

Is Our Traditional Method of Training and Supporting Church Workers on Mission Fields in Need of Reevaluation?

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Whenever we think of “time-honored” institutions, the theological seminary must rate high on the list. For centuries this institution of theological training has been used by leading church bodies in Europe and America as the best instrument for preparing candidates for the work of the Christian ministry. It has been generally accepted that the work of serving a Christian congregation or the church at large in a public capacity requires specialized training, and that this can best be accomplished by pursuing a prescribed course of study under institutional surroundings.

This method of training is usually followed by a professional clergy. The “professional” is here used in the accepted sense of those who have trained for a certain occupation and who derive their livelihood from it. To think of the work of the Christian ministry in such terms should not upset us. Certainly no scriptural principle is violated. The Lord Himself has ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 6:9-14; Galatians 6:6). One would have to be quite naive to think of the system in any other way. A man who spends considerable time, effort, and money preparing himself for a certain kind of work certainly has a right to expect that this work is going to offer a livelihood, especially if he is to devote his entire time and energy in the pursuit of it. One may not even think of it as a profession offering material benefits, but one does have to live.

Within more recent years, however, this “time-honored” method of procedure has for various reasons been called into question, particularly in its application to work on a mission field where one is confronted by differing cultures and situations. As missions sought to become firmly established on foreign soil it was self-evident that missionaries would not continue on in their roles indefinitely. Training institutions for national workers were set up, following generally the pattern of the mother church, with adaptations to fit the requirements of the country and its peculiar culture. That was the idea, at least. The results, however, haven’t always measured up to the plans. All sorts of problems, both major and niggling, have arisen, especially for those who wish to be at all serious about implementing indigenous church policies. Subsequent self-evaluations and study seminars have pointed to any number of reasons as to why the traditional method of training a professional clergy by means of an institutional set-up has become passe, at least as far as the African scene is concerned.

In this presentation we shall examine some of the reasons advanced for wishing to dispense with the seminary system of training as we know it, and also examine the validity of the arguments put forward.

A. The Economic Factor

The chief impetus for reevaluating established methods and procedures of theological training arose out of the fact that efforts on the part of national churches in supporting this kind of program have shown themselves to be woefully inadequate to meet the situation.

A “Study on Church Economy” was undertaken by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) quite recently, covering all the missions in Africa and Asia supported by the American Lutheran Church (ALC), the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), and the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LC-MS). In a report presented to the twenty-second Annual Meeting of the LWF, Commission on World Mission, at St. Louis, Missouri in July, 1970 the following summary statistics were compiled:

Country	Baptized members	Annual per capita offering, 1966-68	Annual per capita income (UN report)
Ethiopia	67,000	\$0.67	\$59
South Africa	168,000	\$0.79	\$191
Tanzania	346,000	\$0.96	\$60
India	607,000	\$0.63	\$77
Indonesia	1,170,000	\$0.07	\$91
Japan	16,000	\$11.66	\$921
Malaysia	1,700	\$3.19	\$255
Philippines	9,000	\$2.29	\$233
New Guinea	350,000	\$0.42	\$72
U.S.A.	8,635,000	\$66.59	\$3,303
(Comparing this with our own 1970 Statistical Report)			
L.C.C.A.	2,125	\$1.79	?

One does not have to study these figures very long to see that an average annual contribution of less than one dollar per member is going to have a hard time supporting a full-time ministry, not to speak of maintaining the training institution itself. We may argue that the average income in these countries is also very low, and thus the costs of supporting such a program much less. While this may be true to some extent, it still doesn't answer the problem. In these developing countries men who are gifted enough to graduate from a seminary could expect and also get a salary which is far above the average per capita income. Even though a salary scale for religious workers may be quite modest, the above rate of giving simply doesn't meet the need.

One other important matter has seriously affected the economic situation of young national church bodies. Many are in countries which have become independent. The pressure to nationalize on the part of immigration authorities has not been restricted to commerce and industry, but to any position where the national could take on the work of an expatriate. Church organizations have come under close scrutiny. In a very practical sense this has simply meant that many key administrative positions formerly held by mission personnel and entirely supported from outside sources are now occupied and also supported as much as possible by the national church body. The LWF study on church economy calls attention to the "financial difficulties" which resulted "when missionaries were replaced by nationals," and which aggravated the economic situation so that it became "a more and more complicated and burning issue" (Report on Study on Church Economy, Part One, Introduction).

LWF Consultant Olof Joëlson had in 1970 only completed the initial phase of his study and was not ready as yet to come up with recommendations. In his "General Remarks," however, he did attempt to pinpoint a number of problems and raise some questions:

Must the ministry of the church be a full time ministry or is it possible to have a part time ministry, so called "tent maker pastors"? Should not every church thoroughly study its congregational situation and try to find out what is the most suitable solution, not least in view of economical considerations? Perhaps it is possible in some churches to have both forms of ministry (Report on Study on Church Economy, Part One, p. 16).

In the very next paragraph he continues,

A serious problem in most churches is the one of financial support for theological training institutions...It should be noted that many churches in the West do not finance the theological training programmes, but that the state universities provide training facilities (Ibid.).

Aside from demonstrating statistically that Lutheran church bodies in Asia and Africa have thus far proved themselves to be incapable of either training or supporting a professional clergy on their own, the LWF report strongly suggests that a reevaluation be considered in both phases of the church's program.

B. The Theological Factor

Another consideration is rapidly gaining prominence in dealing with the question of training and supporting church workers in foreign situations. It has to do with church bodies which are becoming more liberal in their approach to theology. Whether we should call this the "ecumenical" factor or the "social gospel" factor is difficult to say. Both are usually allied. Since both involve the entire approach to theology as such, perhaps the term "theological" factor could best serve our purposes here.

The 1970 meeting of the LWF Commission on World Mission not only authorized a general study of church economy. It also agreed to sponsor through its Department of Studies "a consultation on ministry and theological training in West Africa." West African church bodies expressing an interest in this consultation were:

The Lutheran Church in Liberia
 The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ghana
 The Lutheran Church of Nigeria
 The Lutheran Church of Christ in the Sudan
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon

This meeting was held at Trinity College, Accra, Ghana, from September 27 to October 2, 1971. Dr. Gyula Nagy and Dr. Martin L. Kretzmann represented the LWF and the Rev. William F. Reinking of the LC-MS served as consultant. The leading essayist was Bishop Roland Payne of the Lutheran Church in Liberia, who presented a paper on "Christian Theological Education in West Africa.

Many interesting questions relating to theological education were discussed. Bishop Payne outlined the program followed by his church's "Lay Training Centre" in Liberia, which offers much food for thought and which we shall touch upon later on. Because of the consultative nature of this meeting specific resolutions were not drawn up and formally adopted. A report of the discussions and particularly the recommendations of the LWF representatives, however, very definitely indicate the direction of thinking.

Under "Background of the Consultation" the following point was mentioned: "It was observed that the churches are still thinking very much along traditional lines in their approach to theological training, and it was felt that a consultation might open **new ways of approach** to his important part of the church's work." The "new ways of approach" recommended by the LWF representatives very strongly emphasize **joint theological training program with other church bodies**. Although a joint Lutheran program was first envisioned as a possible solution, it was apparent from the discussions that the individual Lutheran churches were already involved in joint programs with other churches in their areas. It was therefore recommended "that it is not practical, nor in the best interests of the total Christian witness in West Africa, to consider a joint Lutheran training program for our churches" (recommendations to the Churches, A, 1, p. 4 of the Report). The trend toward a more ecumenical outlook was strongly encouraged. Explicitly this would mean, of course, following the two leading recommendations enunciated in Bishop Payne's paper:

1. Theological education must be done only on an inter-denominational basis. The spirit of the times calls for cooperation of the churches to present a united front to a secular-minded world. Much more and effective work could be accomplished if the churches put their limited resources together.
2. That considering the place for long-range planning, a school of theology should be established at or adjacent to a university campus and its curriculum be integrated with that of the university (cf. Report, p. 40).

The second chief recommendation of the LWF committee is entitled “On the Ministry of the Whole People of God” and reads: “It was evident from our discussion that our teaching and preaching should emphasize more clearly and sharply the New Testament view of the Church as the people of God in ministry and service to the world. The Head of the Church, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, ministers to His Body through the proclamation of the Gospel in Word and Sacrament (the public ministry) and builds up the Body for its ministry to the world. In this ministry to the world, the members of the Body, individually and corporately:

- a. Serve their fellow men in deeds of love and mercy
- b. Work for more just and humane structures in society
- c. Shape the mind of the church and of the world about them toward programs of justice and peace. (cf. Report, p. 4).

Subsequent recommendations in the report emphasize that the churches “be deeply concerned about programs for community development” (p. 6), and urge them to “find ways to which we can participate fully in all ecumenical movements” (p. 8) .

The import of this social and ecumenical propaganda at a conference called to deal with theological training problems should be quite clear. Denominational efforts to establish or maintain individual Bible institutes and seminaries are to be discouraged. Thus funds which would presumably be wasted in conserving pet theological dogmas could be conserved. In joining with others a united front could also be presented and Christianity would be in a better position to combat the social and ideological problems of this world.

That, at least, is the general thrust in the “new ways of approach” recommended at the Accra conference.

C. The Cultural Factor

Finally there is the cultural factor which needs to be considered when examining the arguments of those who oppose the traditional system of training and supporting the ministry of the Word. Those who hold this view look at the problem from an anthropological aspect. They are of the opinion that any type of program requiring an institutional set-up will lead to cultural barriers which will eventually defeat the whole purpose of the program.

Dr. Charles Taber, editor of *Practical Anthropology*, states in an editorial entitled “The Missionary Ghetto”:

One of the characteristic phenomena of the missionary movement in many parts of the world is the mission station or compound where, on a single piece of land, often at a distance from the local community, missionaries live and do the bulk of their work.

After listing some of the arguments advanced in support of the traditional mission compound Dr. Taber goes on to say,

I am going to suggest not only that there is something wrong, but that the disadvantages of such an approach to mission so completely overshadow the advantages that there is simply no comparison. In fact, I am suggesting that all the advantages are purely pragmatic and superficial, while the drawbacks are essential and virtually fatal (September-October, 1971, p. 193).

Following this rather harsh and denunciatory position the editor proceeds to explain how the work of communicating the Gospel can take place only on the basis of “interpersonal relationships” based upon mutual understanding and respect. Dr. Taber declares:

Such feelings and attitudes between persons, especially persons of different cultures, can develop only through regular shared experience in multiple social situations in which there is no ulterior motive and no built-in one-way dominance. Therefore, any missionary strategy which minimizes or places obstacles in the way of effective personal relationships is self-defeating.

Dr. Taber contends that the mission compound creates such barriers. It fosters physical isolation. It makes the missionary dominant. It creates “a missionary ghetto” in which the missionary seeks refuge and thus runs away “from the identification which is the only way he will ever accomplish what he is purportedly on the field to accomplish.”

While many of the points set forth in Dr. Taber’s article merit consideration, I felt called upon to take issue with him on some of the items he mentioned. I wrote him and told him so. I also wondered in passing whether he seriously included theological training institutions among his “missionary ghettos” or if I had possibly misunderstood him. In reply Dr. Taber wrote,

If the more specific purpose of Bible institutes and seminaries is to train and encourage local people to get involved in the world for evangelism, then I think one can question an institutional approach that takes a form as to withdraw students and faculty from the world. This matter is not only relevant to the mission field, but also to the older churches in Europe and America. I went to seminary in a Stateside ghetto, and feel that it is just as wrong there as here (Letter dated December 9, 1971).

Dr. Taber thus leaves no doubt in our minds that the seminary establishment as we know it is to be included under his indictment, not only on a mission field but in America as well. If we read him correctly his arguments can be summed up something like this: a seminary establishment where students and faculty live on a common property is like a ghetto. It isolates the people involved from the cultural and social attitudes and customs of the rest of the world and is thus a real hindrance in establishing effective personal relationships with those among whom we are to communicate the Gospel.

There are no doubt other reasons for questioning a system and a method which has become “alter Usus” among us, particularly in this day and age when anything and everything that has to do with “the establishment” is considered to be in need of reevaluation. The three factors mentioned in this presentation, however—economic, theological, cultural—should fairly well serve to show the chief objections encountered, objections which are serious enough to require an answer.

II.

What has been presented thus far is certainly at cross-purposes with the entire intent of this conference. If the national church bodies are proving themselves to be incapable of supporting a trained ministerial program, if we are totally out of step with theological trends and accepted methods of church bodies today, and if, finally, our most sincere and costly efforts are doing nothing more than establishing cultural ghettos, then we are in an anomalous situation. Before we start having too many second thoughts, however, about the validity of our approach, we ought to take another close look at the chief objections which have been brought forward.

Since the economic factor is unquestionably the one which needs our most serious attention, one which may also require certain adjustments in applying established methods to a foreign setting, we shall give more attention to the problems relating to it and take up the other two factors first.

A. The Theological Factor Examined

The theological factor, which points towards involvement with current ecumenical trends and its related social-gospel emphasis, should worry us least of all. If the reason for entertaining thoughts along the lines of

closer cooperation with other church bodies and even state-controlled schools is to save money, then we may as well give up our identity from the very start and not even get involved in world-wide mission work. Exponents of this school of thought may protest vigorously that this is not their first concern, and yet one does hear again and again those well-worn arguments about duplication of work and wasting of funds. These people are no doubt quite sincere in their convictions that the zeal of the fathers in insisting upon full agreement in doctrinal matters was especially misguided in its application to world mission work. Former denominational aloofness is a sin to be repented of as we achieve a wider vision today, they claim. We refer to F. Dean Luecking's *Mission in the Making* (CPH, 1964) to show how this appeal for a more liberal stance has gone out to the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in the past decade.

It is hardly necessary for us, however, to say at length here what has already been emphasized so strongly by our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod in its battle against the growing theological liberalism of our day. Our Synod's conservative position may not be a popular one, but it's consistent, well-known, and certainly not any different from that upon which the fathers founded the Synodical conference one-hundred years ago.

If this principle is worth fighting for in America, it's worth the same everywhere else. It doesn't do to argue that a different set of principles should guide us on our world mission fields. We recall some years ago hearing a European spokesman argue that our mission fields were a "glowing periphery of church activity which transcended denominational obstacles" by virtue of the fact that the people there could take a more "simplistic attitude" over against all these barriers. But if we've spent any time at all in a foreign environment, we'll know that people in other lands have already for some time been confronted by all sorts of splits and divisions within the church and are not quite so uninitiated as we would perhaps like to think. Not only does Africa, for example, have a good representation of all various denominations and sects which have come from Europe and America. It also has **five-thousand independent church bodies** which have sprung up indigenously south of the Sahara within the past one-hundred years. These are being added to at the rate of one-hundred new bodies per years (Cf. "A Study of Independent Church Movements in Africa.") How important, therefore, that our African Christians especially be taught to distinguish truth from error! The words expressed by Prof. Carl Lawrenz at our 1971 Hong Kong Conference bear repeating:

The history of churches and missions offers abundant exemplification of the fact that un-Scriptural positions in doctrine and practice generally have had their inception in the seminaries where the pastors and missionaries were trained. If we hope to remain in true unity as a group of Lutheran churches, we need to give earnest and careful attention to our ministerial training programs as they culminate in seminary work ("The Importance of our Mission Seminary Conference and Its Important Basic Concerns," p. 1).

An added observation should be made in this connection. It was interesting to note from the report of the Accra Consultation that all Lutheran bodies mentioned a shortage of pastors as a serious problem. One can't help wondering how this will be alleviated by going in a more "ecumenical" direction with training schools working on a cooperative basis. All the experiences of the past indicate that church bodies which have moved in this direction are losing ground in all phases of the work, including the production of ministerial candidates.

On this point one thing more needs to be said. Inter-denominational schools or those operated as extension from universities are often started with the argument that in this way a more competent teaching staff and a well-rounded curriculum can be offered. Smaller seminaries tend to overburden their teachers and offer fewer courses, it is maintained. This may, of course, be true. But again it all depends upon what we are looking for, biblical or worldly wisdom. And all the advantages in teaching are certainly not with the big school. Those who have attended smaller schools will vouch for the fact that what may have been lost in some areas was more than compensated for in the personal and individual attention which the students received.

We hope that the same can be said of our small seminaries, and above all that our students are being filled with sound, biblical wisdom, which is, after all, the "one thing needful."

B. The Cultural Factor Examined

The cultural factor in its relation to methods of doing church work will be taken more seriously by those who have carefully studied the findings of cultural anthropologists. Missionaries will take it for granted that they should know as much as possible about the language and culture of the people to whom they have been sent. A knowledge of culture can help us avoid serious breaches of behavior which could easily alienate those who find our ways just as strange as we find theirs. In seeking better understanding under cross-cultural circumstances, however, we need to keep all things in proper perspective.

For one thing we must remember that anthropologists have never been too keen about the work of missionaries. In their eyes missionaries generally have been guilty of unwarranted interference in the lives of other people. In fact, missionaries have quite often been accused of upsetting the natural rhythm of traditional life and thereby doing a lot more harm than good. Since Christianity does in its very nature bring about a change in the entire life and outlook of the individual, whether he be American, Asian, or African, and this particularly in relation to his natural and traditional idolatry, we must realize that we can't go overboard on this cultural aspect and remain what we are. We are ambassadors of the one and only true Savior-God.

As much as we appreciate the meticulously gathered findings of cultural anthropologists, we must also face up to the fact that their chief interest lies in customs and traditions that are rapidly becoming a thing of the past. Whether we like it or not, we are living in the second half of the twentieth century, and also whether we like it or not, ways of doing things are becoming pretty well standardized the world over. Repeatedly we have read articles and papers accusing churches of having made gross mistakes in trying to implement this or that change simply because its implementation did not agree with the custom of fifty years ago. While we realize that certain peculiarities and characteristics will remain with a type of society for a long time, we also must realize that we can't forever stop changes in methods and organizational structures simply because it was never done that way in village life many years ago. African governments are in many ways adapting to twentieth century methods of living and doing. They may often be having a rather hard time of it in making the adjustment, and yet in this world of change, this world which has through means of travel and communication been linked so closely together, we can't nostalgically look back to "the good old days" and wish all these modern innovations out of existence. Never have we witnessed anything change so rapidly as African life within the past decade.

Lest we stray too far afield, however, we should return to the seminary training program. The writers of *Practical Anthropology* see any kind of institution which could give the impression of foreign dominance as lacking in cultural sensitivity. Such an institution sets up a ghetto, it is claimed, which hampers inter-personal relationships.

But, we must ask, what is it finally that they are trying to achieve? Our purpose is to equip men for the work of the ministry of the Gospel, men who will be able to stand on their own feet theologically in a world which will try everything possible to upset a sound confessional position. The best possible method which has been found for inculcating such wisdom, a method which has been adopted by Africans just as well as by Europeans and Americans, is a school where men can be brought together for as long a period as possible under the tutelage of those qualified to do this work. To call this a method of "foreign dominance" is a rather weak argument. This matter of "cultural sensitivity" applies as much to any college or university as it does to the training program of a church.

The same applies to this argument about "setting up a ghetto." Perhaps government would also prefer to do without expensive university dormitories in setting up an establishment where students are brought out of their home surroundings. To be realistic, however, the establishment with all its concurrent problems and expenses is needed to get the job done in the competitive world of today. On a much more modest scale the church finds it necessary to do the same if it wants to be at all serious about doing its job properly. In this respect, however, the theological training school is far less in danger of setting up a "ghetto" way of life than a government college or university. Anyone who is associated with a theological school on a foreign field knows

that practical fieldwork training goes hand in hand with classroom lectures and discussions. Every one of our students spends a good share of his weekend as well as certain afternoons during the week engaged in some form of practical involvement with congregational activity.

We realize that in certain countries today it may not always be possible to set up a scheme involving student body and faculty functioning in institutional surroundings. For such exceptional circumstances other methods and systems will have to be found. Where God gives us the means and the opportunity, however, to set up an institutional program for the training of indigenous theologians (*Theologia est habitus practicus!* - Baier), we would be failing in our duty if we would not use these to the fullest possible extent. May it not be said of us that “the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light” (Luke 16:8)!

C. The Economic Factor Examined

We come back, finally, to the economic problem, the place where undoubtedly our greatest difficulties lie.

It is shocking, of course, to see the miserable performance of many African and Asian church bodies in bringing their offerings and gifts to the Lord. Some of these churches have existed for a hundred years. Efforts toward achieving self-support have been so pathetically weak that it almost seems a hopeless case. In recent years we have even seen large mission stations closed down completely. When national independence was politically achieved and the Europeans left, work which had been carried on the better part of a century came to a halt, simply because outside support was no longer there.

One sometimes wonders, though, how much real effort was put forth during all these years to educate the people in proper stewardship principles. Much has been written and said about indigenous policies over the past several decades. But how much effort has actually been put forth in implementing these policies? And here we don't mean legalistically applying undue pressure in order to achieve certain goals. Often an abrupt change in policy on the part of those who have rather suddenly decided to implement economic reforms can do more harm than good! A steady process of education is required, exercised with all patience, consideration, and persistence. While making his study on church economy Dr. Joëlon mentions a discussion with an Indian friend who said, “It is not true, what you are often told, that our people cannot afford to pay their pastors. The simple truth is, that they have never even tried” (Study on Church Economy, Part One, p. 2). The path of least resistance is to let the parent body go on taking care of the financial side of things indefinitely and permitting the national church to hide behind endless excuses.

Paying their own way is one of the hardest adjustments people of emerging nations have to make. It applies to all phases of life, not only to the church. The hard reality of having to pay taxes or make regular payments on a loan seems to be just as difficult as contributing to a church. Africa is full of financial crises on personal as well as national levels. All the more reason for patient yet persistent stewardship training!

At the same time it is advisable to consider seriously methods of carrying on the work of the Gospel ministry as economically as possible. By this we do not mean letting the pendulum swing to the other extreme and expect to get by with a “tent-maker” type of ministry. This idea is nothing new. It goes back to men like Nevius at the turn of the century, men who already at that time spoke out for indigenous principles. It has been followed up by various mission agencies and church groups ever since, particularly by non-credal, holiness, and inter-denominational bodies (Church of Christ, Pentecostal churches, Christian Mission in Many Lands, etc.). We have seen some of the sad results of this way of doing church work—groups of people under church leaders who are left to shift for themselves, often with a gross misunderstanding of fundamental doctrines of Scripture. No doubt this has contributed considerably to this proliferation of independent sects mentioned before.

Africa needs and will continue to need its own solid corps of well-trained theologians and pastors, men who are thoroughly furnished to stand upon the Holy Scriptures as they were given by inspiration of God. We are sure this applies to all other areas as well. A system or method of thoroughly training and supporting full-time church workers is as vital today as it ever was, and trying to implement economy measures by cutting

down in theological training institutions is the worst possible place to start. If church bodies must seriously think about economizing, a good place to begin would be by cutting down on the tremendous institutional developments which have taken place in the fields of education and medicine over the past one-hundred years. This may sound like “heresy” in some circles, but we have talked with many of those who have personally been involved in these schemes and who feel the same. Recently a lay-missionary in West Cameroon declared, “All I seem to be doing all day long is sitting behind a desk and balancing accounts. Back in Michigan I was more involved in real evangelistic work than I am here on a mission field.” While managing schools and hospitals once seemed to be synonymous with doing mission work, it hasn’t proved to be an effective way at all. The amount of humanitarian service which has been accomplished cannot be questioned, and no doubt there still is a place for some of this service in the total program of the church. Unfortunately, however, the primary purpose of preaching the Gospel has been buried under a pile of frustrating and expensive administrative chores, which the government seems now to be more ready to take over. Finally it comes down to a matter of priorities, and here we feel strongly that theological training and printing of Christian literature must be at the top of the list.

Although the cost of subsidizing theological institutions and preachers of the Gospel may continue for some time to come, this does not mean to say that we should not closely examine methods by which our national churches can contribute more in the way of manpower without adding to the cost. At the Accra Consultation on Theological Education, for example, Bishop Roland Payne made a positive contribution when he described a Lay Training Centre established in his church. According to this plan village lay leaders are brought to a training center for one or more weeks, depending upon the nature of the program offered. It is for those who want to **give** their service to the church rather than to be paid for it. These men are above all mature Christians and proven leaders of their local congregations. The instruction received, although conducted on a simple level, is actually ministerial education and has the purpose of training these men to work under a supervising pastor as congregational assistants in a village setting.

The idea of this Lay Training Center fits the African village scene very well. In Africa it seems that each little village wants to have its own church, which will possibly never grow beyond a membership of less than a hundred souls. When villagers are expected to travel even several miles to church, they often attend sporadically or arrive when the service is just about over. When one man attempts to set up a close schedule of serving several places on one day, invariably difficulties are encountered. Often one man’s full-time service is thus limited to a few small congregations which will be hard put to pay him a full-time salary. The plan of using voluntary or at least part-time lay preachers ought to be explored. In West Cameroon this method is already being followed. One pastor serves as many as fifteen village congregations. During the week he arranges visits with the lay leaders, going over sermon and instruction materials and discussing problems with them, and on Sundays he meets with one or more of these congregations to take care of the administration of the sacraments. This church body has been able to carry on its work for the past seven years with very little support from outside sources.

In West Cameroon, incidentally, it has not been possible for financial reasons to set up a central training establishment for pastors or evangelists. Area schools are organized in donated or rented facilities. Pastors and evangelists meet with an instructor in each area for a period of three months every year for an ongoing program of ministerial training, since they are close enough to their congregations to continue serving them on weekends. One can imagine the many difficulties encountered in carrying on the work in this way, but it shows what can be done when the will is there and when the supply of funds from the outside is very limited.

We are also hearing a lot more these days about theological education on an extension or correspondence basis. The Presbyterians in Central America and the Church of the Brethren in Christ in Africa have been working along such lines. Although we would not recommend this as a substitute for the theological training school, this could also be considered in a limited way for the training of lay congregational leaders who would have sufficient education for such a plan. The thought behind this scheme is to have the student continue on in his occupation, whatever this may be, using whatever free time he has to study his lessons in theology. Periodically he is visited by the teacher for personal discussion. Theoretically the church body saves the cost of supporting a student at a central institution. The student on the other hand does not upset his home or job

situation wherever he lives, and he can continue on in part-time service to the church upon completion of his course of study. We have not been able to ascertain as yet how this theory works out in actual practice, although one can assure that it takes an unusually dedicated and self-disciplined type of individual to attempt this sort of program.

The above suggestions are offered as possibilities for use in case of emergencies, and also as methods which might be pursued if the church out of financial considerations would have to rely more on lay congregation leaders. In any case, however, we do not see how the church can ever do without thoroughly trained theological leaders who devote full-time service to the work of the Gospel ministry and who are supported in this work by the church body which they serve. If present stewardship efforts do not seem to be realistically pointing toward that goal, it is time that they do so. We are not against subsidizing both a thorough training program and the support of soundly trained theological leaders as well. In fact, we consider it a real privilege to be able to help others become strong in the Lord. Subsidy is a poor crutch, however, if the leg is strong enough to begin standing on its own.

We are also of the opinion that our religious students and workers in foreign fields are going to have to look upon this economic problem more as **their** own problem rather than that of a parent body. This business of paternalism works both ways. It is one thing to decry it as “imperialistic” and “colonialistic” when you want more freedom. It is another thing to object against paternalism when the hand is still always extended for support. Our national Christians and particularly those in positions of leadership must come to realize more fully that this whole financial problem is **their** problem. If the cost of living rises and a salary increment would seem in order, they should look to themselves first to see what can be done. If an evangelist is getting paid full-time for church work and spends half of his time farming, this should be looked upon as their own disciplinary problem. When a pastor or an evangelist experiences personal financial difficulties with himself or the support of his family, he should exhaust every possibility to stand on his own feet before asking the mission for an added benefit. The question must first be asked, “What would I do if there were no outside help to depend on?” We can recall some of the days in our own ministerial experience when the month was half over and the monthly salary was used up, when the only way to get an education was to work for it during a time when jobs were scarce, when perhaps after many years of preparation for the work of the ministry there were no places for ministerial candidates. There was no one else to turn to for help but the Lord of the Church Himself and His own promise that He would not forsake His own. It is upon that kind of childlike trust that the Lord build His Church, whether that be in Asia, Africa, Latin America, or the United States of America.

Conclusion

Our traditional method of training and supporting church workers in mission fields has been questioned. Economically, mission churches have shown themselves to be extremely reluctant, if not incapable of providing the financial support for theological training institutions and the salaries of full-time workers. Theologically it has been argued that the day of the private denominational training institution is past, and that only by a combining of forces can the various church bodies carry out the total program needed for our present age. From the cultural viewpoint it has been stated that the institutional approach is a hindrance to the close inter-personal relationships required for an effective communication of the Gospel in a cross-cultural setting.

The theological argument with its pseudo-ecumenical approach violates the doctrinal principles upon which our work must stand. The cultural approach fails to take into account the hard realities of what is required to train people who will be able to stand on their own feet theologically. These two factors with the kind of argumentation used convince us all the more that our traditional approach is more needed than ever. Crucial in its significance, however, is the economic problem. Here we must seriously ask ourselves two things: are we in the first place patiently yet firmly educating in and implementing sound stewardship principles, and are we also making the best possible use of whatever manpower is available to us in the proclamation of the Gospel?

Because we are so convinced of the soundness of a program which involves well-trained workers for the Lord, we dare not neglect putting to full use whatever gifts God gives us to carry this program out. This applies to those who are in a position to help, as well as to those who are receiving it.