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82-29

Language Missions Leaders
Examine 'Melting Pot' Myth

By Patti Stephenson

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PHILADELPHIA, Pa. (BP)--"Many ethnics in America have never 'melted,'" a language missions leader told Southern Baptist leaders, missiologists and researchers at the 25th annual Language Missions Leadership Conference.

Oscar Romo, director of language missions for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, refuted the myth of America as a "melting pot," and said because many ethnics have not "melted," the "task is to weave the concept of God into the context of their culture."

Romo noted that baptisms, Sunday School growth and missions giving are increasing among ethnic churches, but warned, "We will lose these churches in Southern Baptist life if we don't develop contextual language materials."

"Language and culture are conduits for the gospel. The increasing ethnicity of the Southern Baptist Convention calls for accelerating the development of language materials based, not only on the financial return of the investment, but on the spiritual enrichment of ethnic America."

He called for the development of a language materials consortium by the state conventions and SBC agencies to augment production of contextual materials "urgently needed" by SBC congregations ministering to 81 ethnic groups in the U.S.

Noting that "more than 90 percent of the Home Mission Board's ministry is among ethnic Americans" (those who emigrated from other countries and became American citizens), Romo declared that "Southern Baptists' greatest challenge will be to reach the American ethnics who were born here, but who also identify with a language-culture group." At present, he said, "We're only making progress among the American Indian and deaf groups among American ethnics."

Romo praised sponsorship as an effective means of encouraging a fledgling ethnic congregation, but commented that in some cases "the sponsoring church, like an overprotective parent, has smothered the mission's growth." He estimated that an effort by sponsoring churches "to let their ethnic child grow up" could produce 1,000 language-culture churches in one year.

Romo also acknowledged the trend toward formation of separate ethnic Baptist fellowships, particularly in urban areas. "To deny them this privilege is to negate Baptist polity," Romo warned.

Citing HMB forecasts for growing ethnic populations in the south and the cities in the coming decade, Romo outlined a three-fold strategy for producing 3,508 additional ethnic congregations by the year 2000. The plan includes establishing 7,074 new units of work, converting 150 transitional churches into language churches, and organizing 1,000 existing missions into churches.

To reach that goal as part of the SBC emphasis on having 50,000 churches at the turn of the century, "we must change the way we think about expecting every new work to become a church within five years," Romo contended. "Southern Baptists must learn to water ethnic churches as well as to plant them."

Another speaker at the four-day conference, Orlando Costas, missions professor at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, challenged Southern Baptists to remember that "you also were once outsiders, on the fringe as a religious ministry," and urged participants "to find ecclesiastical pluralism within the bonds of Christian love. If you fail, Southern Baptists will have no future."

Costas also examined the implications of "liberation theology" as a movement gaining support among some Christian groups in Third World countries. "Liberation theology frees religion from its ivory tower and puts it in the center of the practice of the Christian faith," Costas observed. "It transforms the church from a powerful institution into a community which identifies itself with the cross."

The conference highlighted Southern Baptist work among European Americans. In reviewing the discrimination and hardships faced by earlier European immigrants, Romo issued a strong call for Southern Baptists to be sensitive to the same plight endured by contemporary refugees from Haiti and Southeast Asia.

Gerhard Claas, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, observed that "many Europeans wonder why Baptists in the U.S. seem to be in competition instead of cooperation." Claas encouraged Southern Baptists to remember that "inerrancy of the Bible and the Moral Majority are great, but people come to your churches to see Jesus."

Gerald Palmer, HMB vice president for missions, praised "the singular devotion of our ethnic leaders in the SBC to bringing their own peoples to know Christ."

Palmer attributed the growth of the HMB's language missions program to "strategy continuity without stagnation" and "planned progress that permitted spontaneous expansion." He affirmed his commitment to Bold Mission Thrust goals, stressing that "Jesus didn't qualify the Great Commission by telling us to 'go into all the world--if you can.'"

The 1982 Language Missions "Mosaic Award" was presented to Bobbie Sorrill, director of education division at Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union, for her efforts in developing language materials for WMU women in SBC ethnic churches.

Baptist Pioneer
Treadway Dies

-30-

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Baptist Press
2/23/82

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Charles F. Treadway, pioneer in Southern Baptist Vacation Bible School and deacon ministry training, died Feb. 23, following a two-year battle with cancer.

Treadway, 67, retired in 1980 from the church administration department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board but was still in high demand as a leader of deacon ministry conferences around the country.

Before moving to Nashville in 1952, Treadway was a pastor in his native Mississippi. While working at the Sunday School Board, he was interim pastor in 28 churches and was instrumental in starting the Brentwood and Crieveewood Baptist churches.

Because of his outstanding work at the Southern Baptist education and publishing agency and his contributions to the Nashville community, Treadway was honored early in 1980 as a Career Professional Employee of the board.

He was a graduate of Mississippi College, and earned the Th.M. and Ph.D. degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he was a teaching fellow for Gaines S. Dobbins in religious education.

Treadway is survived by his wife, Ruby; two sons, Richard, a Nashville psychiatrist, and Jimmy, an English professor at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.; two brothers, Marcus and Howard, both of Hollandale, Miss.; a sister, Eula Wiley of Waverly, Ohio; and five grandchildren.

The family requests that gifts, in lieu of flowers, be made to the Charles F. Treadway Memorial Fund, in care of First Baptist Church, Nashville, Tenn., for a ministry.

Computer Malfunction
Jams Switchboard, Too

DALLAS (BP)--A computer malfunction caused a traffic jam at the switchboard of the Southern Baptist Annuity Board.

The malfunction delayed the posting time of monthly insurance payments by participants in the board's insurance program, and many participants received lapse notices.

As the lapse notices went out, hundreds of phone calls came in. Fairy Holmes, switchboard supervisor, said the board received more than 600 phone calls in a single day.

"That far exceeds our busiest day ever," she added.

Telecommunications supervisor Donna Sharp said 90 percent of the incoming toll-free calls concerned problems with insurance notices.

Some callers failed to reach the Annuity Board after allowing the phone to ring as many as 25 times. "Our telephone system will continue to ring when all the circuits are busy," said Holmes. "When the line is available, the call is automatically transferred to an operator."

Annuity Board president Darold H. Morgan, who urged participants to be patient until the technical error can be corrected, said: "Members who have kept their payments current will not lose their coverage."

He advised participants to keep the payments current, using the latest information they have to determine due date, amount and address for sending in payments.

"Steps are being taken to alleviate the problem," he added. "Please don't hang up; your call will be answered in the order received."

Southern Baptists Aid
El Salvador's Refugees

-30-

RB

Baptist Press
2/23/82

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Southern Baptists continue to minister in violence-wracked El Salvador through refugee relief funds, Christian literature distribution and a steady missionary presence.

The Foreign Mission Board recently released \$25,000 in general and hunger relief funds (in addition to \$23,000 previously released) to aid Salvadorans who are refugees in their own country.

The money has been channeled through the Evangelical Relief and Emergency Committee (CESAD), a group of Salvadoran evangelicals who administer local and international funds to aid about 16,000 Salvadorans per month, said Don Kammerdiener, the board's director for middle America and the Caribbean.

Though Southern Baptists' two missionary couples in El Salvador are responsible primarily for a thriving Christian literature ministry, they also work closely with CESAD in helping Salvadoran refugees displaced from their homes as a result of fighting.

Kammerdiener said Ernie and Lee Ann McAnich, from Alabama, and Bill and Libby Stennett from Virginia and Washington, D.C., continue to affirm that news reported from El Salvador is worse than the actual situation--"that living there one does not get the same impression he would get reading reports of massacres and atrocities."

But they take precautions to ensure their safety, staying within the capital city of San Salvador most of the time now, he added.

"It would be inaccurate to portray it as business as usual," Kammerdiener said. "When you're there you hear bombs exploding; you hear rifle and machine gunfire.

"No human being would be unaffected by that. But continually the word comes back, 'What we're doing is of such importance that it's worth the risk that is involved,'" he said.

Court Says Amish Employees
Must Pay Social Security

WB
By Larry Chesser

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Supreme Court reversed a Pennsylvania District Court ruling which had relieved employers and employees who are members of the Old Order Amish religion from participation in the nation's Social Security system.

Present federal law exempts self-employed members of the Old Order Amish from compulsory Social Security participation. In 1980, the Western Pennsylvania District Court sided with a self-employed Amish farmer and carpenter who contended that imposition of Social Security taxes on his Amish employees violated their free exercise of religion rights.

Old Order Amish maintain that both payment of Social Security taxes and receipt of such benefits conflict with their religious belief requiring members of their faith to provide for other members.

But the nation's high court, in an opinion written by Chief Justice Warren E. Burger, rejected the district court decision, ruling that the exemption from Social Security participation granted by Congress applies only to self-employed members of the Old Order Amish.

The high court's opinion granted that compulsory participation in the Social Security system "interferes" with the free exercise rights of the Amish but declared that "not all burdens on religion are unconstitutional." "The state," the court added, "may justify a limitation on religious liberty by showing that it is essential to accomplish an overriding governmental interest."

The governmental interest in this case is apparent, the justices declared. Warning that voluntary participation "would undermine" the system, they stated that "mandatory participation is indispensable to the fiscal vitality of the Social Security system."

The court held further that it would be difficult to accommodate the comprehensive national retirement program with "myriad exceptions flowing from a wide variety of religious beliefs."

"The tax system could not function if denominations were allowed to challenge the tax system because tax payments were spent in a manner that violates their religious beliefs," the justices declared.

"Because the broad public interest in maintaining a sound tax system is of such a high order, religious belief in conflict with payment of taxes affords no basis for resisting the tax," the opinion concluded.

Burger was joined in the opinion by all other members of the high court except Justice John Paul Stevens who filed a concurring opinion.

Difficult Pressures, Standards,
Can Lead to Ministerial Burnout

CO
By Jim Lowry

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Two Southern Baptist pastors confronting burnout in the ministry say time pressure and secular standards of measurement imposed on the church are significant problems for ministers.

Floyd Higginbotham, Calvary Baptist Church, Batesville, Miss., and Bill Oakley, First Baptist Church, Piggott, Ark., ages 48 and 50, respectively, attended a seminar at the Baptist Sunday School Board with 31 others to learn to be more effective and caring leaders of their congregations. Problems they recognized as prompting professional burnout include depression, internal conflict, breakdown in relationships with family and church members, overwork and rationalization for missed goals.

Oakley, who has been pastor of six churches and is a former employee of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan, described himself as a perfectionist, faced by an inner compulsion to accomplish all tasks in the church. Recognizing these symptoms helps him deal with the inevitable stress of failure when some tasks are left undone.

For Higginbotham, who has been pastor of seven churches, the pressure of preparation for preaching three times each week and leading a one-hour Bible study are primary sources of his frustration. The preacher must "produce" if he is to be perceived as successful, a "problem created by secular standards of measurement imposed on the church," he said.

"People look at the budget, the number of baptisms, church growth and Sunday School attendance," echoed Oakley. "In our denomination, a pastor is expected to produce. These are the things that are measureable, yet I'm not sure they are always the most important.

Oakley and Higginbotham also agreed that age restrictions set by pastor search committees are a constant source of frustration and pressure for men their age.

"We've set the standard in the Southern Baptist Convention that a man at age 45 is about through," Oakley said, primarily referring to mobility and acceptability to churches seeking pastors. "We are both at the age where we have to do a lot of praying about God's intention for our lives. I believe God will take care of it, but worrying about it gives me stress."

"I'm in a position at my age to be the best pastor I've ever been because of the experiences I've gone through," Higginbotham added. "Yet this is the age where churches don't want you. The pastorate is the only profession I know where a person doesn't continue to advance."

Another responsibility that eats pastors' time and creates severe stress is an increasing counseling load. Sermon preparation, visitation, administration and planning leave little time for talking with members about problems.

"How do you tell a member you love and care for that you just don't have time to deal with his problem?" Oakley asked. "It gives me a deep sense of agony to turn someone down."

Higginbotham is his church's only staff member. Motivating and enlisting volunteers, attending committee meetings and preparing for sermons often leave him frustrated because there just are not enough hours in the day.

"In a church with one staff member, the pastor has to initiate the activity, whether it is recreation, fellowship, education or Bible study," Higginbotham said. "You also have to be a participant in all the activities."

Participation in those activities prompts more stress for the one-staff-member pastor because it saps time required for sermon preparation.