethnic/language-culture congregation(s); and initiates new work. The coordinator also assists congregations in their planning for growth and guides existing churches in their ministry among ethnic/language-culture people or groups. The responsibilities generally are not administrative.

The language missions coordinator works with other programs within the association to provide awareness and specialized assistance in working with and training ethnic/language-culture people or groups.

The responsibilities of the language missions coordinator are defined by position description established in agreement with the state convention and the Home Mission Board.

The salary is provided by the mission agencies in accordance with the salary schedule of the Home Mission Board. The association provides operational and travel expenses and approximately fifty percent of the agreed-upon salary.

9. \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_, Catalytic \*

The language catalytic missionary is a person who serves ethnic/language-culture group or groups within an assigned region or geographical area. The primary responsibility of the catalytic missionary is to discover, enlist, train and undergird volunteer laypeople and ministers (Messengers of the Word) who proclaim the gospel and initiate new work. He also assists congregations in their planning for growth and guides existing churches in the ministry to ethnic/language-culture people and groups. Specific assignments are designated by job description. Missionaries to the deaf are considered regional missionaries in most cases.

The catalytic missionary cooperates with association(s) in the assigned region but is not a part of the association staff. The duties of a catalytic missionary do not ordinarily include pastoral responsibilities, but are defined by position description established in agreement with the Home Mission Board and state convention.

The salary of the catalytic missionary is provided by the mission agencies in accord with the salary schedule of the Home Mission Board.

10. \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_, General \*
- The language general missionary is a person who provides general leadership in areas or state conventions for work among a specific or varied ethnic/language-culture group. The responsibilities generally do not include administrative responsibilities. The salary of the language general missionary is provided by the mission agencies in accord with the salary schedule of the Home Mission Board.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_, NOC \*
- There are some workers related to the Language Missions Division whose task does not fit any of the above descriptions. The nature of their work is established by job description and assignment. Some of these are as follows:
- a. Staff of Institutes and Academy.
  - b. Missionary serving government Indian schools and hospitals.
  - c. Kindergarten teachers.
  - d. Missionary serving specific ethnic/language-culture group.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_, State/Area Consultant \*
- The language missions consultant serves as a specialist with a particular ethnic/language-culture group. The responsibilities of the consultant include culture research, study of trends within their specific ethnic/language-culture group, development of culturally relevant church growth techniques and training conferences. In addition, language missions consultants are available to conventions and associations for laser penetration studies and consultations, as well as speaking and training assignments. The responsibilities generally are not administrative, except as may be required through other special assignments to which they may be related. The salary of the language missions consultant is provided by the Home Mission Board in accord with salary schedules of the Board.
13. Language Program Leader \*
- The language program leader directs the program of language missions within the territory of the state convention. Working under the direction of the state director of missions, in most cases, the program leader is to survey needs; assist in long-range strategy planning and implementation; enlist, train and undergird missionaries, pastors and laypeople who proclaim the gospel and initiate new work. He also assists congregations in their planning for growth and guides existing churches in their ministry to ethnic/language-culture groups. The responsibilities generally are not administrative.
- The language program leader works with other programs within a convention and/or association to provide awareness and specialized assistance in working with and training ethnic/language-culture people or groups.
- The salary of the language program leader is provided by the mission agencies in accord with the salary schedule of the Home Mission Board.

14. State Director of Language Missions \*

The state director of language missions provides general leadership in a state convention for work among ethnic/language-culture people or groups. He is responsible for strategy planning, program development, training and administration.

15. National Ethnic Missionary \*

Personnel whose primary responsibility is to initiate new work among specified ethnic groups nationwide.

16. National Consultant \*

Personnel whose primary responsibility is to serve as an ethnic/language-culture specialist for ethnic research and church growth on a national level. The task may include a cooperative effort with other convention programs.

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+ American Indian, Asian, Caribbean, Deaf, European, Hispanic, International, Middle Eastern, Multiethnic.

1/26/77, 2/9/81  
2/3/82, & 9/10/82  
1/12/83

APPENDIX 4

LASER THRUST CHURCH GROWTH, 1978-1994

Year	Number of Cities	New Units	Ethnic Groups
1978	12	None Reported	None Reported
1979	18	None Reported	None Reported
1980	No city reported	None Reported	None Reported
1981	None Reported	None Reported	None Reported
1982	5	32	20
1983	8	57	32
1984	5	16	18
1985	3	44	25
1986	7	43	24
1987	4	64	28
1988	7	39	35
1989	None Reported	46	20
1990	None Reported	12	10
1991	6	9	18
1992	18	13	13
1993	12	8	12
1994	12	10	7
Totals	117	393	--

Source: Information compiled from the *Annals of the Southern Baptist Convention*, Nashville: Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1978-1994.



APPENDIX 5

SBC SEMINARIES HISPANIC ENROLLMENT

Area	SWBTS	GGBTS	MBTS	SEBTS	NOBTS	SBTS	Total
Enrolled	127	290	44	81	141	78	761
Diploma	2	13	10	43	--	3	71
B.A.	34	--	4	9	113	13	173
Masters	83	25	8	29	38	55	238
Doctoral	8	6	22	--	--	8	44
Spanish Speaking Professors	5	4	2	1	--	9	21
CLD	--	246	13	--	--	--	246

Source: Enrollment information was gathered from each of the seminaries by Daniel Sánchez. This information was current on April 8, 2013.

APPENDIX 6

10-YEAR HISPANIC CHURCH GROWTH STUDY, 1980-1989

ETHNIC CHURCH GROWTH STUDY, 1980-1989  
LANGUAGE CHURCH EXTENSION DIVISION, HMB  
HISPANIC CONGREGATIONS

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	% CHANGE
CONGREGATIONS	1,400	1,522	1,694	1,822	2,030	2,183	2,335	2,488	2,550	2,612	86.57%
BAPTISMS	9,142	13,157	12,378	10,907	12,404	13,801	15,198	16,595	14,026	11,312	23.74%
MEMBERS	90,958	107,408	121,570	126,710	136,739	146,260	155,782	165,303	153,064	140,030	53.95%
BAPTISMAL RATIO	1:9.95	1:8.16	1:9.82	1:11.62	1:11.02	1:10.60	1:10.25	1:9.86	1:10.91	1:12.38	10.47%
<b>CHURCH PROGRAM ENROLLMENT*</b>											
BIBLE STUDY	103,124	130,340	147,031	153,590	167,106	189,864	212,621	235,379	192,752	147,768	43.29%
DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING	39,508	48,163	49,218	52,296	56,434	52,692	48,951	45,209	40,114	34,717	-12.13%
MUSIC	13,804	17,520	17,828	19,212	22,338	20,919	19,500	18,081	16,650	15,128	9.59%
WVU	20,832	27,565	29,482	29,186	32,165	29,899	27,632	25,366	22,798	20,074	-3.64%
BROTHERHOOD	10,262	14,431	15,624	15,669	18,626	17,632	16,637	15,643	13,385	10,999	0.34%
RECEIPTS	\$17,042,984	\$22,886,496	\$26,654,222	\$30,282,422	\$32,479,614	\$37,796,567	\$43,116,519	\$48,430,472	\$40,119,605	\$32,380,537	89.99%
PER CAPITA RECEIPTS	\$187	\$213	\$219	\$239	\$238	\$258	\$277	\$293	\$262	\$231	23.41%
COOP. PROGRAM GIFTS	\$698,460	\$988,804	\$1,250,692	\$1,210,333	\$1,433,023	\$1,736,694	\$2,040,365	\$2,344,035	\$1,945,801	\$1,573,694	125.31%
% TO COOP. PROGRAM	4.10%	4.32%	4.69%	4.00%	4.41%	4.59%	4.73%	4.84%	4.85%	4.86%	4.54%
MISSION GIFTS	\$1,322,130	\$1,942,670	\$2,407,052	\$2,547,130	\$2,894,292	\$3,314,639	\$3,734,986	\$4,155,334	\$3,478,370	\$2,833,297	114.30%
% TO MISSIONS	7.76%	8.49%	9.03%	8.41%	8.91%	8.77%	8.66%	8.58%	8.67%	8.75%	8.60%

\* Ten-Year Average

Source: Ethnic Church Growth Reports and Uniform Church Letters, 1980-1989, October 1990

ETHNIC CHURCH GROWTH STUDY, 1980-1989  
LANGUAGE CHURCH EXTENSION DIVISION, HMB  
TOTAL ETHNIC CONGREGATIONS

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	% CHANGE
CONGREGATIONS	2,074	2,354	2,714	3,034	3,474	3,767	4,054	4,341	4,669	5,037	142.86%
BAPTISMS	13,089	17,985	20,681	19,418	23,415	24,034	25,815	27,570	24,519	21,271	62.51%
MEMBERS	142,783	156,470	185,610	203,672	234,599	252,426	271,840	290,353	283,845	276,612	93.73%
BAPTISM RATIO	1:10.91	1:8.70	1:8.97	1:10.49	1:10.02	1:10.50	1:10.53	1:10.53	1:11.58	1:13.00	10.52%
<b>CHURCH PROGRAM ENROLLMENT</b>											
BIBLE STUDY	142,108	160,025	184,145	203,703	227,339	280,502	313,960	346,766	313,080	276,590	94.63%
DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING	46,786	45,738	49,639	54,733	62,879	71,970	69,726	67,320	66,979	67,927	45.19%
MUSIC	17,121	19,727	23,232	24,060	34,705	35,536	36,416	36,998	36,808	36,320	112.14%
WMU	27,072	30,225	35,418	38,259	45,231	47,132	46,450	45,616	43,625	41,403	52.94%
BROTHERHOOD	13,207	14,100	16,013	18,629	22,859	26,567	27,894	29,046	26,947	24,761	87.48%
RECEIPTS	\$23,941,951	\$29,923,295	\$37,416,995	\$43,549,429	\$51,665,919	\$63,681,671	\$74,923,719	\$86,145,653	\$78,559,112	\$71,290,382	197.76%
PER CAPITA RECEIPTS	\$168	\$191	\$202	\$214	\$220	\$252	\$276	\$297	\$277	\$258	53.70%
COOP. PROGRAM GIFTS	\$1,053,521	\$1,343,569	\$1,699,887	\$1,798,555	\$2,257,544	\$2,794,971	\$3,217,126	\$3,618,617	\$3,319,700	\$3,065,777	191.00%
% TO COOP. PROGRAM	4.40%	4.49%	4.54%	4.13%	4.37%	4.39%	4.29%	4.20%	4.23%	4.30%	4.33%
MISSIONS GIFTS	\$2,099,417	\$2,768,022	\$3,584,244	\$3,805,182	\$4,715,955	\$5,610,647	\$6,272,812	\$6,868,822	\$6,247,249	\$5,675,875	170.35%
% TO MISSIONS	8.77%	9.25%	9.58%	8.74%	9.13%	8.81%	8.37%	7.97%	7.95%	7.96%	8.66%

\* Ten-Year Average

Source: Ethnic Church Growth Reports and Uniform Church Letters, 1980-1989, October 1990

APPENDIX 7

SEND CITY STATISTICS (MIDWEST)

City	Total Population	Church to Population Ratio	White Population	Ethnic Diversity	Percent of Hispanic Population	Hispanic Population
Chicago	8,742,486	1:31,791	54%	46%	22%	1,923,346
Cincinnati	1,629,097	1:10,861	78%	19%	2%	32,582
Cleveland	1,593,407	1:41,932	37%	63%	10%	159,340
Columbus	2,093,185	1:17,890	78%	21%	4%	83,727
Detroit	5,207,434	1:30,452	69%	30%	4%	208,297
Indianapolis	1,856,787	1:19,965	62%	3%	9%	167,110
Kansas City	1,923,194	1:7,662	75%	23%	8%	153,855
Minneapolis-St. Paul	3,192,702	1:118,248	78%	20%	6%	192,562
St. Louis	2,721,817	1:7,889	75%	24%	3%	81,654
Total	28,960,109				10.4%	3,002,473

Source: Information is from NAMB website, <http://www.namb.net/cities/>, current as of 31 October 2013.

APPENDIX 8

SEND CITY STATISTICS (SOUTH)

City	Total Population	Church to Population Ratio	White Population	Ethnic Diversity	Percent of Hispanic Population	Hispanic Population
Atlanta	5,712,148	1:4,157	51%	48%	11%	628,336
Miami	5,670,125	1:9,087	35%	67%	42%	2,381,453
New Orleans	1,176,364	1:5,882	54%	46%	8%	94,109
Total	12,558,637				24.7%	3,103,898

Source: Information is from NAMB website, <http://www.namb.net/cities/>, current as of 31 October 2013.

APPENDIX 9

SEND CITY STATISTICS (NORTHEAST)

City	Total Population	Church to Population Ratio	White Population	Ethnic Diversity	Percent of Hispanic Population	Hispanic Population
Baltimore	2,729,110	1:13,248	60%	39%	5%	136,454
Boston	4,935,739	1:42,919	76%	24%	9%	444,217
New York	22,214,083	1:76,337	51%	50%	21%	4,664,957
Philadelphia	6,562,287	1:29,694	65%	34%	9%	590,606
Pittsburg	2,450,281	1:36,034	87%	11%	1%	24,504
Washington, DC	5,809,698	1:9,571	49%	50%	14%	813,358
Total	44,701,198				14.9%	6,674,096

Source: Information is from NAMB website, <http://www.namb.net/cities/>, current as of 31 October 2013.

APPENDIX 10

SEND CITY STATISTICS (WEST)

City	Total Population	Church to Population Ratio	White Population	Ethnic Diversity	Percent of Hispanic Population	Hispanic Population
Denver	4,092,796	1: 19,397	69%	29%	20%	818,559
Las Vegas	1,969,975	1: 19,313	47%	51%	30%	590,992
Los Angeles	18,081,569	1: 18,583	33%	66%	45%	8,136,706
Phoenix	5,252,805	1: 19,822	58%	42%	31%	1,628,370
Portland	2,262,605	1: 28,283	76%	20%	11%	248,887
Salt Lake City	1,776,528	1: 43,330	78%	21%	15%	266,479
San Diego	3,140,069	1: 14,605	48%	51%	33%	1,036,223
San Francisco	7,563,460	1: 16,920	43%	55%	24%	1,815,230
Seattle	4,269,349	1: 28,653	70%	25%	9%	384,241
Total	48,409,156				31.1%	14,925,687

Source: Information is from NAMB website, <http://www.namb.net/cities/>, current as of 31 October 2013.

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## ABSTRACT

### A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISPANIC CHURCH-PLANTING STRATEGIES IN NORTH AMERICA, 1970-1994

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013  
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This dissertation analyzes and critically evaluates Southern Baptist Hispanic church-planting strategies in North America during the period of 1970-1994. This twenty-five-year study demonstrates that these years were both important and influential days for language missions among Southern Baptists.

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the reality that the United States is a nation of many “nations.” Each culture is extraordinarily unique and, consequently, requires that strategies be contextualized to reach successfully the increasingly diverse population in North America.

Chapter 2 explores the historical context that was the genesis of Southern Baptists’ language missions in North America. Key people instrumental in reaching language/cultural groups, starting new churches, and developing indigenous leadership among different ethnic groups helped to paint the overall language missions landscape.

Chapter 3 introduces Oscar I. Romo and explores Romo’s missiological principles, sociological understanding, and theological foundation for language missions. The chapter investigates how Romo’s theology influenced his methodologies, and to what extent he influenced other people and agencies.

Chapter 4 introduces the reader to three important questions one must answer in order to have a better understanding of the importance and influence of language missions in the Southern Baptist Convention during the period of 1970-1994. While Chapter 4 is descriptive of each strategy, Chapter 5 analyzes, evaluates, and critiques the strengths and weaknesses of both primary and secondary strategies.

Chapter 6 draws conclusions from the historical, theological, missiological, sociological, and ecclesiological lessons learned during the period of 1970 to 1994. Additionally, chapter 6 examines the lessons learned from the past, reflects on current church-planting practices of the NAMB, and answers important and practical questions.

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