

CHAPTER 7
INSIDE THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF GUATEMALA:
REASONS FOR THE CURRENT STATE OF DENOMINATIONS AS PER LEADERS
OF THE MAJOR DENOMINATIONS

Introduction:

General Growth Rate of Churches and Broad Reasons for the Trend

Currently the majority of the denominations do not enjoy the same rapid growth that was common in the 1970s and 1980s. The continual loss and gains of members from one church to another create an illusion of expansion, when in fact, the evangelical church is barely maintaining its fraction of the population in relation to the general population growth rate. The continued high growth rate of the two largest denominations, the Assembly of God and the Church of God, as well as the high profile of several Neo-pentecostal mega-churches mask the sluggish performance of the overall evangelical church. Rising personal comfort and security fostered by the resolution of the Civil War, rising secularism, globalization and importation of post-modern ideas that conflict with Christianity, the resurgence of the Catholic Church, the promotion of the Neo-Mayan Religion, and a religiously neutral government are all significant external sociological factors that contribute to the growth decline of the evangelical church: The evangelical church has no direct control over these factors but must recognize their existence and significance within their context. The evangelical church can influence other church growth factors that are directly within its control. Some of these are: general moral problems within churches, lack of adequate preparation by many rural pastors, syncretism with inadequate assimilation of the message of the Gospel, and a crippling legalism

within many churches. Illiteracy is a factor in both the realm of public policy and the church's domain. Churches can and must address illiteracy in order to open the Word of God to their flocks.

A Brief Context of the Major Denominations Interviewed

Both raw facts and descriptive statistics show relationships among pertinent church growth factors, but they do not conclusively demonstrate the causes and effects for observed factors. The following information is taken from interviews from the recognized Guatemalan leadership of most of the largest denominations or typical denominations within the country. Two of the larger denominations, the Elim Church and the Prince of Peace, were unavailable for comments. The interview summaries are generally organized by the fastest growing groups. Exceptional results in these groups imply that leadership understands their denomination's dynamics and has effectively put into practice strategies and methodologies to grow faster than others. Moderately growing groups have experienced a high degree of success in the past but now they face new challenges that have decelerated their growth. The leadership within these groups offers insight as it looks to the causes of some of the problems that plague their church and the evangelical church at large. The denominations that are growing slower than the general birth rate still offer useful perspectives from hard lessons of the past that have put them in their current predicament. A glimpse into the windows of various denominations reveals their leadership's understanding of their contribution to the overall Church. These insights will also help leaders see evolving patterns in this mosaic. These patterns shed light upon the causes for current growth and solutions to the common challenges of the evangelical church of Guatemala.

Figure 7.1

**A Summary of the Major Denominations of Guatemala
(and Other Typical Groups)**

Church	Begin Year	Person Interview	1990 Comm'ty	2001 Comm'ty ¹	NetGrowth 1990-2001	Adj. % Grow ²	Chur ches	Primary Constituenc	Type
Assembly of God AG+	1936	Orlando Pinzon	225,000	600,540	167%	102%	1,825	Rural and medium	Pentecostal
Church of God-FG	1932	Roberto Sosa	187,000	487,984	161%	98%	1,834	Rural Indian and Ladino	Pentecostal
CAM CAM<>	1899	Steve Sywulka	145,950	175,849	20%	-9%	1,400	Indian and Ladino	Traditional
Prince of Peace	1950	Not avail. for inter	170,000	179,038	5%	-20%	?	Rural Indian and Ladino	Neo-Pentecostal
Elim EL<>	1962	Mynor Giron ³	60,000	105,435	76%	33%	?	Ladinos	Neo-Pentecostal
Nazarene	1902		35,300	102,345	190%	120%		Rural	Pentecostal
Presbyterian PR-	1896	Fernando Mazariegos	65,567	65,800	0%	-23%	ca 500	varied	Traditional
Bethany BE+	1970	Efrain Avelar	21,600	60,000	178%	110%	120	Medium size Ladino towns	Neo-Pentecostal
Baptists All			49,500	75,648	53%	16%			Traditional
K'ekchiConv KB+		Samuel Cucul	13,076 ⁴	30,000	129%	74%	90	Rural K'ekchi	Traditional
LadinoConv LB<>	1946	Rosalio Ramirez	21,249 ⁵	28,398	34%	1%	45	Low Class Ladino	Traditional
EI Shaddai ES+	1983	Alberto Benitez		15,000			26	Upper middle class	Neo-Pentecostal
Familia de Dios FD<>	1990	Rigoberto Gálvez		8,000			8	Middle Class	Neo-Pentecostal
Mennonites (Capital) ME-	1976	Carlos Rodas		1,000		?	8	Low class Ladinos	Traditional

¹ Data are from the demographic study. Other data of corresponding groups come from the interviews of KB+, ES+, FD<> and ME-.

² 1990 community Figure times 1.32 gives adjusted figure to accommodate the 32% general population growth from 1990 to 2001. For a denomination to maintain even with the general population growth it must have grown by 32% in this period. Larger than zero signifies the denomination is gaining relative ground to the general population growth and less than zero signifies the opposite.

³ Giron is no longer with Elim but was part of the leadership of the church until 1998. The Central Elim did not grant an interview.

⁴ Interpolation from the unpublished report. Frank Johnson, "Baptist Growth Among the K'ekchi People of Guatemala: An Update". (Guatemala, 29 October 1997).

⁵ Community equals membership times 2.5= 34,325. Data from *1991 Southern Baptist Annual*. (Nashville: Executive Committee, SBC, 1991), 138.

The denominations with sustained rapid growth demonstrate that they understand and implement good principles of leadership, growth strategy, making disciples, church

organization and training. The Pentecostal Assembly of God is the largest denomination in Guatemala and has enjoyed a steady and rapid growth since the early 1950s. In the past eleven years it has exceeded the general population growth rate by 102%. The Assembly of God is well distributed throughout the country and historically has worked well with both the Ladino and Indian lower classes. The SEPAL team interviewed the animated and visionary Superintendent of the Assembly of God, Orlando Herrera Pinzon (AG+)¹.

The second largest denomination is the Church of God-Whole Gospel (CG+) which has steadily grown since the 1950s. In the past 10 years this church has exceeded the general population growth rate by 98%. It started in the Indian areas of El Quiché and has enjoyed tremendous success among rural Indians. Currently the denomination has a strong presence throughout the country, in cities as well as rural towns. It continues to have a large Indian base, but as the church has grown and society has transformed, it now has a large constituency of Ladinos. The superintendent of the Church of God-Whole Gospel is Roberto Aldana Sosa.

The second fastest growing denomination in Guatemala is the Neo-pentecostal Bethany Church which was started in Quetzaltenango in 1970 by Efraín Avelar (BE+). In the past eleven years, Bethany has exceeded the general population growth rate by 110%. This study shows that Bethany has approximately 60,000 people associated with their

¹ For this section, this paper abbreviates each denomination, followed by a plus sign (+) to signify a growing denomination. In this case AG is Assembly of God. A denomination abbreviation followed by a (<>) greater than and less than sign signifies growth approximately equal to the general population growth rate. A denomination abbreviation followed by a (-) minus sign reminds the reader that this is a declining denomination. Context of the quotes can be found in Appendix 7, with each interview placed in alphabetical order according to denomination. The interviews are composed of numbered questions. The number after the comma in the reference refers to a part of the response given to a numbered question. (AG+, 4) signifies Assembly of God interview in Appendix 7, text under question 4.

churches.² Although some of this growth likely is transfer growth from other denominations, Bethany is an attractive and charismatic church that is inspired and driven by Avelar. The majority of the churches are in the western part of Guatemala but they are beginning to branch out into other parts of the country. Their works are normally in cities or large towns.

Another influential Neo-pentecostal group studied as El Shaddai. El Shaddai Church (ES+) in Guatemala City has grown because of focused attention to leadership and missions. It is an upper-middle class church with missions in Indigenous and Ladino areas. Though relatively new and small, it works among diverse cultures in Guatemala. SEPAL interviewed one of the pastors of the Central Church, Oscar Alberto Benítez.

The K'ekchí Baptist Association has taken a distinctive path of work and growth apart from the Ladino Baptists. They are characterized as rural, poor, visionary and effective (KB+). They have exceeded the general population growth rate by 74% in the past eleven years. They are led by the low-keyed but able, Samuel Cucul. This is the only entirely Indian Church that was interviewed.

Churches maintaining a growth close to the general population are the Central American Mission (CAM<>), Familia de Dios (FD<>), Ladino Baptists (LB<>) from the Guatemalan Baptist Convention and possibly the Elim Church (EL<>). Since 1998 Elim have suffered a division that is not entirely reflected in the comparative eleven year time span. It has had negative growth since 1998. CAM is the second oldest denomination in

² As stated in other parts of the paper, the Bethany church figure is an approximation due to the reporting of the names of individual congregations, rather than the name of the denomination. Bethany is a common name among older congregations and in rural areas some ignorant adherents of a church only know and report the congregational name. Although this Figure is adjusted to reflect this problem, this researcher considers this number of 60,000 a guide in order to rank it within the total evangelical context.

Guatemala with a long tradition of aggressive evangelism and growth. Over the past eleven years this has slowed down considerably. CAM has enjoyed an expansive and groundbreaking work in the Indian areas of Western Guatemala. They have strong multi-cultural works in Guatemala City and expansive, multi-cultural lower-class to middle-class works in the Interior. They reach a wide spectrum of cultures in all types of communities. The Familia de Dios is a Neo-pentecostal church that has its main focus in Guatemala City. It is a middle-class church that concentrates upon cell concepts for discipleship and growth. The Ladino sector of Guatemalan Convention of Baptist Churches function parallel to the K'ekchí Baptists and are part of the same Baptist entity but are separated for purposes of this study. Baptist Ladino work is strongest in the Capital and is stable in the West of Guatemala. The Elim Church would not grant us an interview but SEPAL was pleased to interview Mynor Giron, the senior pastor of the Elohim Church, as he offered insight into the world of the once fastest growing Elim Church. Giron was a part of the Central Elim leadership until shortly after the death of the amazing Dr. Ríos Paredes in 1998, the founder of Elim.

The denominations suffering are the Presbyterians (PR-), Mennonites in the Capital (ME-), Prince of Peace and Calvary. The latter two were unavailable for interviews.

Each leader offers his unique style and experience and the Spanish to English translation of their interview attempts to preserve this style. For this researcher, it was an honor to interview these exemplary leaders. Some have a persona, confidence and spirituality that mere words on a page cannot capture. Many of these men have

leadership skills that go beyond strategies or abilities as they use a God given ethos to inspire and motivate others. Interviews in their entirety are in Appendix 7.

The Centrality of Leadership in Church Growth and Development

Purposeful and Defined Leadership Are the Keys to Motivated Churches

The distinguishing characteristic of Neo-pentecostal churches is not their theology nor their worship form, but their consistently strong, leadership. It is centered in an individual who is "anointed by God". Typically, he has a clear vision and communicates it ardently to others. Efraín Avelar (BE+) eloquently describes this kind of leadership.

In the first place, I believe that successful development of a church is undoubtedly the pastor's part. The leader is a key factor, because as is the priest, so are the people. I believe that the leader of a movement should be a visionary man, non-conformed, unsatisfied with what he has reached and always should pursue more. The function of the leader is to prepare leadership around him, because every church is as strong or as weak as its leader. If the leadership of the church is strong, the church is going to be strong. If the leadership of the church is weak, the church is going to be weak... We are talking about a monarchical system, that is, a system where the pastor can develop his vision without limitations. (BE+, 14).

Mynor Giron (EM+), a Neo-pentecostal apostle and a disciple of the founder of Elim, Dr. Ríos Paredes, understands clearly the centrality and a balanced perspective of leadership.

Leadership is fundamental. We say that everything depends on God but there is a human participation. We put a lot of importance on leadership, and we do a lot of preparation of leaders. We prepare leaders and send them out to preach immediately to our congregations, to the rural areas, or to places where something is only starting. We have an expression that helps to balance us: "Its urgent to preach the Gospel, but not so much to send just anyone." (EL<>, 14).

Growing churches have clear purposes and immediate areas of service for lay leaders. Leadership is not about positions and titles, but rather it is about preparation, action and service. Roberto Sosa of the Church of God (CG+) similarly practices these same principles that Giron espouses.

We put a lot of emphasis on leadership and we invest a lot in the preparation of leaders. We prepare leaders and send them to immediately preach in our congregations, into mission areas or places where things are just getting started, jails, hospitals, parks and streets. (CG+, 3).

When the slower growing or declining denominational leaders mentioned the area of leadership, they did not respond with the clear, crisp answers and emphasis upon leadership as did the leaders of the fast growing denominations. Lack of leadership and lack of definition are poor qualities of a leader in any culture.

Leadership Issues and Slow Growth

Fernando Mazariegos of the Presbyterian church (PR-), notes that lack of planning has direct results in leadership production. He recognizes that lack of planning and spontaneity have dire effects as it yields a shortage of leaders.

I think the church has unplanned diversity. Much of it is very spontaneous as it forms and generates leadership. We have had many holes. Imagine, we belong to a generation that has a gap of 25 years without ordaining a pastor... from within the Central Presbyter--it's chaotic. It's terrible! It's decadent! So, we have had many errors and few strategies to form leadership. It has happened spontaneously, but the few strategies I think have been a good seedbed that have given good fruit in its time. But there have been very few formal strategies and we have sinned by being spontaneous. (PR-, 18).

Conflicting notions of leadership between the leader and followers create tensions. These tensions in some cases are attributed to differing concepts of leadership

between Indian and Western (Ladino) cultures. In Indian areas in particular, the CAM church suffers from a high degree of legalism and tradition cultivated by the static nature of Indian culture. This contributes directly to the decelerated growth of the church. Steve Sylwulka notes that the church continues to plant more missions, but because of member losses, the church overall has not grown significantly in 10 years (CAM<>, 26). He astutely recognizes the importance of leadership; but the reality of culture and legalism stifle new leadership.

... there are churches that do not have that vision, and have a lot of generational conflict. [T]he elders, perhaps have run the church for a long time and see some as competition and are slow to accept new leadership. In the Mayan culture, the process of leadership within the community, the cultural process of leadership, is by stages. One passes a certain age. He occupies a certain position and later he moves up. There is great respect toward the elderly. Since fifty to a hundred years ago this has been a problem because the young people leave to study and return with new ideas and enthusiasm. The leadership has not wanted to give them a place, because they have not passed through this process to win the right of leadership. This conflict began long ago, and there is not an easy answer. (CAM<>, 17).

That is why many begin as workers and continue as workers, gaining experience and respect, until ten or fifteen years later, they become pastors because they have earned that position. There are churches that do not have the vision for the same structure. They want the people to go through that long process to become leaders, but it is not a formal process, it is a cultural process. There are other churches who have a vision for new leaders. They send their students and help them economically, but there are few of these churches.

Many of these leadership challenges arise from the contrasts between Mayan and Ladino culture. Within the Indian sector of the CAM church, local culture has standardized the leadership process where Indian culture flourishes. Neo-pentecostal leadership style is the antithesis of Indian leadership style and some "progressives" or

Ladinoized CAM members are leaving the Indian leadership style churches for Neo-pentecostal churches. Sywulka contrasts these styles:

[I]n the Latin church, there is more of the role of the chief, a strong pastor that wants to dominate everything, although that is not always the case. On the other hand, there are also [church] elders who do not want the pastor to have any power. In the Mayan churches, there is more the concept of collective leadership, which is gained by age and experience. The two cultures are very different in this sense. (CAM<>, 18).

Dynamic Spiritual Leadership Inspires Others to Experience God's Power and to Accomplish the Impossible

The fastest growing churches have strong, sacrificial role models and extraordinary interventions of God at key times in the life of the church. The fastest growing denominations celebrate and remember God's intervention in the life of the church. To be sure, the groups such as the Assembly and Church of God are well organized with a strong, solid structure in place to keep the operations of the church advancing. Important as it is, they do not value this as a centerpiece for growth. Always under the surface of plans is the memory of recent divine intervention and manifestations of God. As a contrast, the Ladino Baptists (LB<>) and Mennonites (ME-) speak of programs or doctrine and theology class. The Presbyterian (PR-) leadership speaks of divine intervention as two sides of an ugly schism dialogued through their differences. They are not as mystic as the growing denominations. This is not to say that all of the mystical groups such as the Pentecostals and Neo-pentecostals do not believe in organization and the traditional churches do not believe in the work of the Holy Spirit. Each group displays and lives what their teachings emphasize.

The growing Pentecostal churches have supernatural defining moments in their history. Leadership publicly acknowledges and makes known the works of God. They remember and use these to inspire their members to achieve more in the present. This is similar to the Jewish remembrances of the miracles of God that delivered them from Egypt. In the early phases of the Elim church, God performed many signs and wonders. Ríos Paredes was an unusually effective leader who displayed confidence, dependence and expectation for direct intervention by God. This ethos was contagious to others and became the norm for Elim leadership. The church had unusual beginnings that marked the leadership for life. Giron relates an incredible event that propelled the Elim church (EL<>) into exponential growth and national recognition.

A spiritual retreat comes to my mind where the Holy Spirit baptized 638 people. It was a tremendous thing in glory. I remember that on that occasion the firemen came because the neighbors called to put out a blaze that had reached the roof of the tent. The non-Christians of that place saw that the flames had reached all of the church. As a result of that, they called the nearest fire department who asked the people, "Where's the fire?" And there was no fire. The neighbors saw that there was a fire, but it was something spiritual. There was no fire there. After explaining to them that something spiritual was happening, and they saw the multitudes praising the Lord, all of them gave themselves to Jesus Christ.

But there were many miracles, healings; many supernatural things. It was impossible for someone to be there and not realize that there was clear evidence that God was moving in that place. (EL<>, 2)

...In that way the word went out to other churches, to other pastors that were looking for what they should adhere to, and the result was Elim, Elim, Elim. And that is how it was growing. We never worried about having good organization. Everything was of the Lord, and the Lord. Very mystical... Its growth was something abnormal. In a period of approximately fifteen years of being a small, local church, it came to have close to a thousand six hundred national and international churches. (EL<>, 2-3).

Sacrifice has made El Shaddai (ES+) the church it is today and the ethos is passed on to others. Early in the formation of the Central Church, Benítez relates this story:

It was when we bought [a place] on Sixth Avenue in zone 9. We bought it for a million quetzals.³ We owed a million quetzals, after having sold all of our cars and everything. We could only pay interest and not the principle. Then, we decided to sell [the property]. They allowed us to stay for two years. We sold it for two million quetzals. We paid off the banks. We gained a million quetzals, and they gave us two years of free rent. Then, our faith grew. Our finances grew, and we bought [another place]. We entered here by a vision, a dream. The church originated with a word of faith, believe the word of faith, believe the Bible, then healings, miracles, and spiritual gifts [will come.].... In 1994, the Lord visited us. There was a pouring out of the Holy Spirit in the church. The people left the church literally drunk, and the congregation of 2,500 members grew in a year to 7,000, in '98 or '99. The apostolic movement, which is the opening of churches, began. We began to open churches in Boston; Toronto; Washington, D.C.; Mexico; Venezuela; Peru and Chile. (ES+, 19).

There is no wonder why recently when the church sent out "an average leader" to Villa Nueva, the church grew to 1,200 members within two years.

Similar stories come from the Church of God which emphasizes speaking in tongues and external manifestations of the Spirit. Sosa alludes to this as he relates the supernatural visitation that propelled the church forward. "On the thirteenth of April, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit came, for the first time in Totonicapan, with the same evidences from Acts chapter two. The church member, Eleodora Son Turnil, still lives there. She spoke in tongues that night... [and for three days] she did not speak Quiché or Spanish." (AG+, 3). Similarly, the Familia de Dios Church (FD<>, 3) remembers the supernatural ways that the early ministry grew and how many people were moved by God

³ At the time of this event Q1,000,000 (the Guatemalan currency, the Quetzal) was equal to approximately \$350,000.

to give, money, a radio and TV station, funds for a Bible Institute and property. Healings and miracles also occurred. He summarizes,

The Lord has done great things that we have not even thought of. What I have been able to see in these ten years is that everything has come as an added thing. It is true that there is responsibility in the work, but we cannot [take credit for it]. It has been the grace of God. We have seen how God has given, without us having asked. We have watched ourselves and tried to work responsibly. (FD<>, 14).

Experiential religion can have its negatives and can lead to abuses. Pinzon (AG+) confronts one aspect of this as he cites excesses that must be corrected.

Many of our people are carnal because they go after emotions rather than the Word of God. ... But today we see that people spend two hours in church jumping, dancing, singing, and breaking their ear drums. Also, they finish the service tired and sweaty. But the question is: where are the people at the altar crying for repentance? What did all this lead to? It is nothing more than emotion. ... where it is the solidity of the Word? ... This really is troubling in Guatemala because many churches are putting aside the Word of God and substituting ideas of singing in its place. There is no time left to preach the Word. If one looks at the New Testament, the Word is what took first place. It was the *kerygma* that Paul wanted to preach. What Peter wanted to accomplish was the reconciliation of man with God. (AG+, 25).

An unbalanced emphasis on the experiential leads to a false sense of spirituality where a person judges himself and other Christians by his external emotional state. This leads to spiritual pride and blindness as to God's work in others. Sadly, non-pentecostal groups have been sneered at by supposedly more spiritual individuals. Mazariegos (PR-) relates this, "Because normally as Presbyterians, we talk a lot and then they attack us and say that we don't have the Holy Spirit, that we are cold churches, that we are dead churches, [and] that we go against the current." (PR-, 27).

A mature leader recognizes the potential for abuses and tries to maintain balance in his leadership. A strong, central leader motivates people to accomplish impossible tasks. Centralized power has the advantage that one person can make immediate decisions to quickly produce results with able leaders. On the other hand, centralized power tempts leaders to step over moral guidelines as they justify their actions. A strong leader can unwittingly move from being a motivator and exhorter to a manipulator.

Avelar (BE+) recognizes the risks as he states,

We are talking about a monarchical system. That is, a system where the pastor can develop his vision without limitations. ...I have seen that the pastoral system undoubtedly functions for the development of the church, because the leader has the opportunity to develop his vision without great limitations. Of course, there are risks. There is the risk that the leader will become a dictator... (AG+, 3).

Pinzon (AG+) identifies the abuse of strong, central power in more detail:

I believe it is more because there is a charismatic leader who has the gift of manipulating the masses. The people hear this person and they do not question him. They accept it. Why? Because they are often manipulated by what they call the "Rhema" of God, a personal revelation, and this is new. (AG+, 26).

Growing Denominations Look for Emerging Leaders

Growing denominations know how to identify, motivate and put leaders to work.

The rural Baptist K'ekchí state simply that, "You have to see how the church members carry out their responsibilities." (KB+, 15). Contrasting from the primitive rural K'ekchís, the sophisticated upper class city church recognizes the same principle but states it as,

"What gives them their title of being ministers is their fruit, their qualities, their testimony, their work, and their character. Then, we begin to observe them. We call them to be ordained ministers and they are very good, or we send them to open churches with outside missionaries." (ES+, 13) Similarly, Rigoberto Alvarado of the Familia de Dios Church explains that they also identify their leaders and put them into service.

"Leadership springs up from those that get involved in the different areas or departments of service within the same congregation... One can see who is maturing and who has the vocation of being a leader and is moving up the ladder to be a pastor, evangelist, or some other minister." (FD<>, 9).

Growing Denominations Cultivate Effective Leaders by Involving them in Meaningful Ministry

Leaders are not just found, but they are trained, encouraged and put into practical work by all of the growing denominations. They are very deliberate in this as demonstrated by the El Shaddai and Bethany churches. Avelar (BE+, 14) talks of the importance of developing leadership and delegating responsibility to the younger leaders.

Benítez expands this thought in his context:

Number one is service; giving people opportunities. It is very important. We, as pastors, have to give opportunities for the people to work. What we do is cell groups, family groups, or house groups. There, one begins as an assistant or only as a member. Later a help; and later an assistant to the leader. [Later those with proven character] have to go through the training center... That has happened through the years. It is not months. It is a lot of patience. To have a good, solid leader requires many years. (ES+, 14).

The Best Leaders Are Mentors

Great leadership produces desired results. A book or a leadership course cannot make a leader. Learning to be an effective leader comes best from the long process of working with a good role model. The growing denominations demonstrate that leadership is comprised of vision, sacrifice and a constant example. The Assembly of God Church had key leaders fifty years ago who are still remembered as wonderful examples. Pinzon relates that early workers walked up to three days in order to participate in a new mission. Dedication marked early leaders and set a high norm for those who followed. Pinzon says,

The first thing that the first workers set down was a doctrinal base and the reason for the work. I believe what has contributed most to the organization has been the spirit with which the Assembly of God has grown. I have been working in the Assembly of God for twenty-six years since I was 18 years old. I remember when I entered the Bible school, they nurtured us to be obedient and to give our heart to the work of the Lord. The pastorate grows with the mentality of being a worker, not a "Reverend." The worker obeys. He does not expect from others, but he gives. If we had a spirit of "Reverend," we would not have the organization we have, because a lot of sacrifice is required. (AG+, 2).

Strong sacrificial leadership leaves its imprints upon those who follow and later are in front of the helm. Roberto Sosa relates the many examples of leaders that he looks to. One of them, Miguel Tzoy Cortez, was one of the first Assembly of God pastors in Totonacapan.

He is ninety-four years old, but he is the most important example of leadership that I have seen in my life. That man raises an arm and does not stop raising it. [As we prepare for a region conference] three or four church members have asked him, "What do you want, Brother? What should we do?" He feeds 8,000 people. In less than two hours, they have a perfect organization. (CG+, 3).

How do you teach someone to love God, expect great miracles or to thirst after the Word of God? Seminaries, books and courses have a place, but dynamic leaders have been mentored by other great men of God. The following example demonstrates why Mynor Giron is a great leader who loves the Word.

Giron: Doctor Othoniel Ríos was a minister who loved the Word of God like few men of God that I have known. His love, interest, and study of the Word gave him much revelation of it. (EL<>, 2).

5. SEPAL: You said that Dr. Paredes was a teacher who knew how to teach The Word like no one else. What was his teaching like and what effects did they have on you?

Giron: He always studied the Bible. The curious thing is that after a specific study, we experienced it in practice. That is to say, that in some way the Spirit made us experience the truths that we studied. That made it so that the doctrine that we studied was internalized. Personally, I learned the movement of the Spirit before discovering it in the Bible. I saw the gifts working and, later, the description of them in the Word; so it was easy to learn it... [H]e was zealous with his studies... He was a true lover of the Word of God, and he taught me to love the Word, and I bless him for that. (EL<>, 5).

Not only actions of the leader are important, but his attitudes are as well. The K'ekchí Baptists (KB+) years ago had godly role models who left a permanent impression, even long after their departure from Guatemala. A high level of dedication and call continues within the current K'ekchí Baptists. The riches these rural pastors lack in salary are far outweighed by the riches they have in dedication. Santiago Basagui states,

[Even] if one does not have a complete salary, he is always working. He never thinks, "I am not a pastor, because I am only part-time." He is working. Here among the K'ekchí, we do not talk about part-time or

full-time. We give them some Q400 or Q500 monthly.⁴ They are satisfied to receive it. They are working hard, visiting the church members day and night, caring for the missions, the same as those that are full-time. There is almost no difference. The K'ekchís work enthusiastically, not for their salary. The only thing asked of him is why he is thinking, "Am I going to earn more?" There are pastors that are like this, but the K'ekchí Baptists do not think this. If they are called by God, they are called by God. (KB+, 7-8).

Leaders of Growing Denominations Are Well Defined, Wholly Committed and Accountable to their Calling

The growing denominations have definite expectations for their leaders. In Guatemala, these denominations have an ever increasing number of full time pastors (particularly in the Ladino sector). Their responsibilities to their church and missions as well as their obligations demand a full-time commitment to their denomination to prepare themselves. 66% of the Church of God (CG+) pastors are full time and the percentage is increasing. (CG+, 8). Sosa clearly and unhesitatingly stated the explicit relationship of a church to a pastor. His response to the interviewers indicates that he understands and advances this relationship.

It has to be a church that at least worthily supports a pastor, in the first place. In the second place, it has to be a congregation that can gather a work team. In the third place, it has to be a church with a work plan, with some projection, with some well-defined goals. And it has to be a church that has adequate land to build their own installations. (AG+, 2).

Other strong denominations also have a high level of full time pastors. The Assembly of God is most impressive. 100% of their pastors are full time. Pinzon states that, "they are either a pastor or they are not." (AG+, 8). Likewise, El Shaddai expects a high percentage of pastors to be full time. (ES+, 6). CAM has clear norms and training

⁴ Equal to US\$50-\$60.

requirements to qualify as a pastor and these are well known in their denomination. Half of their pastors are full time. (CAM<>, 14,15). More than half of Elim pastors are full time. All of these groups have educational requirements or preparation in the context of the denomination. Lack of preparation and lack of definition has had disastrous effects as cited by, Oscar Benítez of El Shaddai.

One of the primary errors is naming leaders that have not been consistent. There was a lot of change in leadership. Pastors were pastors, then, the next day, they were nothing. Leaders were leaders and now they are nothing. Those errors we have corrected; being more careful in putting the correct person so that he be committed for a lifetime. (ES+, 33). These corrections have been in the form of defined expectations and training requirements for all pastors. (ES+, 13).

As a contrast to these clearly defined expectations and responsibilities of pastors of the growing denominations, the slower growing or decaying denominations reflect a level of passiveness with regard to requirements for their pastors. In the interview with the Ladino Baptists (LB<>, 11, 13-14), one was left with the impression that there have not been defined expectations in place for years. The Ladino Baptist seminary has struggled for years and is not well attended.

15. SEPAL: What does your denomination do to raise leadership?

Ramírez: This question is very much related to theological education, right?

16. SEPAL: In regards to Hispanic work, how many pastors are there that work full-time?

Ramírez: It is minimal. Between ten and fifteen percent of the pastors are full-time. (LB<>)

The passive attitude toward qualifying pastors among the Ladino Baptists is seen also among the Mennonites. (ME-, 10, 11).

10. SEPAL: What percentage of pastors in the Mennonite church are working full-time?

Rodas: We could think, Brother, as I told you, about 20%.

11. SEPAL: Do the pastors receive a certain requirement to be pastor?

Rodas: One of the requirements that is asked of a pastor is that he know, believe, and confess doctrine. That doctrine is Jesus. The name Mennonite is a secondary name that we have. Our doctrine is Anabaptist. That is identified with the terms to rebaptize or double baptize, and that arose from the sixteenth century. The pastors or candidate pastors believe in that, and also have studied at the Bible Institute level.

There is a subtle attitude among the plateaued and decaying denominations in regard to theological education. They assume doctrine and cognitive concepts taught through a theological institution will make a man into a leader. Further, some of the plateaued denominations have also suffered from models in the past that build an ecclesiastical structure that presumably increase church growth, rather than producing a structure that responds and anticipates church growth. In some denominations, such as CAM, Ladino Baptists and to a lesser degree, the Presbyterians, missionaries propelled the growth of the initial work but later, for various factors, retarded the work. Rosalío Ramírez identifies some of the dynamics that have put Ladino Baptists in their current predicament.

In the first stage of the work, when we could depend on the help of many foreign missionaries. I believe that the influence was very strong in the sense that a school [of thought] was brought. Certain models were

brought, and we were certainly influenced by those examples. ... The model was not perfect in everything. ... I consider that one of the things not taken care of, because they thought they were our mentors, was leadership. I would say that the missionary tried to be the center of the work. And naturally, that is part of the negative aspect. (LB<>, 22).

Summary of Leadership in the Growing Denominations

The growing denominations recognize that leaders are best made through examples, leadership schools and actively training, and selecting the most capable candidates. They actively seek out potential leaders; give them role models who do great things and then, expect great things from them. When a denomination is relatively small and new, the example and energy of the first founders of the work set the tone for subsequent leadership. Leadership has historically been something more caught than taught. Most traditional denominations falsely equate theological training with making a leader. If the denomination is fortunate, it has at least a succession of leaders who follow a good example, although they may not understand the leadership process. As times change and an organization grows, the ethos of the founder slowly diffuses as emerging leaders no longer have an extended relationship with the founder. In order to assure a continual supply of good leaders, an organization must take steps to develop emerging leaders. To varying degrees, all of the growing denominations understand these dynamics and they have high expectations and opportunities for new leaders. Figure 7.2 summarizes factors of government style, mentoring and accountability that are described in this chapter.

Figure 7.2

Characteristics of Leadership in Major Denominations

Denomination	Code	% Full Time Pastors	Government Style	Level of Accountability of Pastors to Denomin.	Strong Mentors
Assembly of God	AG+	100%	Centralized denom. Authoritative pastor	High	Yes
Church of God-FG	CG+	75%	Centralized denom. Authoritative pastor	moderate	Yes
CAM	CAM<>	50%	Organized denom. Pastor and Elder rule	moderate	Yes
Prince of Peace		?	Centralized denom. Authoritative pastor		
Elim	EL<>	?	Authoritative pastor		
Nazarene	NA+				
Presbyterian	PR-	10%	Synods vary. Centralized denom. Elder rule		
Bethany	BE+	?	Centralized in Apostle	moderate	
Baptist					
K'ekchi	KB+	?	Denomin. strong Pastor and congregational rule	moderate	yes
Ladino	LB<>	10%	Diffused denom. Congregational rule	Low	no
El Shaddai	ES+	100%	Centralized in Apostle	High	Yes
Familia de Dios	FD<>	100%	Centralized in Pastor	High	
Mennonites (Capital)	ME-	20%	Diffuse	Low	No

The Relationship of Training and Accountability to Effective Leadership in Growing Denominations

When asked what various denominations do to train their leadership, most respondents recognize the profound importance of training pastors and leaders. The fastest growing denominations emphasize formal leadership training on pastoral, lay, youth and women's levels. They have high expectations and insist on personal preparation and development. For example, the Church of God in the Western part of Guatemala requires that all pastors graduate from their seminary. They also insist that within at least one year that Sunday School teachers receive training in their seminary in Quetzaltenango. Orlando Pinzon puts the role of training in perspective, "When people

have better leadership abilities, the presbyters send them to the Bible Institute. The Institute does not make leaders, it only refines them." (AG+, 2). Growing denominations are determined in assuring leadership training. For example, Pinzon relates the seriousness of their training as they heavily invest in their programs. "We're training our presbyters constantly and we invest a lot of money in the preparation of our leaders." (AG+, 14).

Accountability is a part of the culture in growing denominations. These groups directly deal with sin and slothfulness among leaders. One example is that the Assembly of God insist that pastors file a monthly report on goals and statistics to the district offices. They must also file a yearly report. If they do not file reports within a certain time period, the pastor's ordination is revoked. Efraín Avelar gives the reason for developing leadership and how they formally prepare their leaders.

The lay leaders are those that are trained in the church and the pastor transmits to them his vision. They go on the streets, open cell groups, and the people are won to Christ. (BE+, 15).

Most denominations work to raise the general level of theological preparation of their pastors. They have formal, well-known programs and institutions to this end, but one of their challenges in that of illiteracy. The Church of God leadership wants to increase the general level of secular and theological education of their pastors.

The majority of our pastors have some diploma, nothing more. We have different programs, like event studies, which are for the leaders of the churches. Then, there are biblical studies, basic studies, and theological studies for the workers. That is where the majority are. At least, now we can say, although it be at a diploma level, our pastors are prepared. Ten or fifteen years ago, we had pastors that barely could read, and they did not have basic knowledge of hermeneutics, counseling, nothing. We had to

make a formal agreement, I remember it was very much discussed, that we are no longer going to have pastors that, at least, do not have the minimal education of a diploma in Bible studies... Our goal is that all of our pastors complete their secular education, or at least, have a two-year High School diploma. ... Later, that all of our pastors be at least graduates in Bible or graduates in Theology. (CG+, 11).

The Assembly of God not only has requirements for their pastor's education but the denomination assures that pastors can fulfill these requirements.

It is a requirement that we have in order to take charge of the work. If he is a laymen, he must enroll in a Bible Institute within one year. If he lives in a remote area and cannot attend the Bible Institute for financial reasons, we have created what we call the "Decentralized Institutes". We have twenty-eight institutes that function on Saturdays and they are located in areas close to those who cannot get to the Centralized Institute. We have a department which we call "The Department of Christian Education" where we have a full-time person looking after everything: education, quality of studies, curriculum, and everything that has to do with the education in preparation at the seminary. (AG+, 10).

The K'ekchí Baptists (KB+) have expectations for their pastors. Four times a year they have a week of training in each region and at the end of each month pastors come together for training. The growing denominations all have high expectations or requirements. These denominations have well defined and geographically accessible pastoral training provided for their leaders.

There is a subtle difference in the attitudes between the fastest growing groups and the others. For example, Mazariegos admits that they have struggled in the past in their training and orientation. The interview, revealed that pastoral education has concentrated in the area of doctrine and knowledge. The Presbyterian church has made a concerted effort to educate their pastors in the past few years in order to reclaim their identity and uniqueness as Presbyterians.

So the Congresses, seminaries and activities that we have had, have reminded us of, "What does it mean to be a Presbyterian?" We have reached a good level of teaching the fundamental principles of our identity, our culture and history. Not everything and not with absolutely all of the pastors, but many of the pastors with a little secular education have reached a certain level of knowledge and comprehension of what it means to be a Presbyterian. We talked to the teachers of our High Schools, talked on the level of our presbyters, on the level of our women's groups; youth groups have worked with the questions of: "What does it mean to be a Presbyterian? What are the Calvinistic points? What are our Presbyterian roots? Where do we come from?" Raising these questions have helped us to recuperate some sound basic doctrine. (PR-, 16).

The focus of educating the church in doctrine has undoubtedly contributed to the Presbyterians understanding basic Christian doctrine. It has also bolstered them in the area of Christian ethics and lifestyle. The findings of this research bear witness to this effect. Pure doctrinal or theological training does not in itself create leaders that can grow a church numerically, however.

Ladino Baptists (LB<>) in practice take a passive approach to theological education, as they assume that such education does create effective leaders. Ramirez states, "Local pastors and the leaders have the responsibility to take advantage of preparing themselves [in theological studies] or else the situation stays the same. There, I believe that a wise leader takes advantage of that impulse that those projects give." (LB<>, 5). Offering opportunities is not the same as expecting or insisting that pastors prepare themselves. Lack of accountability is couched in a culture of only offering opportunities to others and the results are obvious.

The percentage [of pastors with formal Bible training] would be very low. We have a group of some thirty pastors right now that are receiving some training and that have finished a course from seminary. The rest do their work biblically. Apart from that, they have a couple of special courses (LB<>, 8)

The slow growth rate of the Mennonites is not a mystery as they do not preoccupy themselves with growth. "[The Mennonite church] has grown slowly. The Mennonite Church is inclined to do community service and service to others. The service to other people concerns us more than having congregational growth." (ME-, 4)

A Summary of Growing Denominations and Training

- ◆ They understand that training polishes leaders. It does not make them.
- ◆ They are determined to invest in leaders.
- ◆ They have accessible, wide spread and continual training.
- ◆ They insist upon continual training and accountability.
- ◆ They balance between training for knowledge and training for skills.

Strategy and Methods of the Largest Churches

Strategies and methodologies are tools that, in able hands, help to accomplish specific goals. Just as good tools in the hand of a master craftsman are used to produce a work of art, those same tools in the hands of a novice produce an extraordinary amount of sawdust. Good strategies and methodologies in the hands of a visionary, adept leader produce mature fruitful Christians. They grow healthy churches; expand the leadership base; and establish new missions. The same methods in the hands of a poor leader, produce less than desired results.

A Christ-Like Spirit Is the Foundation to Growth

Oscar Benítez recognizes that tools are not an end in themselves but that Christian character lies behind a solid ministry as he states, "Methods. It is easy to invent them. For example, here we applied all the methods to evangelize. But [there is more]: it is the preaching of the Word, good preaching of the Word, ... faithfulness, integrity, pastoring the people, discipling, visiting people, and ministering to them." (ES+, 22).

Methodologies driven by a faithful spirit and a clear vision yield fruit. The Assembly of God Church demonstrates effective methodologies linked to a strong spirit of service. When asked what factor contributed most to church growth, Pinzon's broad answer demonstrates an inseparable union between methods and the spirit of the worker. This spirit is evident in a humble, determined person who pays a steep price to see the lost come to Christ.

I believe that there are three [factors]: 1) We believe in the power of the Holy Spirit, a primary part of the work of evangelism.

2). Also, the philosophy of our Bible institutes. For example, when I began the work in 1975, I went to study at the institute. I finished the first year and they took me to a town where there was no church. There was nothing. They simply took me and told me, "This is your town," without sustenance or anything. It was by faith, and they had prepared me in the institute to do it. There was a church in Huehuetenango, where the pastor promised to give me only my food. I was eighteen years old. I walked eight kilometers. I preached, evangelized, and worked there fourteen years.

God allowed me to open the work, put up a church building, and leave behind some 300 believers. Various churches were planted by that mother church. That is the spirit in which our institutes are driven, to go and open works. None of our great pastors today with large congregations started their ministry in an established church, instead, they started by opening a work. When any of our leaders are presented before a new group of pastors, he will talk about his experience as a worker that started from the

bottom. He is not going to be like the REVEREND that they put in there because he is a theologian or because he is a teacher but because he started from the bottom.

3). I believe that [another factor] has been our doctrine. It is a healthy, balanced, and biblical doctrine. I believe that we are in the Word (AG+, 5).

Different Ways of Arriving at Effective Strategies

The denominational leaders that were interviewed lean toward a particular mode of thought and work. Some synthesize new models as they learn from the Bible from their context and the lessons of other groups. Still others follow a vision from models that were handed down from missionaries or charismatic leaders of the past. Some follow a central leader and his vision as they advance toward their goals. Regardless of how effective denominations derive their methodologies, leadership starts with visions and plans, and then they lead as they implement their methods and they grow. Others have no clear direction and apply inconsistent methodology and they do not grow.

Synthesizing New Models from Methodologies in Other Contexts

Efraín Avelar (BE+) explains many reasons for the growth of the Bethany Church. No one reason is the silver bullet for church growth. He demonstrates an amazing ability to learn from others and adapts according to his situation. Bethany's growth is related to church government, worship form, and constant discipleship through cell groups. In the following paragraphs Avelar touches on deliberate qualities they sought to have in their church. They sought to make it "attractive" by concentrating on the worship style, preaching style and deliberately took steps to eliminate the perception of legalism that raises barriers to those outside of the church. These foci attracted people into the church

but they also assured that the church was in the community making a difference through their cell groups, aggressive evangelism and heavy use of communications medium.

Avelar's strong leadership through a monarchical government assures the completion of strategies. He states the basic reasons for their growth:

I was reading a book by Peter Wagner, called *Terremoto en la Iglesia* (or *Earthquake in the Church*). Wagner calls this the *New Apostolic Reform*. He says that the churches that have taken the system of pastoral government have more opportunities to develop and to grow than the churches that are in traditional systems of government. In the 1980's, we made some changes: we left legalism behind, and we entered the new system of praise and worship, that many churches in Guatemala now have. Some call it the renewal of praise or the restoration of praise, that has greater expression in praise. That also made our congregation attractive. We became what began to be known as neo-Pentecostals in the 1980's.

We adopted the discipleship system, and we began to have 40 groups of discipleship. We involved some 400 people in the church. Discipleship is a system where the cells serve in discipling, not evangelizing.

At the beginning of the 1990's, we had around 1500 members in the church with only one Sunday service. We decided to make the change to family groups, because we heard what was happening in Korea: the churches were growing. We implanted the system of family groups in 1991. We did not have growth the first few years, but after some time, we were able to develop. By 1997, we had approximately 400 family groups in the church (BE+, 4)... we had 4,000 people, more or less, involved in family groups.

We changed to the system of homogeneous groups in 1998. It is also called the *Principio de los Doce*, or *the Beginning of the Twelve*. Now, we have 620 active groups in the church..., we will have, around 6,000 people involved in homogeneous groups. Obviously, our church has grown. We began four years ago to celebrate our annual events in the stadium, here in Quetzaltenango, like other churches from the Capital have done. We have done it here in Mario Camposeco, and we are going to do it again in the stadium. It is a celebration for the work of our cell groups and the growth that our church has had (BE+, 5).

From the preceding section, Avelar demonstrates his ability to copy other systems and to evaluate. He demonstrates the rare quality of a great leader who synthesizes something new from past experience and present circumstances.

We were working with family groups in the Cho system, but we changed to homogeneous groups. Although we had family groups in the church, we already had some homogeneous groups. In the family groups, the idea is that the family meets, but we observed that, apart from family groups, we had youth groups and women's groups. We began to see that these groups grew more than the family groups. That is, these were the homogeneous groups, and they developed more than the heterogeneous groups (BE+, 6).

El Shaddai Church effectively reaches the upper classes. They have demonstrated vision, faith and creativity in their work. They are masterful in the media as they demonstrated in the *Jesus es Señor* campaign which they sponsored in the early 1990s. They emphasize the basics of sound and competent preaching of the Word, discipling, evangelism and working in depth through family groups, "because it pushes one to have a consistency in discipleship and practice of what the student or disciple learns. There, they must visit and pastor. There, it is seen if they are holy, applicable, responsible, disciplined, and people of faith." (ES+, 23). El Shaddai leadership evaluates and adapts other systems.

We began to learn about spiritual warfare. The Lord confirmed [this] with other international ministers like Peter Wagner and Dr. Cho. We began to learn other things, and we began to see what spiritual warfare is. We have to fight against Satan and his demons. *Jesus is Lord of Guatemala* began to advance, when we began to do spiritual warfare. We moved here with one thousand people. That was in 1990. In 1992, we had two thousand people. In 1993, we had three thousand people... (ES+, 22).

The leadership of Familia de Dios Church grasps the complexity of growth strategies and methods. The first attraction to this church is the excellent, positive, Biblical preaching of pastor Luis Fernando Solares. But methods do not stop with just the famous orator.

The church has grown because of various factors, not only one. First, there was a revival or a [spiritual] explosion in Guatemala in general. In the second place, there was an influence of mass media. I already mentioned the television program. There has been a radio station since the beginning that has preached the Gospel [and] has been another factor. Third, the form of preaching also influences. Despite the fact that we are a Neopentecostal church, we have put a lot of emphasis on the Bible. I am Neopentecostal, but I have theological formation and Pastor Solares also has Biblical, theological formation. We have a seminary, and we have a theological library which the majority of Neopentecostal churches do not have. So, that is another factor. Also, we have houses with Bible studies or family groups. Also, ministries have been diversified. We have counseling twenty-four hours a day by telephone--twelve hours by person. Last we have a visitation and an evangelistic department. All of that has contributed (FD<>, 13).

Following a Vision Established by Good Models from the Past

Since the mid 1960s there has been an unusual movement among the K'ekchís with the Baptists, Presbyterians, Mennonites, and Nazarenes. There are 30,000 K'ekchí Baptists (KB+, 5). The Central Presbyterian Synod is 45% K'ekchí (PR-, 3). There are 6,000 Mennonites (ME-, brief), and nearly 13,076⁵ Nazarene K'ekchís. The K'ekchí Baptists have experienced a continual growth since the late 1970s. Samuel Cucul understands that this growth comes from God's grace, hard work and doing things that work. It seems that a good system was started years ago by missionaries and this system and ethic has since continued. The concrete thought style of the K'ekchí concerns itself with finding what works and put it to practice. Theory is not a priority.

⁵ Interpolation from the unpublished report. Frank Johnson, "Baptist Growth Among the K'ekchí People of Guatemala: An Update", (Guatemala, 29 October 1997).

SEPAL: What are some other things that have specifically helped the growth to be faster, as you see it?

Cucul: We almost do not use methodologies. The [national] missionaries just find a white harvest, as we say. Then, the church helps the missionaries that just began the harvest. The church begins to work with them, to visit them, and to help them. If they need to build a temple [simple church building], the Christians in the church help them.

We do not lose many members, either. When a member falls, the pastor and the deacons go to his house and pray for him. They teach him what the Bible says in regard to his sin. They promise him that they are going to pray for him until he sees his errors. Usually, the member comes back to the Lord. If he continues sinning, they put him under discipline and the church prays and prays for him, because we know that God never forgets his children. Other denominations put their members under discipline and they do not repent. They are cut off from the congregation and ignored by the members (KB+, 4).

One reason that the K'ekchí Baptist Association is growing is because it is working with fifteen K'ekchí missionaries. The K'ekchí missionaries are going to the villages where there are no Christians. They go to visit, to evangelize, and to have services in schools or on farms. That is how all the missionaries are. The Christians in our churches are working with the people that accept Christ. That is why the K'ekchí Baptist Association is growing, as well as the churches. The churches open missions. [Before being able to be a member of the K'ekchí Baptist Association, the church must have at least one mission.] (KB+, 2).

Sywulka reports a similar mindset in different Mayan language groups with the successful CAM work. Able mentors established good patterns and the new disciples carried the work from there. CAM psyche that lives to evangelize and establish churches is evident in their own words:

The pioneer missionaries brought the vision and were always forming disciples on a personal level. If they found a young man with a certain capacity, they took him with them on their trips. That is how they were taught, by pure practice, and that is how national leadership was raised, with a lot of vision to go preach and to establish churches (CAM<>, 9).

Since the beginning, these same nationals very quickly started to work as workers, pastors, and evangelists. Therefore, the greatest part of our churches has not been from foreign missionaries, but the majority are from national origin (CAM<>, 8).

Following the Defined, Central Leader

During the 1980s and early 1990s the Elim Church, under the powerful leadership of Dr. Othoniel Ríos Paredes, was the fastest growing church that began to dominate the evangelical landscape. After his death in 1998, the church split into several factions. Interviews with pastors and demographic data of this study indicate that many of these churches once experienced much higher attendance than they do today.⁶ Elim was governed by a strong, central leader who apparently did not leave behind sufficient structure and leadership to carry on the work. Church growth was linked to the vision, energies and leadership of one individual. Divorced from its founder, the signs, wonders and direction of the movement have stalled. Giron indirectly sheds light upon this:

The Mission Elim grew without a theological or scientific methodology applied. In its growth there was a very poor organization that, personally, did not contribute to the growth. The minimal instruction that he gave the deacons and deaconesses was: treat people well, show love, but it was impossible to take care of those multitudes.

We were unable to obtain an interview with the leadership of the Prince of Peace Church. They are similar to Elim in that they are Neo-pentecostal whose drive came from a central leader, rather than an organizational leadership. Prince of Peace is declining in membership partly due to the inability for one person to fill the position and function of the deceased founder, José María Muñoz.

⁶ The survey of 55 Elim or Miel (a faction of Elim) indicates that 20% report membership larger than actual church attendance. This is unusual reporting as most denominations regularly report attendance larger than membership. Coupled with the recent division in Elim after the death of Ríos Paredes, as well as the resulting decrease in adherents corroborates with our observations made in the pastoral survey.

Patterns of Slow Growth

The Ladino Baptist, Presbyterians and the Mennonites have had slow or declining numerical growth in the 1990s. A reading of the entire interview will give the reader a better contextual clue for some causes. Excerpts of the interview indicate passiveness toward leadership responsibilities as compared to the high expectations that the faster growing denominations have of their pastors.

SEPAL: In Baptist history in Guatemala, what are the times of greatest growth? Second question: During those times, why do you think they had such growth?

Ramírez: In the Spanish area, the growth is very influenced by events. It is very noticeable when we see our statistics that, when we have had an evangelistic event, such as national crusades, the growth curve rises. There is a normal growth, but that really is very low. I divided the Spanish area from the K'ekchí area in this answer, because I believe that the K'ekchí segment maintains a more accelerated growth. In some way, they were taught to do mission work by themselves. There is a constant moving toward those objectives of mission advancement (LB<>, 3).

Large events can produce fruit, but the challenge is to preserve the fruit and make more leaders. This challenge requires much effort. As strange as it may seem, church history demonstrates that solely sound doctrine will not produce church growth. There are many more factors that have been discussed. If these are not present, the church will not grow as demonstrated in the Mennonite Church in Guatemala City.

SEPAL: You mentioned congregational growth. What do you believe have been the reasons that have helped to accelerate growth in some way?

Carlos: One of the basic reasons, I believe, is the type of gospel that is preached. The Gospels of peace, justice, and love are preached. We focus on Jesus' idea of helping and loving our neighbor as we love ourselves. Then, logically, we think that, through the identification of love and unity, the church will grow. It has been a slow growth up until now (ME-, 5).

Functionally, in Guatemala when social ministries are heavily emphasized, aggressive evangelism and church growth decline. The most evangelistic and fastest growing denominations carry out social ministries through strong churches and individual Christians. When the church operates on the premise that changing society begins by changing hearts rather than changing hearts by changing society, the church grows and people are transformed. Both social ministry and evangelism are part of the Gospel and the priority given to these two linked facets of the Gospel determine future growth and health of a denomination.

Internal Church Organization Affects Church Growth

Government

All leaders of the growing denominations recognize that church growth is tied to church government style. Leadership personality shapes church government in a young church or strong institutionalized government shape leadership style. Tensions arise when there is a marked contrast between leadership style and the existing traditions of the denomination. Within Guatemala there are three main types of leadership styles that effectively grow churches: Directed Central Denominational leadership with strong pastoral leadership, Centralized Authority Leadership, and Directed Central Denominational leadership with collective leadership.

The Assembly and Church of God both have strong, pastoral leadership in the churches and a strong, directing central denominational leadership actively involved in the training and affairs of their pastors. Sosa mentions pros and cons of the centralized government.

The type of government of the church is classically centralized. It has helped us. But another problem is the stability of that system. Some leaders have used that authority not for edification like Paul says, but for a certain desire for power (CG+, 19).

Neo-pentecostal churches have centralized leadership and administration through a defined, visionary leader. The central churches with strong pastors offer "coverage" for daughter or associate churches. Gálvez states, "The Family of God is a Neo-pentecostal church and, like the majority of Neo-pentecostal churches, is directed by a charismatic leader or pastor with a calling." (FD<>, 11).

Avelar, a Neo-pentecostal, exposes the virtues and inherent danger of this type of "monarchical" government. "Of course, there are risks. There is the risk that the leader will become a dictator, and this can affect the life of the congregation." (BE+, 14).

The Presbyterian Church or the K'ekchí Baptists are examples of defined central administration with strong pastoral/collective leadership which function well in Indian culture. Most Indian cultures rarely accept a strong central leader but rather it looks to the elders or the people with experience to direct the affairs of the church as Sywulka stated earlier in this section.

Finances

Finances are key to the operations of ministries which in turn are the engines of church growth. All growing denominations have different systems of emphasizing finances and collecting funds. Rural churches support their pastors by paying them with agricultural goods. Many rural churches formally give their "first fruits" to the pastor that

supplement the congregation's ability to support the work of the church. Many Church of God congregations first give the tithe to the pastor and then give the offering to the general church budget. Generosity in giving reflects the generosity of the heart toward general Christian service. Avelar eloquently states their posture on giving. Although the details of his statements cannot represent all denominations, the general themes do.

Something basic for the life of a church are its finances. The pastor should have, not only a mentality of leadership, but he should have a business mentality toward the church. The church is a business, because there are men, systems, money, and projects. The church is a business, because money comes in. The church is a business, because there are investments. The church is a business, because there are expectations for tomorrow. I have tried to maintain my church under a business perspective. I teach the people in my congregation to give tithes and offerings. I believe in prosperity... If the people in the congregation prosper, the church also prospers.

I came from a background of the traditional church. I never spoke to my church about finances during the first ten years of my pastorate, from 1973 to 1984. I remember a trip that I made to the United States at the end of 1984. I saw the prosperity of many churches, even in some Hispanic churches in the United States. I understood that I should change my mentality and my attitude toward my congregation. Since then, I have taught in my church about finances (BE+, 15).

16. SEPAL: Now, with a commitment from the members of the church with their finances, do you see a difference at the level of commitment to the Lord?

Avelar: Yes, I have seen it. I believe that teaching about finances has brought many benefits. First, the people are committed to the Lord. It is like in marriage. It is difficult to be committed to a woman without having expenses. Jesus said, "Where your money is, there is your heart." The people that put their heart on the kingdom of God put their money there, too. The people are committed when they give their finances. Second, I have seen that, when the people sow in the kingdom of God, they prosper, because what they sow, they reap. It is a universal principle established by the Lord.

Christian Radio Gives Exposure to the Gospel,
Evangelizes the Lost, Teaches and Encourages Christians

The media of radio has had a profound influence upon the Gospel in Guatemala as it exposes non-Christians to Christian culture evangelism and Biblical teachings. 92% of evangelicals and a large portion of Catholics listen to this kind of media.⁷ The radio has a profound, cross cultural, cross-denominational influence as it is broadcast in many Indian languages and to very remote areas. In Guatemala, CAM has been the pioneer of Christian radio. Steve Sylwulka explains the results of Cultural Radio TGN.

The radio has been one of the instruments that God has used for the growth of the church. When the radio was founded in 1950, evangelicals were 3% of the population. The radio, because of being varied cultural quality, has reached a large area even entering into areas where evangelicals have not been. Thousands of people have come to the Lord because of the doors opened for the Gospel. People that had listened to the radio later went to a church. There is no doubt [that the radio prepared people to be more open to the Gospel]. But apart from that, the radio has had a triple purpose: to evangelize, edify, and educate. We have always had an evangelistic and an educational role (CAM<>, 20-21).

CAM has the most extensive broadcasting into Indian languages. The Church relies upon radio as a means to reach illiterates through this media as well as train low literate pastors. Sylwulka states,

We are programmed in the languages of Cakchiquel, Quiché, K'ekchí, and Aguacateco. Here, we do not have it in Mam. We have other stations, daughter stations, that transmit primarily in the Mayan languages. The Mayan radio in Barillas, Buenas Nuevas in San Sebastián, and Huehuetenango have programs in six Mayan languages. I estimate that among these three stations, we are covering more or less fifteen languages. (CAM<>, 24).

⁷ n=2098 evangelicals responding to the question with 1855 responding affirmatively. Catholics responding to the question with 1328 answering affirmatively. n Catholics = 10,346.

Christian radio is also an important media used by most Neo-pentecostal churches. Familia de Dios started indirectly as a result of the radio ministry of Luis Fernando Solares, who is adept at broadcasting. The senior pastor of the Prince of Peace Church, José María Muñoz, became even more well known through his radio broadcasts. Likewise, the leader of the Elim church was a gifted sports announcer who used his talents on radio. Both Bethany and El Shaddai have radio programs. The K'ekchí Baptists have their own station in K'ekchí. Interestingly, the two largest denominations, the Assembly of God and the Church of God have not relied heavily upon radio, even though individual churches may have their stations. (AG+, 23). The Church of God leadership states that they will emphasize radio more in the future. "But our church has not wisely given importance to the mass media of communication. I believe that it has been an error, but we have never worried about saying much. However, we already have, I believe, eleven radio frequencies like this, local, community frequencies." (CG+, 23).

Direct Evangelism Is the Engine to Church Growth

The mark of the evangelical church of Guatemala has been its unrelenting evangelism. All churches who evangelize consistently grow numerically. Evangelism creates converts and leaders. This is fundamental. When churches lose their evangelistic zeal, they lose their edge for growth. As the growth rate of the evangelical church in Guatemala has plateaued within the past ten years, it seems that evangelism is waning among some groups. Many small churches look inward and have internal conflicts.

Effective evangelization must be coupled to a healthy church that looks outside of itself and focuses on the lost world. Avelar speaks to this issue.

Another very important aspect that I consider for the development of the church is to have a system of evangelization. Because what happens is that many pastors want their churches to grow, but they do not pay the price. Churches are not going to grow simply by having Sunday services. The difference in the parochial church and the apostolic church is that the parochial church has inherited the concept from the Roman Catholic church that, in some way, is projected to the evangelical church. It is to open the church on Sundays and preach. The people come, listen to the sermon, and return to their house, but they never produce anything for the Kingdom of God.

The apostolic concept of the church today is not the church that is focused on itself, but it is the church that is focused outwardly, where the potential of the church rests in the lay leaders, and they do the work of the ministry. Today, the lay leaders are those that are trained in the church and the pastor transmits to them his vision. They go on the streets, open cell groups, and the people are won to Christ. Really, the churches that are going to develop as mega-churches or churches of growth are those that have that mentality (BE+, 15).

Immediate, Consistent and Organized Discipleship Are the Marks of Growing Churches

One of motivating reasons to broaden this study from a simple evangelical count to a census that measures the depth of Christian commitment is that a disturbingly high amount of evangelicals appear to have a double life. This study shows that between 25% to 42% of evangelicals are actually Christian.⁸ It is much easier to teach a person a program of evangelism than to teach him how to live like Christ in the real world. Steve Sywulka points out,

⁸ See Chapter 6 of this study.

A partner of mine did a study very similar to what you are doing, but on a much lower scale about twenty years ago. At that time he did a series of surveys here in the Capital with churches of various denominations focusing on three aspects: Bible knowledge, doctrine, and ethics. The results in the three areas were abysmal, and there was not much variety within one denomination to another.

The truth is that, yes, all the churches failed a lot. The members failed. They did not know The Bible ... I do not believe that the situation has changed much from then until now. What we are seeing now that affects us is that there are some 200 pirated radio stations in the country, and 95% of them are evangelical.

There is an enormous lack of teaching and application to life. But it is equal among the Central American, Assembly of God, and Presbyterians. Some have perhaps a little more teaching than others, but in all, there is a great deficiency. There is not a lot of commitment. That is the great challenge to me, because for the Evangelical Church in Guatemala, it is not so much evangelism, because that is the church's strength, but it is knowledge and practical application to life that is lacking (CAM<>, 29-31).

Most leaders recognize that the church must do a better at making disciples. This simply means putting the Bible to practice in real life. Some churches are better at making disciples, such as the Presbyterian church (PR-)(whose members score high on ethics), Bethany (Be+), and the Church of God (CG+). Roberto Sosa offers keen insight into the situation of making disciples.

16. SEPAL: You mentioned the discipleship that you have in the church, but is this the preparation that you give to the new believers?

Sosa: Only in the first phase, previous to baptism. Then the second, the third and fourth phase are follow-up. The problem, if you permit me, is that I think that what has happened in the church is like what can happen in a baseball game. We have had a lot of success in winning people to Christ, like a baseball team that bats a lot of hits and puts men on bases.

In the best of cases, they are given some education after the basics for baptism, and we take them to second base. But there we do not follow up

on them. A baseball team can put fifteen, twenty, or thirty men on base, but if they do not score, the game is lost. So, the truth is that the Christian should know Christ and consolidate himself in faith and be baptized. Then, receive the stages of formation, of basic training, followed-up by a real training for him to serve God for the ministry. Then, send him to serve the local church and to serve other churches. If the people do not have that complete process, I think that we are not doing the whole job. Rick Warren says that the success of a church is not measured by those that enter, but by those that leave. He means that those that enter the church are trained in the church and go into ministry. (CG+, 16).

Currently, the churches that work with discipleship groups, with family groups, are those that are experiencing greater growth. I personally have the criteria that, if a church is healthy, it grows. None of us, as parents, have to pull our children's ears in order for them to grow. They grow by themselves, because they are healthy. When they do not grow, it is because they are sick. There is a natural growth and, as a product of that, comes to the church. The problem for me has been not when churches do not grow. That is a sin, because I already repented, for not having given emphasis and training to leaders to disciple adequately. That is one of the great errors that we as a church have made. We are going to re-enforce the discipleship program. (CG+, 28).

5. SEPAL: But apart from that obstacle that you mentioned, what are some others?

Sosa: Discipleship, education, formation, the change of paradigms of a conventional Christianity to the personal experience of faith. That is another of the great obstacles that we have. Saturday, I was with seventy-eight leaders in San Marcos. We called on them at nine o'clock in the morning. They came at nine thirty, and I told them, "We begin at nine o'clock." If it were another congregation, I would not tell them that, but I am dealing with leaders that came a half hour late. It is Guatemala time. That is the problem. We need to see in what way we shape ourselves and our people. It is a process that does not stop. One dies if he does not keep learning.

Sosa understands that discipleship is more than attaining cognitive Biblical information but it must lead to general discipline in life. The struggle that all churches have is to first build a knowledge base on God's Word and then to apply that knowledge through the power of the Holy Spirit to everyday life. El Shaddai has a thorough program

to assure that believers have the knowledge to be good disciples. Oscar Benítez explains their system:

The training center is that, if a person received Christ, he goes to a retreat. Later, he begins five weeks. We put him in the training center, which is a year and three months. In each step, we have credits. Then, what we do is put leaders in training for a year and three months. Some of [the leaders] go to Liles, a two-year system. (ES+, 13).

We have many new believers, many conversions. The team takes them aside to get their information. We give them to one of our Christian ladies, and she calls them and invites them. The youth go to where there are things more for youth. They have what is called "reconciliation." They take them to training, they go and visit them, they give them lessons (ES+, 15).

Pinzon of the Assembly of God explains their system for dealing with new believers. They recognize that making disciples involves teaching, learning, experience and practice.

We have an integral department of evangelism in the churches. We have created and have large amounts of literature that we use for new believers in order to mature them. We have a plan that is based in five words: prayer, filling of the Holy Spirit, evangelism, discipleship and consolidation. (AG+, 16).

17. SEPAL: What you mean by "consolidation"?

Pinzon: That people are confirmed in the faith and that they turn into soul winners. It is a complete program.

18. SEPAL: How long does it take?

Pinzon: It depends upon the situation within the church. The program has 24 lessons which are separate from doctrinal training that we have every Thursday. We're constantly teaching these lessons.

21. SEPAL: Do you have Sunday School in your church?

Pinzon: Yes. That is one of the first things we do. Apart from Christian education, we have a department of Sunday School specifically to work with local teachers in their Sunday Schools. I was the national director for four years and was in charge of more than 30,000 teachers throughout the country.

Making disciples is not just a course but an ongoing process as Gálvez of the Familia de Dios recognizes:

We are constantly teaching basic fundamental doctrines that we have in our doctrinal declaration in the distinct areas: God, Christ, the church, man, and the Holy Spirit as well as in other practical areas: counseling, visitation to the sick, and elemental teaching to the newly converted. Periodically, we are trying to train all those that are going to serve and those that want to serve full-time. We ask them to register and to study in the Theological Bible Seminary that we have. (FD<>, 8).

Both Giron and Ramírez recognize the importance of making disciples as they illustrate the sad picture of what happens when this is not done thoroughly. Currently Elim recovering from the fragmentation that also caused it to lose members to other denominations.

Another error was the lack of consolidation or the care of the sheep. Due to the multitude of people it was an almost impossible job to take care of every one of them. So many of them went to other congregations or they stopped walking in the Gospel. (EL<>, 10).

Over the years this researcher has often heard Ladino Baptists complaining that the Pentecostals rob their sheep. This has to do with the quality of disciples rather than the aggressiveness of the proselyters. Ramírez pinpoints the relationship between leadership and discipleship.

I believe that our greatest problems are in two specific areas: discipleship and leadership. Because there is no conservation of fruit [this indicates that] there is no correct understanding of what is in essence discipleship,

because discipleship is not only giving initial lessons to a new believer. We have to see discipleship as more integral. But we have not come to the understanding that discipleship is important. There is no conscious effort from the active leadership to keep and disciple new believers. On the other hand, leadership is personality motivated and our leaders do not have the tools to do their work well. And that results in a work that stops in its tracks. (LB<>, 18).

Weak disciples do not live the kind of Christian life that the Bible prescribes. As described in Chapter 6, Christian attitudes and actions are difficult to measure on a large scale. Lateral exchange of members between denominations is a remarkable phenomenon in Guatemala. Pinzon identifies the problem well as he states,

In Guatemala there is a lot of rivalry between organizations. The thing is this: you'll see that there are many mega-churches today. But go and make an evaluation of these and find out where these members came from; if they're not from Prince of Peace then they will be from the Central American Church, Presbyterian, or Assembly. But there are very few who are converted through evangelistic work. This is not growth. An example: I have a church of 100 members. Fifty of them leave the church to form another group at the end of the block. That's not growth. They simply divided and now there are two churches with 50 people... They leave from Calvary and then go to the Assembly. They leave from the Assembly and go to Elim. They leave Elim and then go to Shaddai. They leave Shaddai and go to King of Kings. They leave King of Kings and go somewhere else. This is a transfer of persons.

But why does this is happen? Because there is not a solidity in the Word of God. [Emphasis mine.] Many people go around looking for emotions rather than the Word of God. (AG+, 24).

Making disciples is one of the great challenges to any church. It requires purposeful ministry to assure that new converts are consolidated in the faith. Making disciples is a combination of mentoring, teaching how to live and grow and teaching the norms of the faith or denomination. A cognitive disciple has much Biblical information but has difficulty in multiplying himself. An experiential disciple is tied to emotions or

fads and can drift in the faith. Well grounded disciples have human examples, knowledge in how to live the Christian life, practice applying the Christian life as they are guided by mentors and the Word to be their guide and norm. In spite of all of the help a church can offer, much of it depends on a person's will as he decides to submit the Lord or live for himself. But if a church does not do its part, then even those with a willing heart will likely not become disciples of Christ.

Issues Concerning Mayan Groups

Language and Literacy

The majority of denominations look to the task of evangelizing Indians as a language and a literacy challenge. Indeed this is true. The message of the Gospel must be understood in order to accept or reject it. All leaders express a special concern and challenge in this area and many are concerned about the low level of knowledge which is directly related to illiteracy in the Interior of the Republic.⁹

The Church of God has a large constituency of rural Indian members, especially of the Quiché group. They are the largest denomination within the Quiché and have a successful track record of producing leaders. Sosa recognizes that rural Indians lack general education and literacy and proposes a link between literacy and discipleship.

We are very lazy about reading and we must change that. It is difficult for the people to read. They have to be motivated to love reading... I hope we take advantage of that circumstance in order to propose to ourselves that there be no one in our churches that does not know how to read. But, that is a life-long process. It seems to me that it is always going to be an obstacle. (AG+, 16).

⁹ See (AG+, 20), (ES+, 3,10), (FD<>, 5-7), (EL+, 3,7), (CAM<>, 6-9), (PR-, 7-10, 15, 24), (LB+, 11).

The Familia de Dios Church is strong within the Capital and has significant works within the Interior of Guatemala, including several Indian areas. Gálvez succinctly identifies some of the underlying reasons for illiteracy that directly affect leadership.

[The public education system] can be improved, and should be improved. The problem is not only the local [educational] system, but the whole system that we live in here in Guatemala. We have difficulty with the different dialects. We have difficulty that everything is centralized in Guatemala City and it is much easier to study formally here [in the Capital]. The churches have followed that same pattern. The mega-churches are concentrated here. It is much easier to study formally in the City.

We should do everything possible to give some type of training to our pastors in the Interior. But their preparation--they do not know how to read or write well--makes the problem of discipleship and teaching difficult. The majority of pastors have not made it to the sixth grade of basic education. It is difficult for us and for them to have access to have a better level of [secular] education (FD<>, 5).

When presenting the question of training in an Indian context to Fernando Mazariegos, he immediately links it to literacy and a cultural way of thinking. His understanding of the relationship of literacy and the challenges of the Indian culture demonstrates a depth of comprehending the realities of rural Guatemalan life and Indian cultures. He also understands the responsibility that the church has to its members.

The farther away that churches and presbyters are [from civilization], the more problem we have with access to schools and access to an education. The directors of those same presbyters have been worried about literacy because we do have a problem. We have the Bible in K'ekchí, but there wasn't anybody who could read it because they didn't know how to read K'ekchí and Wycliffe Bible translators knew about the situation. There have been many missionaries working in translation, but they realized that in different places that even in their own Indian vernacular that people did not know how to read their own languages, and the national education projects were failing.

Prior to the signing of the Peace Accords [1998], these type of projects were practically drowning the children in the interior of the country. For them, First Grade was not First Grade, but it was a year of learning Spanish. This was a mistake on the part of the Ministry of Education because they were teaching a language to the children in which they could not think. They think according to their culture, and after one year of learning Spanish, to enter into the second year [in Spanish] was an injustice. So the presbyters began to understand the situation and today they have Christian education projects that are a part of the mission of the church. This is where I say that it is an element of the mission that we think about as part of an integral Gospel: teaching them to read. This is not part of secular life, it is part of the ministry and part of spirituality that we can have. But there are still many illiterate people in our churches and it is worrisome.

Giron voices the opinion of many pastors that this researcher hears: the government has consistently failed in education in the Interior and now for the spiritual welfare of the Church, the church must take on a strong role.

The goal is to unite all the pastors and give them the vision to educate; that we understand that education is not the job of the government. It is the job of the church. To push education by means of the church to change our people's mentality and to get our nation out of the material and spiritual poverty that it is in (EL<>, 13).

The Baptist K'ekchí leadership link understanding of the Bible to literacy. The Divine literacy program apparently is more effective than the government's program.

11. SEPAL: What do you do to assure that the churches know biblical doctrine and the doctrine of the denomination well?

Cucul: Years ago, certain missionaries taught us little by little the Word of God. Then, there were three missionary wives that took a lot of time to teach the pastors their vowels and consonants so they could read the Word of God. It was very slow work, but it gave us the ability to know the doctrine of the Bible.

12. SEPAL: But are there still many pastors that do not know how to read?

Cucul: Yes. From time to time, the pastors go to a place and pray that God will teach them how to read. Then, after a short time, some can read and study and teach the people what he can read in the Bible. All of our pastors attend the pastor conferences to study a few books of the Bible. Later, they return to their churches to teach what they learned.

Non-Literate Training

The problem of illiteracy in Guatemala will exist for generations. Under ideal conditions when the church and the government both seriously undertake the problem, there will be substantial improvements in society and in the church. We do not live in the ideal world, however. As mentioned, several denominations are successful in working with illiterates and do a fine job of making disciples under less than ideal conditions. CAM is the most experienced church in Indian work and Sywulka offers practical ways that leaders have been helped in the past. These methods are: examples, simple institutes, cassettes, and radio.

The first missionaries, the pioneers, brought the vision of preparation of leaders even when there was not a formal Bible Institute. *The pioneer missionaries brought the vision and were always forming disciples on a personal level. If they found a young man with a certain capacity, they took him with them on their trips. That is how they were taught, by pure practice, and that is how national leadership was raised.* [Emphasis mine.] (CAM<>, 9).

16. SEPAL: What measures are you taking to help pastors who cannot, or barely, read?

Sywulka: The method that is most often used involves brief institutes that move from place to place, and others that are established at the same site, but meet every fifteen days. Various institutes that we have in Huehuetenango are in Mam and Kanjobal, one in the east and one in San Marcos, that meet every two weeks. As it is very flexible, some get involved enthusiastically and commit themselves, and going through the whole program more or less in an orderly way.

For those who are less formal or illiterate, we have some programs on cassettes and radios. These programs are a great blessing in that sense... Many people have been molded through these programs. Many pastors have told us that they prepare their sermons on the basis of what they hear on the radio (CAM<>, 16).

Additional Cultural Issues

Each Mayan group is a unique culture, though they are Guatemalan. Mazariegos shares some fascinating insights on the K'ekchí.

In 1963 or 1964 the K'ekchís evangelized in a certain way where they would do it by family, contrary to the western mentality. I visited several K'ekchí Churches and saw a church with 300 to 350 people. I said to Agustin Rax, "Hey, how many members do you have here?" He said to me, "Well, we have somewhere between 40 or 50 members." I said, "You're pulling my leg!" So with more of a Hebrew concept, they tell us that a member is my wife, my children, and myself. And this is more biblical than the statistics that says I'm a member, my wife is a member, my children are members. In this way statistics make us more individualized. But for them, one family is a member. So the wife evangelizes other non-Christian women. The husband evangelizes other non-Christian men and the children evangelize other children who are not Christians. So there was a growth that was not just spontaneous, but the whole family went out to evangelize. This method is more open and has been more effective than other traditional methods such as "The ABC Steps" or "The Four Spiritual Laws" (PR-, 7).

8. SEPAL: This phenomenon of evangelizing by family, is it just within the K'ekchí or is it within other Indian groups also?

Mazariegos: Yes, it is more common with the K'ekchí. Others like the Kanjobal have done it, but mainly it's among the K'ekchí. This is a good model, including to see how they have grown over the years. For example, they took a very dedicated person from the church. All of the church committed themselves to work this person's land and took him to another town for six months and said to him, "Here, you have to plant your church." So this method of evangelization and opening new churches was more than sending a seminary student. It was to send someone for a vocation. Of course there are mistakes. But the growth began to be

spontaneous, and today the K'ekchi's continue to grow and expand in such a strong way that currently there are five K'ekchí presbyters. (PR-, 8).

Guatemalan Leaders Speak on the Role of Missionaries in Guatemalan Churches

The Guatemalan evangelical church has entered into adolescence and has had flourishing and independent leadership for quite a few years. In light of the maturing national church and the ever changing strategies of missions, most leaders were asked questions related to their personal experience with foreign missionaries in Guatemala and their opinions on the roles, if any, of missionaries in the future. Most have had positive experiences as they share similar stories. (AG+, 29), (CG+, 20-21), (CAM<>, 6-9), (EL+, 23), (KB+, 11), (LB<>, 22). Bethany, Elim and Familia de Dios have had no foreign missionary involvement. Sosa's comments are representative of the churches that have had missionary involvement.

I believe that they brought us an important part. The work has grown in a ninety-eight or ninety-nine percent because of the work of the national worker. If they had not brought the message to us, there would not have been national workers. So, I believe that the work of the North American missionaries is a very important work. They committed errors and, perhaps, we have committed more errors than they have. But they gave the best of themselves. (CG+, 23).

Giron admires the sacrifices of the past but knows that the present counts. As the church has grown, the role of missionaries must be changing. "I think that American missionaries did a work worthy of a crown for eternity. But now the time has come to prepare missionaries from Latin America." (EL<>, 23). Most large denominations are gearing to this end. Most that have had positive experiences with missionaries in the past

look for changing role of the missionary to be a resource person or a specialist. (PR-, 27).

Below are some typical comments:

I think that future missionaries for Guatemala will have only a role to help in the national work. (AG+, 32)

The goal is what I mentioned a little while ago: not dependence, but interdependence. I believe that the United States has a lot to give us that are their economic resources. Equally so, I believe that our church in Guatemala has a lot to give to the United States: their leadership, their human resources. (CG+, 32).

The missionary in these times should be a person that multiplies leaders. Not so much the man that comes to evangelize, although he has to evangelize, because if he is a Christian, he is going to evangelize. I see more a missionary in a formation of leaders.... That is how I see it, really, because we have to admit that Guatemala is said to be one of the most evangelized countries. It is not the job of a missionary to come and do everything, because there are people here capable of doing a lot. We see many times that the missionary has some resources ... of knowledge or of material resources that he should share with the national work in a way that helps some need. These resources are vital to the objective of growth. (LB<>, 23).

Only one church, the Mennonites see that missionaries should have the traditional role.

The foreign missionary role continues being the same, helping go to that person that is truly interested in God. The missionary role is to take the Good News, to take the teachings of Jesus to other places and to transmit it to those that are still lost. (ME-,12).

Bethany is a wholly Guatemalan church and logically does not see a major future role for missionaries. Likewise, the Neo-pentecostal Familia de Dios is Guatemalan in origin and Gálvez states, "I believe that missionaries no longer have much to do, because the missionary functions, precisely, where Christ has not been preached.... We are

responsible to do it." (FD<>, 17). Because the interviewer is this missionary researcher,

Gálvez likely tempered his answer with:

But, since everyone does not have that same vision to go to the departments and do missions, maybe it should be done by foreign missionaries. So, it should be more to the places in the Interior and the desolate places. It should be more our responsibility to go to Guatemala and not to wait for [foreign missionaries] to come. (FD+, 17).

Undaunted by the presence of a missionary, Sywulka, himself the son of missionaries states:

We have almost finished the work that we have proposed: the whole Bible in Mam, Chuj, and Kanjobal. The whole Bible in Chuj of San Sebastián and Jacalteco is being finished. In the area where we have worked we have the Scriptures, almost complete, and where there are other missions. We have, therefore, not seen the need to enter there. The Mam, Chuj, and Kanjobal churches are already very strong, and have their own institutions. We have seen that there is not much need for foreign missionaries. (CAM<>, 12).

There are inherent problems of perspective that collide due to North American culture and experience. Benítez states that they have always have had differences with North American missionaries due to the "strong culture" and the different form of government (ES+, 25-26). Mazariegos expounds upon some of the problems that can come from well meaning foreign missionaries.

Another strong problem that has caused some moments of divisions and arguments has been a certain hegemony that sometimes the church in the United States has toward us, in spite of the agreements that say that we are sister churches. Never should a foreign missionary be president of one of our Synods, nor of the executive committee of our Synod. ...A huge amount of money enters Guatemala from the church of the United States and it tugs and pulls. I give something to you. I demand something of you. I give something to you. I manipulate you. So the church in the

United States with its influx of money, and to a degree, knowing what's happening, I think, equal to the Europeans, came and said, "Oh no! Poor Indians, now we have to help the Indians more. And the Indians were so exploited by the Ladinos!" This influx of fraternal workers and this money game caused some in the church to see some other members as bad managers of these resources and it brought about corruption and division. It causes some to fall and look at the church as, "How much can I take from it?" and not, "How much can I help it?" (PR-, 21).

Figure 7.3

Missionary Involvement in Major Denominations

Denomination	Code	Adjusted 10 year growth rate	% Full Time Pastors	Current N. American Families	Peak of N. American missionary Families	Guatemalan Families on Foreign Field supported by Guatemalans
Assembly of God	AG+	102%	100%	10, (AG+, 30)	13, (AG+, 31)	5, (AG+, 33)
Church of God-FG	CG+	98%	75%	2?, (CG+, 21)		5, (CG+, 22)
CAM	CAM<>	-9%	50%	55, (CAM<>, 10)	100, (CAM<>, 10)	
Prince of Peace		-20%	?			
Elim	EL<>	33%	?			
Nazarene	NA+	120%				
Presbyterian	PR-	-23%	10%			
Bethany	BE+	110%	?	0, (BE+, 17)	0, (BE+, 17)	
Baptist		16%				
K'ekchi	KB+	74%	?	3 and 3 Mam	5 and 2 Mam	0 foreign, (KB+, 2)
Ladino	LB<>	1%	10%	8	14	
El Shaddai	ES+		100%		?, (ES+, 26)	5, (ES+, 24)
Familia de Dios	FD<>		100%	0, (FD<>, 16)	0, (FD<>, 16)	0, help some families (FD<>, 15)
Mennonites (Capital)	ME-		20%	?	?	?

A denomination demonstrates maturity when it begins to develop missions programs and turns from a receiving to a sending organization. All growing denominations have some form of local church planters or internal missionaries. Less

have internal cross cultural missionaries. Figure 7.3 summarizes the supply of foreign missionaries that some denominations have had in Guatemala and amounts of external missionaries that various Guatemalan denominations send or entirely support. Most of this mission support is new in the church of Guatemala, having occurred within the past five years or less.

Leaders Speak on Syncretism and Legalism

Syncretism and a general compromise of Christian beliefs lead to lifestyles that are contradictory with Christianity. In most of the interviews, denominational leaders expressed concern regarding the existing Christian lifestyle and the mixture with the background Guatemalan culture. Recognizing this as a problem is one matter; but identifying its root causes proves to be more difficult. Benítez describes the situation as follows: "Getting people out of syncretism, being able to instill values and character in the people, and fighting against cultural syncretism. It has been a tremendous challenge." (ES+, 32) Pinzon describes the situation in similar terms,

Whether we like it or not, we have a Catholic background. Our people have inherited these things and it is difficult for them to get rid of them. We're not talking about doctrine; we're talking about customs. Many of our people are carnal because they go after emotions rather than the Word of God... We're not against the emotional aspect but it must never take the place of the Word. (AG+, 27).

The causes for syncretism and related issues are more difficult to identify because there are many sub-cultures and situations that are unique to each denomination. Pinzon ultimately looks at syncretism as a matter of leadership and personal decision.

26. SEPAL: Do you think that illiteracy can be a factor with the problem of syncretism?

Pinzon: I don't think so because if you look at the mega-churches, the people are middle-class. If we look at the churches in the villages, these are people who love the Word. In other words, it is not a question of not knowing how to read. The problem is not with the illiterate people, rather, it is the middle-class, with the doctors, with the college graduates and with the college students.

If you do an evaluation of these churches, the majority of the members have a profession. Therefore it is not because of ignorance. (AG+, 26).

Related to the syncretism is the problem of legalism which is prevalent in many rural churches. Though Pinzon speaks to the issue from the Assembly of God perspective, his observations are true for most rural churches.

From the Assembly of God perspective, there was a legalism ever since the beginning of the work. It wasn't something that was done on purpose, but that is how our fathers were taught: this is sin, that is sin, sin, sin, sin. This formed a certain type of new doctrine. We have not wanted to tear this up by the roots, but we are in a process to teach our new pastors how legalism damages the church. We teach them the difference between doctrine and culture; what are central truths and what are not central. It is a process. (AG+, 28).

Conclusion

Church growth is directly tied to leadership, vision, planning, expectations and training new leaders. These are the human factors. God's power and hand upon a usable vessel is indispensable; for church growth is both a spiritual and a human endeavor. Effective leaders are not born overnight and all growing denominations invest in leaders for tomorrow's work. The fastest growing denominations have strong, sacrificial role models who infuse vision into others. Key leaders in the strongest denominations have a

clear sense of call or anointing as well as a clear understanding of God's guiding hand upon them. They look for emerging leaders, invest in them, expect much of them and put them into the work of the Lord. The solid denominations invest in leaders and understand that training polishes leaders. They have accessible, wide spread continual training and a high level of accountability. They balance between training for knowledge and training for skills. They copy, adapt, invent or import methodologies that create desired effects. They have church government and programs that fit well with the local culture and are unrelenting in their evangelism. Most denominations struggle with discipleship but continually improve their methods as they mature new dependent Christians into serving Christians.

All denominations recognize special challenges as they work with Mayan culture. These are language, culture and literacy. Low literacy levels among Mayan groups present a barrier to knowledge of the Word and a solid foundation in Christ. Solutions range from active literacy training to chronological Bible Storying. Growing groups recognize the special challenges and address them.

Most growing denominations gratefully acknowledge the sacrifices of North American missionaries in the past but are now becoming a people who send the blessings of God to other nations.