

ARE WE ON THE RIGHT TRACK  
IN SETTING UP A THEOLOGICAL TRAINING PROGRAM AS EARLY AS  
POSSIBLE IN OUR WORLD FIELDS?

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Introduction

It seems to this writer that it is necessary to ask and answer two questions regarding our theme, which itself then can be answered. These two questions are:

1. Is it desirable?

2. Is it practical?

In a moment we will delve into these questions. But first let me add that after we answer these two questions and thereby our theme also, it should be understood that each field will finally have to resolve for itself the desirability and the practicality. There is no way that this conference paper or this gathering can decide for Indonesia, Puerto Rico or any other field when and how they ought to begin a Theological Training Program. All we can do is advise them as to what to consider and realize about beginning a training program of this nature, and the corresponding demands it places on the mission, the national church and the workers on the field. Then the experienced men on the given field will have to determine in view of their over-all situation, their needs, and that which the Lord indicates, whether and when to begin a Theological Training Program.

I

Let us consider now our two questions in order. First, IS IT DESIREABLE TO SET UP A THEOLOGICAL TRAINING PROGRAM IN OUR WORLD FIELDS AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE?

If we consider the PURPOSE and the OBJECTIVE of our mission endeavors, it seems most desirable to begin such a program as early as possible.

This coincides with the viewpoint of both the mother and the national churches.

The PURPOSE of our mission endeavors is to preach the Gospel to every creature.

While we do not want to make the mistake of indicating to our mission constituents that only trained evangelists and pastors can preach the Gospel to others, a theologically trained clergy can be a definite asset, in fact a requisite. Every Christian can and should preach the Gospel to others. So also in our mission fields a good, sound, confirmed and trained laity can certainly do this, witnessing to their neighbors privately and in planned programs of the congregations.

But being realistic we note that a trained laity is an agency of part-time and limited workers. Trained evangelists and pastors can be full-time and capable of preaching the Gospel in more ways, especially in the congregations themselves.

Besides this, the more the Gospel is preached by all, the more people you are going to have for follow-up visiting, confirming, edifying and training, such as in instruction classes and services. We are thus emphasizing that part of the task of preaching the Gospel to every creature is to "teach them all things, whatsoever the Lord has commanded." For this a trained national clergy is not only an asset but a requisite.

We conclude then that a Theological Training Program is desireable in carrying out our PURPOSE of preaching the Gospel to every creature.

The OBJECTIVE of our mission endeavors is to found an indigenous national church which is and remains faithful to the pure Gospel.

While we can say that a national church begins to exist when we have our first converts in the foreign country, we hardly have an indigenous church, if we don't have a theologically trained national clergy.

There are three basic needs for a theologically trained national clergy for

establishing an indigenous national church. First of all, trained men are needed to occupy the pulpits of the congregations that are founded. If we don't have this, we only have congregations of WELS served by their men but in a foreign country.

Secondly, an indigenous church needs to be self-governing, which means it needs a national leadership. It is both common and correct that such leadership be at least in a great part theologically trained.

Finally, we want to found a national church that is and remains doctrinally sound. In other words we are saying that the national church should be self-disciplining in spiritual matters especially. If it is, and it carries out well this task, we will also find a much better relationship between the mother church and its new offspring, since the leadership of both groups are in harmony on all spiritual matters. For both of these spiritual reasons we again need a theologically trained leadership in the national church.

We conclude then that since our OBJECTIVE is to found a sound, indigenous church, it is most desireable to have a theological training program as early as possible in order that -

1. trained men may be prepared for the national congregations.
2. trained men may work into leadership positions of the church.
3. trained men may pray and work toward keeping their church doctrinally sound.

We also feel it is desireable for the mother church and her limited capabilities to have a theological training program in a world field as early as possible. The sooner that the national church advances in the growth pattern of its existence, the more possible it is for the mother church to turn its attention to founding other churches in other countries. For even if we

had to subsidize the national workers for a while, it is less expensive than to continue sending or supplying expatriate missionaries.

Finally, the prevailing nationalistic political-economic situations in so many countries also makes it appear desireable to establish <sup>CARLY</sup> a theological training program. Evacuation can become a fact overnight for our missionaries with as little as 48 hours notice to leave the country. If this should occur it seems logical that a well developed and trained church would have a better chance for survival. And I think that we would agree that the most integral part of a soundly structured church would be a well-trained leadership and clergy. --- So from the viewpoint of the national church it also seems desireable to start a theological training program as early as possible.

Thus from considering our PURPOSE and OBJECTIVE of doing mission work, as well as from the viewpoints of both the mother and the national churches, we can answer and say it is desireable to begin as early as possible a Theological Training Program in a world field.

## II

Now, while according to the Scriptures and modern missiological concepts we might say it is desireable to start a theological training program as early as possible, IS IT PRACTICAL?

Here I believe we won't find the answers always positive, and the consecrated missionaries on the field are going to have to apply some good, common, Christian sense to the needs and to the situation or present conditions of their work.

There are three basic questions that have to be answered to see if it is really practical to begin the theological program:

- I Do you have the mission staff that can undertake this program early in the history of the field?
- II Do you have the proper students?
- III Do you have a national church that can support this program?

I Let's take up the first question, Do you have a mission staff that can undertake this program? This question and its answer is probably the most important for you to decide. This is true for the simple reason that if you don't have the right staff and a workable situation for them, it is neither good nor practical to begin. But let's analyze this by using allied questions:

1. Are you in a new language area? If so -

A) How well does the staff really know the language? Do they know enough for congregational use? For theological use? ---

Please, understand that while a missionary may have knowledge of the language sufficient for work in the congregation, this does not mean that he is necessarily ready to teach the theological disciplines.

B) What basic materials are available in your language needs for use by the missionary staff?

For congregational use? ---- Sunday School, Bible Class, Instruction Class, Evangelism and Stewardship Materials? If there are few of these necessary materials available, these will have to be developed and produced first. Frankly, it will allow little time to write and produce courses for theological training.

For Bible Institute (Pre-Seminary) and Seminary?

Is there much available, for class or for library needs, or are you going to have to develop these items yourself? If the latter is the case, it is better to prepare some of these before starting the training.

2. Is the missionary staff experienced?

Foreign mission work is really different than one supposes before beginning. If you are entering a new culture and men are inexperienced in foreign mission work of any type, it is going to take a couple of years to learn "the ropes." If the staff is inexperienced it would be impractical to initiate a theological training program in the first few years on the field.

3. Is the staff large enough considering your present over-all program?

A) The men on the field are going to have to determine, time-wise, how much they are involved in the regular daily activities of the mission apart from any planning, preparing, and presenting of a theological training program. They should take into account the time they are using for writing congregational materials. It is desirable, practical and beneficial

even to your theological training program to have training courses for your lay Christians such as Sunday School Teacher Training, Evangelism and Stewardship Courses. Then the students coming to your theological schools would have had some training in practical matters, and also an opportunity to have proved themselves by working for the Lord at home.

B) Also considering the size of your staff, how many can participate in the theological training program and how much? You will need one man at least who can dedicate a great deal of time to planning, preparing and beginning the work. Eventually, he should have at a minimum two others who can teach several hours a week, since there is no way that one man can be prepared and handle all the theological disciplines.

Also the missionaries should consider the needs and the time involved in the supervision of the students in practical field work. This involves both accompanying the student(s) at first on visits and in congregational classes, and later on in periodic observations and evaluations.

(We might remark here that if the field feels the necessity to begin a theological training program, it could perhaps begin a little earlier than usual by using a part-time pre-seminary program. But even in this case one has to be careful because once a program is started it must be carried out, and then followed up in due time by a more advanced program.)

## II Do you have the proper students?

The students for the theological training program, the raw material, should and have to originate from the congregations. Even more than this it is important that the aspirant has proved himself in the congregation by his faithful attendance and a clear demonstration that he has a genuine willingness to serve the Lord. He should be recommended not just by the missionary or his pastor, but by his congregation, and there should be a definite Form that they use in recommending such a student. (SEE - Appendix-1.)

But even if he demonstrates this, what are his qualities and capabilities?

How might he be used in the church and in what position? (A helper, an Evangelist, a pastor, or what?)

Remember, you may be beginning your theological training program with one or two students. If you have the field under control, and if the student has good capabilities, it can be well worthwhile. The opposite is also true. It may not be worthwhile to start the program if the student doesn't have noticeable good gifts, and you don't know quite how you will use him.

Finally, does the student have such qualities that if financial support is necessary, either in training or later as a worker, it is a good investment? (In my opinion, the student should have a much better than 50% chance of completing not only the Pre-seminary training but also the Seminary level.) Also we would ask - what precedent is being set with this first student with regard to scholarships and/or salaries for workers of the national church? If a man has only qualities to serve say as an evangelist and not as an ordained pastor, do you have a policy regarding such men and their means of support? If you start paying a salary to the first Evangelist, it is going to be difficult later on to make a policy change.

The training and later the paying of national workers is one of the very most costly items in our fields. It has to be scrutinized and planned well, and we need to strive for quality in the graduating product that is worth the investment.

III Do you have a National Church that can support such a program?

This last question is again of extreme importance because we have to have a BALANCE between workers and the congregations that support them. It is not only helpful but our goal to train and to have national workers. But it is equally necessary to have congregations in which they can work and that can support them, either they themselves, or by means of the national church budget. If you have an imbalance here, it is necessary to correct it first of all.

In order to initiate a theological training program the national church has to have the maturity sufficient for the following tasks:

1. To provide some kind of facilities. In the beginning this does not have to be more than one or two rooms. Later on, of course, it is going to involve land, buildings and up-keep. (See Appendix-2.)
2. To decide who will study. Remember the congregations have to recommend the students.

3. To pay the costs of running the program (but not the expatriates' salaries). In the beginning these costs can be minimal, - table, chairs, blackboard, books, and especially texts. (The mother church can help out in this, but it should be in a hidden way, such as providing books for the library.)
4. To pay for scholarships, and later salaries of the workers. This will be the difficult part for the infant church. But it is their problem, and it is absolutely essential that they wrestle with it and solve it.

From what we have seen then, it may be most desireable to start a theological training program as early as possible, but it is not always going to be practical. <sup>in the first few years -</sup> The Lord can and will show us clearly when in any field it is His Will to do so, if we keep in mind the factors stated in this paper.

Two things though that can be done in new fields to perhaps move forward the time of commencing the training program are the following:

1. Include in the initial team experienced missionaries as much as possible.
  - A) of the same language and cultural group, if possible (Ex. - Col. or Puerto Rico to Chile).
  - B) but not being afraid to even cross language and cultural lines by calling experienced men from another part of the world.
2. Increase the original team from 3 to 4 men, the 4th man (3rd, if 4th not possible)
  - A) helping out at first with the regular mission work (especially needed written materials for the congregations).
  - B) but also from the beginning being responsible to begin planning and laying out guidelines for the theological training program.
    - 1) he should be granted extra funds for extra language study in the field. -
    - 2) but this studying ought to be principally in writing with the professor helping and correcting this.

Above all the presence of the Holy Spirit is essential for He alone can produce the desired theological trained manpower that is finally needed. Let us implore fervently that He aid and make successful our efforts in the theological training of national workers.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Roger Sprain



**FORM FOR RECOMMENDING STUDENTS BY THE CONGREGATION**

The following should be filled out and approved by the Church Council or Congregation of which the aspiring student is a member.

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_
2. Address \_\_\_\_\_ Tel. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Civil Status \_\_\_\_\_ How many children? \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Information - Part 1**

A. Does he attend church services faithfully? \_\_\_\_\_

B. Does he partake of the Lord's Supper frequently? \_\_\_\_\_

C. Does he give offerings according to his ability? \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Information - Part 2**

A. Does he serve in any way in his congregation? \_\_\_\_\_  
What does he do? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

B. Is there anything in his character or conduct that should be observed?  
(1 Tim. 3:1-7).  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

C. How is he going to support himself while studying? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

D. If it is necessary, how can the congregation help him economically?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. We recommend \_\_\_\_\_ (Name)  
for studying in -

- A. The Bible Institute \_\_\_\_\_
- B. The Seminary \_\_\_\_\_

- A. He should continue his secular work \_\_\_\_\_
- B. He or his family can support him \_\_\_\_\_
- C. He needs a scholarship \_\_\_\_\_
- D. The congregation will help him. \_\_\_\_\_

(The Ev. Lutheran Confessional Church of Colombia and its Lutheran Center of Bible Instruction does NOT guarantee or promise to accept the student solely because of this recommendation. Neither does it guarantee or promise to accept the graduate for work with salary, if the student should complete one of the prescribed courses. --- But this recommendation is essential in order that the student may matriculate to the Lutheran Center of Bible Instruction.)

Planning For The Future:

1. According to your knowledge, if the student is accepted, and later graduates from one of the courses,

- A) Will he need a salary? \_\_\_\_\_
- B) Can he work and serve? \_\_\_\_\_
- C) Has he personal funds and can serve without a salary? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you know if there will be other aspiring students from your congregation? \_\_\_\_\_ How many? \_\_\_\_\_ When? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
President of Council

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary of Council

Name of Congregation \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Tel. \_\_\_\_\_

## FINANCING THEOLOGICAL EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

It is generally the case that our newly founded national churches or missions are incapable of buying land and building their own theological training facilities.

Thus the Mother Church, WELS, as she is capable, through her Board for World Missions gives a GRANT to the fledgling national church to purchase & build the needed facilities.

The money given is written off by WELS, that is, it is not expected to be repaid to the Mother Church. This is a good and wise policy.

However, it is this writer's opinion that the national church should still pay for the land and buildings as she is able. There are two reasons for this opinion:

1. It is not good, at least in most cases, to present an outright gift, the newly founded national churches as it creates dependence and not independence.
2. Equally important the money of the Mother Church is used only once, if a gift is not repaid.

Therefore, since the Mother Church does not request the money be repaid, the national church should -

1. Establish a unilateral desire and decision to make payment for the property
  - a) paying a monthly amount that they decide,
  - b) into a National Church Fund for Theological Training Purposes.
2. Decide how this fund is going to be used for theological training purposes, with part of it, <sup>if</sup> at all possible, becoming some type of revolving fund.

### Example:

Property is bought for 25000 US.

The Nat. Church decides to pay in the beginning 25US per month.

They decide the money put into the fund should be divided in the following way:

- 25% - future building needs.
- 25% - furnishings for the Center.
- 25% - cost of running the program.
- 25% - scholarships, or worker housing fund ( a type of CEF).

These percentages naturally would be subject to change. Also one would pray that as time went on, and the church grew, they would increase their payments.

The National Church in the beginning is indeed small and incapable of many tasks. But she is not helpless, and as she tries to learn to walk in the Lord's Kingdom, He will develop her muscles, financial as well as spiritual.