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77-92

Ethnics Are the Answer
In Cities, Romo Declares

By Everett Hullum

LOS ANGELES (BP)--The top priority for language missions in the decade ahead will be to perfect and implement an effective urban strategy, Oscar Romo told Southern Baptist "catalytic missionaries" and state missions leaders here.

Focusing on Los Angeles as a prototype of the nation's metroplexes, Romo, director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's language missions department, presented a four-part "predesigned plan," for starting and strengthening language missions in U. S. cities.

"In the age of the ethnic," Romo said, "we have to develop a strategy for reaching the cities, because most ethnic people are city-dwellers."

"If the cities are to be won for Christ," Romo insisted, "ethnics must do it." Ethnic people comprise a heavy percentage of most inner-city neighborhoods.

"Flexibility and creativity will be the key," Romo added. "We can give guidelines, but only local people can give adequate direction to it.

"Ours is not the only way, but it is one way we think we can help local churches and local people get hold of the vast unchurched metropolitan areas."

Calling for a closer partnership between the Home Mission Board and local churches, Romo outlined a "church-centered approach" with four emphases:

--"Laser Penetration." Taking its name from the process that gathers diverse light beams into a single powerful stream, the laser gathers language missions experts for a concentrated, short-term analysis of a metro area's language needs and opportunities.

--"Catalytic Action." Recognizing Home Board and local church limitations in funds and personnel, a "Catalytic" effort, using a single missions worker to reach several ethnic groups, will become more common in the future.

Such a "catalytic missionary" may begin new work wherever needs exist but the object will be to discover local, indigenous leaders and develop them before the missionary moves on to other projects.

--"Cross-cultural Approach." Churches, especially those in changing neighborhoods, must learn to cross cultural barriers to begin missions work with other groups.

Anglo churches must offer opportunities for ethnics to form subcongregational units, for example. And, Romo added, more and more ethnic churches must learn to minister to different culture. He cited two ethnic Los Angeles churches now beginning programs for persons of another ethnic group moving into their area.

"Such outreach may use existing Southern Baptist programs and facilities," Romo said. "But cultural adaptations may be necessary for outreach to be most effective."

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-- "Kaleidoscopic Missions." As metropolitan area neighborhoods become more and more "multi-ethnic," existing facilities must be shared, Romo said. Pointing to the four independent language congregations meeting at Nineteenth Avenue Baptist Church in San Francisco, Romo said this approach may become the model for the future, as metro building and site costs soar.

"It is especially important to propogate this concept in communities where ethnic composition is changing, or where a neighborhood has a mosaic of ethnic peoples," Romo said.

"Laser penetration" teams worked for four days in the Los Angeles area in pr paration for the conference, assembling 24 missionaries from as far away as Hawaii and Puerto Rico.

The goal of the laser teams was not to begin new work, but to discover trends and movements of the ethnic composition of Los Angeles. Such discoveries are then used to determine ethnic population needs and the ways Southern Baptists can best minister to them, Romo explained.

The studies, including information from such diverse sources as public librari s and international business corporations, also alert existing churches to changes in their communities.

With 18 language groups represented by the laser effort, however, several opportunities for new work were initiated.

Bible studies for Greeks, Laotians and Arabs were proposed after local people expressed interest.

An evangelical Arabic group, needing facilities in which to meet, was discovered and paired with a local Southern Baptist church with facilities to share; a group of Russian immigrants of Baptist background were located and given information concerning Southern Baptist aid.

Data from the Los Angeles "laser penetration" will be compiled and made available to the local Baptist directors of missions, Romo said.

The laser effort and the conference itself were the result of three months planning and preparation, Romo said, involving not only the Home Mission Board's language missions department, but also the directors of missions of the five Los Angeles associations and the California state leadership.

Los Angeles was chosen for this laser effort, the fourth and largest laser, Romo concluded, because the state will become "the first third world state in the U. S." in 13 years when ethnic peoples become the majority in California, according to U. S. census projections.

"We felt we could help Los Angeles and California Baptists get a handle on future ethnic missions needs," Romo said. "We also felt no city would be a greater challenge, or teach us more about conducting a laser, than Los Angeles," he added.

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Juries to Determine
Obscenity Standards

By Stan Hasteley

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WASHINGTON (BP)--Local juries, not state legislatures, are to determine what constitutes obscenity in federal cases, the U. S. Supreme Court ruled here.

In a 5-4 decision, the high court upheld the conviction of a Des Moines, Iowa, man charged with violating the 1873 Comstock Act, which forbids the use of the U. S. Postal Service to transport obscene materials.

Jerry Lee Smith was convicted of mailing issues of "Intrigu ," a hard-core pornographic magazine, and two obscene films to post office box addresses in the Southern Iowa towns of Mount Ayr and Guthrie Center. The materials were unknowingly mailed to postal inspectors who had requested them using fictitious names.

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Smith contended at his trial and in his appeal to the Supreme Court that the charges against him should be dismissed because the Iowa legislature in 1974 passed a law removing all restrictions from possession of obscene materials by adults. The law did restrict distribution of such materials to children.

Justice Harry A. Blackmun, who wrote the majority opinion, acknowledged that although Smith had not violated Iowa law, he was still subject to federal prosecution for violation of the federal Comstock Act. The jury, therefore, and not the state legislature, must decide whether the materials sent through the mail were obscene, Blackmun wrote.

In 1973, the Supreme Court ruled that local community standards, rather than a uniform national standard, must be applied in obscenity cases. That decision, announced in *Miller v. California*, issued three basic guidelines for determining obscenity at the community level:

--"Whether 'the average person, applying contemporary community standards' would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest . . . ;

--"Whether the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law; and

--"Whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value."

Justice Blackmun concluded that a state's "right to abolish all regulation of obscene material does not create a correlative right to force the federal government to allow the mails" to be used for sending obscene materials.

Four of the justices dissented, including John Paul Stevens, who argued in a lengthy statement that "a federal statute defining a criminal offense should prescribe a uniform standard applicable throughout the country."

Stevens said further that just as standards relating to obscenity differ on a national level, standards vary even within "so-called local communities."

He concluded: "In my judgment, the line between communications which 'offend' and those which do not is too blurred to identify criminal conduct. It is also too blurred to delimit the protections of the First Amendment."

In a footnote, Stevens also called attention to the views of Anthony Comstock after whom the Comstock Act was named. Comstock was said to have scorn for "light literature, pool halls, lotteries, gambling dens, popular magazines, and weekly newspapers."

Justices William J. Brennan Jr., Potter Stewart, and Thurgood Marshall, who regularly dissent from the high court's majority in obscenity cases, issued a brief statement declaring that the Comstock Act is "clearly overbroad and unconstitutional on its face."

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1,500 Public Decisions
Made in Liberia Crusade

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MONROVIA, Liberia (BP)--A total of 1,500 public decisions, including 641 professions of faith in Jesus Christ, were made during a nationwide crusade here.

A group of 22 pastors, four wives and four musicians from Louisiana conducted the crusade at the invitation of Liberian Baptists. The group included Robert L. Lee, executive secretary, and Leonard Sanderson, director of evangelism, Louisiana Baptist Convention, Alexandria. Southern Baptist Missionary I. Earl Williams coordinated the crusade.

An invitation to Sanderson from Liberia Baptists launched the crusade two years ago. Sanderson and Charles Lowry, the Louisiana Convention's director of teaching and training, visited Liberia in November, 1976, for planning with national Baptists and missionaries.

The crusade, which included personal visitation, began with witness training in local churches, in the seminary and in Ricks Institute, a Baptist school. The training class included over 1,500 people, according to Sanderson.

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Evangelistic meetings, preached in local churches, followed the witness training.

"Churches that were almost dead and had very little leadership responded beyond expectation," said Williams. "Even the first Sunday after the crusade there were 17 professions of faith. We had a record high of 341 in Sunday School."

"Added impact came to the crusade because of the participation of Liberia's President William Tolbert," said Sanderson. "He was with the group that gave us a reception on the night we arrived." Lee preached in President Tolbert's church and stayed in the Tolbert guest house. Tolbert is a Baptist preacher.

"I am of the personal opinion that our witness training will have the most long lasting value of all of our contributions," Sanderson said. "We continue to hear reports that this was true on our trip to India the previous year."

Williams, who is from Louisiana, received a special plaque during the crusade from his home church, New Chapel Hill Baptist Church in West Monroe, La. The plaque expressed "greetings, gratitude, commendations, support and prayers."

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Pari-Mutuel Forces Slowed
In Tennessee and Missouri

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NASHVILLE (BP)--A Baptist-led effort has beaten back--at least temporarily--an effort in the Tennessee general assembly (state legislature) to legalize pari-mutuel betting, while a similar effort was defeating pari-mutuel betting forces in Missouri.

Supporters of a bill in Tennessee, calling for the establishment of a race track allowing pari-mutuel betting, backed down on the last day of the session of the legislature when they couldn't build adequate support in the state Senate for passage.

John Bedford, a Memphis pastor and chairman of the Christian Life Committee of the Shelby Baptist Association, which had opposed betting, praised the efforts of William Ray Ingram, a Memphis attorney and active Baptist layman, and Alvin C. Shackelford of Brentwood, editor of Baptist and Reflector, statewide Tennessee Baptist newspaper, for their personal work with state legislators.

In Missouri, the state House of Representatives turned back the latest attempt to permit pari-mutuel betting by a vote of 88-57. The bill had cleared a House committee by a wide margin and had the backing of St. Louis officials and the Teamsters Union. The Missouri Baptist Convention, the Christian Civic Foundation and the Missouri Catholic Conference led the fight against the bill.

In Tennessee, pari-mutuel supporters postponed action on the bill before a vote, leaving the way clear for it to be revived when the legislature reconvenes in January. Supported by Shelby County business leaders, who want their local government to establish a track for horse racing to generate revenue, the bill asks the legislature to permit Shelby County residents to decide by referendum if they want gambling at publicly owned tracks.

In Missouri, more than 40,000 signatures on petitions were presented to the state representatives in the weeks before the vote. Petitions came from representatives' local districts and were coordinated by the Christian Civic Foundation.

Baptist leaders in both states expressed appreciation for the results, commenting that gambling has no place in the financial structures of state government since it works its greatest hardships on those who can least afford it.

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