

Evaluating Goals for Mission Training

Going back to the basics, we need to raise important questions. Are the training principles and premises of our schools and institutions in line with our training goals? What do we need to change or accomplish as the situation demands? These are essential questions as we face the training challenges of the final frontiers

by Ralph D. Winter

I appreciate very much the use here of the term goals. It seems to me that any kind of strategic consideration must deal with goals. If goals are mis-stated or out of date or don't apply, they can cause more havoc than virtually any other thing. Sometimes the real goals have never been admitted, and if they were articulated, people would say, "Well, that's not our goal" when such undetected goals really are the actual functional goals in the situation.

An example of this is the common situation where the people in a residential school for training pastors say their goal is to develop church leadership, when they actually are defending the existence of a training pattern (or are afraid to question) whether or not it is the best way to develop church leadership. To be sure, this is a delicate and disturbing subject—tinkering with goals.

On the other hand I'm not happy with the original terminology of this topic about "abandoning old goals." It was not my idea—that phrase. I'm not really very interested in abandoning old goals. I don't care if they're recent or old; if they're not good, they ought to be abandoned, or changed or modified. Some of our best goals in education are the old ones; some of the worst are new goals. We may actually face a situation where we need to rediscover the old goals, find out where we were headed in the first place, and not assume that our current new strategies are necessarily the best. Therefore, I would like to loosen up this question of old or new goals. Old or new is not the important distinction.

In any case one thing we cannot avoid in a missiological society such as

this one is that we cannot ignore the goals of frontier mission as compared to the goals of ordinary mission. I say "ordinary missions," but if I were really bold, I might say "mission that has drifted from its true goals," but I wouldn't dare say that. That does not mean that I question the legitimacy of Christian activity in areas of the world where churches are already well established—even though missions originally focused on places and peoples lacking churches. It's an amazing achievement: almost all missionaries today, when they get to the field, are greeted by Christians, and perhaps by other missionaries as well. Historically that's a new situation. We apparently haven't stated our goals clearly enough to avoid contentment with that achievement, or even to question it. For the most part missions have not even had the goal of planting mission structures within their own overseas churches.

Inter-Church Missiology

However, at this point in time, I would rather just let it be. Let's agree that some mission goals have to do with the church "growing where it is" while other goals have to do with the church "going where it isn't." These two concerns really shouldn't be thought of as conflicting. The problem is that a vast proportion of all mission money and personnel today is involved in churches around the world simply "growing where they are"—a concern I would call inter-church mission, the missiology of the relationship of the global church to itself, a concern which does not any longer address the relationship of the global church to the rest of the world out

side of itself. The latter was classically the primary purpose of mission.

Thus, goals in terms of frontier mission are really quite different from goals in terms of what I would euphemistically call regular or ordinary mission, or even contemporary mission, or mission the way it generally is today. At best it is cross-cultural inter-church mission.

Please understand that I don't feel critical towards what's happening. I was one of those missionaries myself working in an area where the church already was. I thought I was doing something worthwhile, and I think I was. Such labors are not to be sniffed at or belittled. It's a very important thing that the church should "grow where it is." I come out of the church growth movement without the slightest inclination to deny or belittle it.

But at the same time, I think the International Society of Frontier Missiology has opted to focus on a whole new set of goals that relate to the church "going where it isn't." This is a bit different from what many people think of today in terms of mission, so we need to be prepared for some surprised reactions.

Virtually all missionaries now a days are involved in a vast pastoring operation—church nurture. And whether it is at home or across the water is not all that different. The difference within the United States between Willow Creek and the average 100-member church in a small town in Iowa is about as great as the difference between a church in Baltimore and another in Sisto Paulo. Virtually all missionary activity today is concerned with the care of existing churches—not with classical missions. From this point of view,

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inter-church missiology is, in a way, a corruption of the word missiology. Well, even to have to say “classical” missiology is to devalue the word missiology from this point of view. If it may to some sound nasty to insist that classical missiology was frontier missiology, let’s just talk about frontier missiology, and understand its goals to be quite different from those of inter-church missiology.

Intra-Cultural Missiology

A third kind of missiology is called intra-cultural missiology, a phrase I did not dream up. It came from the lips of from Ken Onaniken, who said, “intra-cultural missiology is what we’re involved in in India.” He made no apology. “We are battling with our own culture,” and of course every church in every culture ought to do that. I’m not against that either; that’s very important. Like J.B. Phillips said years ago in his *Letters to Young Churches*, “Don’t let the world press you into its mold (Romans 12:2).” Every church every where has to battle, battle, battle-not only with its own culture, but eventually with its own enculturated syncretistic forms of Christianity-“culture Christianity” which diverges so gradually and subtly from Biblical intent. So, intra-cultural missiology is a very important kind of missiology with its own set of goals. Intra-cultural missiology means wrestling with your own society and culture.

But, again, I fear that this is a bit of a corruption of the word missiology. I don’t really mind this use of the word, but let’s recognize that it isn’t the same thing even as cross-cultural inter-church missiology, which means going and assisting believers in other languages and cultures all over the world with their own intra-cultural mission. The result is that a person like Ralph Neighbor, Jr., can fly back and forth from Columbia Biblical Seminary and Singapore without shifting gears hardly at all. You’ve got big churches in both parts of the world,

and to be healthy they all have to have accountable cells within them, and they all have to wrestle with their own local culture. So both intra cultural and inter-church missiology are good. But goals that are related to global church work, whether inter-church or intra-cultural, are going to be different from goals related to frontier missions.

M.D.s and Veterinarians

We might ask ourselves, “Why even evaluate the old goals if everything is going okay?” Well, everything is not going okay. David Hesselgrave and Len Tuggy have already pointed out that things aren’t necessarily working.

I think it would be instructive—maybe this is a little fanciful—to compare the training goals of a medical doctor with the training goals of a veterinarian, and to distinguish in a parallel way between pastoral training and missionary training. We all know that an M.D. has to have really good training. Why? Because human beings need his help. But with veterinarians, it’s different. The patients can die and nobody’s going to sue you (or at least in the old days no one ever sued you). The veterinarians’ patients are not as important as the M.D.’s patients. So also, I’m afraid, the missionaries’ “patients” are not as important as the pastors’ “patients.” That’s one reason that our seminaries concentrate more on the training of pastors than on missionaries. The former seems clearly more important, not just a larger market.

I never thought of this parallel until I had a chat with a veterinarian one time, and he sort of filled me in. It isn’t anywhere near as complicated to know what to do when a human being is sick as it is to know what to do in every case within a wide range of different forms of animal life. To know the exact dosage for a parakeet or a crocodile or a cow is inherently more complicated than to focus on just humans, as complicated as that may be.

Similarly, training people to go either to Hindus or to Muslims or to Buddhist—you’re dealing with quite different subjects! Preparation is not easily defined. So picture the veterinarian of a major zoo. You can imagine he’d never get a night’s sleep thinking about the complexities of his problem.

Frankly stated, to be a good missionary in a strange place is a much more difficult task than to be a good pastor in a familiar place. This is not meant to belittle the pastor but to emphasize that the training of a missionary ought not to be less than, different from, or instead of, but in addition to pastoral training.

Admittedly, the veterinarian can’t really be as well-trained for all those different kinds of animals as an M.D. can be for just one kind of animal. This fact in mission training becomes especially true when you consider’ dial the bulk of the available money for ministerial education—the investments, the endowments, and social support—flows more readily to the training of pastors for us at home than for the training of missionaries to work with people out of sight and out of mind. While the average missionary may need more training than a pastor the tendency is the other way.

I can remember years ago saying to myself that there really is no combination of normal educational opportunities which, stacked end to end, will produce the right missionary training. Either you’ll be in that process too long and arrive on the field too late, or you’ll arrive on the field early enough to really get the language but not be properly prepared. My conviction is that you cannot at this point in history assemble a series of existing training choices in any country in the world-not in the United States or in any other country-and come up with a truly efficient and effective training program for a missionary.

Thus, we cannot leave unexamined the seminaries as they are. We can’t just say, “First you go to high school, then to

college, then to seminary, and then you get some specialized training if you're going to be a missionary." When a friend of mine was in seminary years ago, the students in his graduating class received word from their denominational board that those who planned to be missionaries should attend a special three-day training program immediately following graduation. That was considered adequate preparation. This is a true story!

But if you tack on quite a bit more—a whole lot of good stuff—you will arrive on the field hopelessly late. By the time you're sixteen you begin to lose the ability to learn a foreign language. So, someone will say: "Well, we can't send people into missions when they're sixteen." Look again. We're sending thousands of people overseas when they're sixteen, as a matter of fact. A huge proportion of the mission movement today consists "short term" young people. This is good education but mostly embarrassingly amateurish and use less mission. It may be marvelous experience, but it doesn't really advance the cause all that much.

In my denomination—I'm Presbyterian (U.S.A.W) there are some 2 million to 3 million people in the denomination and 18,000 pastors. A very serious professional study was done not very many years ago that determined that two out of three of our ordained people would be happy to get out of the ministry if there were some convenient, unembarrassing way to do it. So here we have a denomination with 18,000 pastors—all nice people, not immoral, not bad, and certainly not worse off because of their seminary training. While they are all academically qualified they're often not as qualified to pastor as gifted people within the very congregations they serve.

Meanwhile, coming in from left field is the statement that of the 30,000 new churches established in the last 25 years in the U.S., only 5% have seminary-trained pastors. In other words, many of the new

churches, even in the U.S.A.—the burgeoning Charismatic Center movement, Chuck Smith's Calvary Chapels and the Vineyard fellowships—don't bother with the kind of seminary training that our Presbyterian mission board would assume to be basic for missionaries. I really do not feel that our seminaries are teaching the

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wrong thing, or that it isn't useful stuff. I'm very academically sensitive in that area. I'm not saying, "Hey, just forget seminary!"

But our goals need to be re-examined, especially if what we're doing isn't working. For example, according to Walter Kaiser, Jr., six of the major evangelical seminaries today would be bankrupt if it were not for Korean students that make up from 20% to 35% of their student bodies. That kind of situation will not last very long; something different is going to have to be done.

School as a Goal in Itself

Let's take some sample goals. First of all, the goal of school itself. As anthropologists will readily point out, there was a time, and still is for many people in the world, when education went on apart from the phenomenon of formal schooling entirely. Education did not consist of schools where you sit down in a class, etc.

Thus, I think we have to ask, is the school itself a reasonable intermediate goal for training? In other words, we need to study the classroom versus the apprentice-

ship pattern. In Germany, 62% of the younger population (I forget the age range) is involved in apprenticeship, not in formal classroom schooling, although some very high-quality academic stuff is covered in that apprenticeship. In America, for that same age range not 62% but rather 2% of our people are involved in work/study apprenticeships. (And we have five times as many people in that same age range in prison.) In America, the average age of murderers has now dropped below age 16. These are related facts.

In his books, Donald Joy of Asbury Seminary states that in America we have postponed maturity by an artificial process. He says we have created adolescence, which results from people in school instead of in work. It would appear that schools have created problems instead of solving them. So we need to ask what is really the purpose of school if the people can learn in a different and distinctly productive context and at the same time be happy, well-developing people?

I lived for ten years in a Native American society where there were no schools but where, nevertheless, people did learn a great deal. There was no adolescence, but there was a great deal of family stability. So, we need to ask ourselves whether our lengthy school system has actually served us well, and if it should be exported to the rest of the world.

Linked to this question is the one about how many years of schooling. The Student Volunteer Movement was what really catapulted missionary training into a college level operation. When they went out, they often were culture-shocked to find national pastors out on the mission field who hadn't gone through college! "Yale in China" was one of the rallying cries of the Student Volunteers. They thought that just trans-

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porting Yale to China would fulfill the Gospel! In America they pushed pastors out of their pulpits saying, “You’ve got to have proper training; we’ll do this job until you get it.” Nowadays, however, it isn’t just college we say mission-field pastors need, we think seminary. A college education isn’t good enough. If you were to drop down in a parachute in the average mission field in the world, you would find that for every hundred churches there would be only eight ordained pastors. If (by our imported Western definitions) the pastors overseas are not properly trained, how likely are their missionaries ever going to get “properly” trained?

Origins of the Schooling System

It would be helpful to reflect for just a couple of minutes on where our American school system came from. It’s been a fascinating thing for me to delve back into the origins of the American educational system, so-called. I’m not referring to an “educational” system but rather to our “schooling system.”

Harvard in the 1600s had only one teacher, who was also the president, for all the classes for all three years—and there were only three years of study. The average age of entering students was 13 or 14, and they didn’t need any previous schooling at all. Yet they received a “college education.”

Why? Because the word college in those days meant the same as grade school today. In French and Spanish it still means grade school. When we go overseas we tell people, “Well, Thomas Jefferson graduated from college when he was 17,” as I’ve heard it said many times—as if that were something special. As an aside, I remember taking a tour of William and Mary College and listening to a run down of its early days by an distinguished elderly gentleman. When he finished, he asked, “Are there any questions?”

I said, “At what age did Thomas Jefferson go to school if he graduated when he was 17?”

“Oh, he was a very bright student. He was very precocious and went early.”

Then I asked, “What was the average age of people who went to college in Jefferson’s day?” The man did not know. The fact is, Jefferson got out of college late, not early. Students starting at age 13 got out at 16. But these facts seem to be suppressed among us today. We lived for 250 years with this kind of system before we shifted massively to “more is better” in terms of time behind bars in classrooms. But, disastrously, we’re imposing on people overseas what has been true for ourselves for only the last few years. And it is proving it self harmful here.

Harvard set a pattern for other schools to follow. It taught mainly Latin, not a curriculum for pastors, as is commonly supposed. The idea that Harvard was set up primarily to train pastors was a public relations statement. There has never been a time when even half of its students went into the ministry; indeed, the curriculum in the 1600s didn’t even relate to the ministry as such. The students learned Latin at Harvard and then trained for the ministry as apprentices out in the pastorate. You had to have a certain smattering of Latin even to get in, but that’s all.

To know Latin was to be literate, so Latin schools were gradually set up in the villages. Village schools were very brief, at first only one year, then later two years, and still later three (then six, then eight, then twelve—community colleges today). It was handy to have the little kids out of the way. “let’s get the kids out from underfoot so we can do our work better. Let’s extend the school to provide a sort of babysitting function. Can we think of other things to teach?”

To jump 300 years down track—it was only recently that a UCLA chancellor,

who had been involved in a five year study of the function of UCLA, said, “This is basically a babysitting operation.” School is still essentially the process of taking care of people who are thought not to be ready for responsibility even though at the same time it post-pones real education and maturity. Can we admit it? Our basic schooling goals are really quite questionable as we think about training for ministry or missions.

Fragmentation of the Content

What is a seminary anyway? It’s a place where teachers teach, and those teachers have to work to get their pay. They can’t wait while the one professor teaches and then wait another semester before the other professors can begin to teach; they have to be kept busy most of the time. If you have one teacher, like at Harvard, who would teach everything, that would be fine. When you get two teachers, you split things up and say, “You teach this; I’ll teach that.” Then you get three teachers, then five, and pretty soon you’re slicing reality (the subject matter) into more and more pieces and ever thinner slices.

Hesselgrave’s quote from David Wells’ new book bears repetition here. He speaks of:

...the fragmenting of knowledge within the seminary curriculum. Subjects and fields develop their own literatures, working assumptions, vocabularies, technical terms, criteria for what is true and false, and canons of what literature and what views should be common knowledge among those working in the subjects. The result of this is a profound increase in knowledge but often an equally profound loss in understanding what it all means, how the knowledge in one field should inform that in another. This is the bane of every seminarian’s existence. The dissociated fields—biblical studies, theology, church history, homiletics, ethics, pastoral psychology, missiology—become a rain of hard pellets relentless bombarding those who are on the pilgrimage to graduation. Students are left more or less defenseless as they run this gauntlet, supplied with little help in their efforts to determine how to

relate the fields one to another. In the end, the only warrant for their having to endure the onslaught is that somehow and someday it will all come together in a church. (Pages 244-245 in *No Room for Truth* by David Wells, Zondervan, 1993.)

This is the phenomenon of curricular fragmentation. It is obviously not best for the student, but it definitely involves unstated institutional goals, namely keeping the professors busy. In this situation students simultaneously take courses that are not intentionally related. They might take Bible, theology, hermeneutics, exegesis and Hebrew all at the same time, but they might not even be studying the same part of the Bible. There's no coordination between the courses. There's no attempt to allow the student a refined mixture of reality and knowledge in a well-organized program because to do so is unrelated to keeping the professors busy. Plus, the professors probably wouldn't want to be in the same classroom at the same time. And, such a practice would not be economically feasible.

In other words, a great deal of our goal structure in our educational institutions involves factors that do not relate to the stated overall goals of the institution. Many schools are tempted to believe that success is to have enough students whose tuition pays the faculty. They may think that if they just keep growing bigger and bigger, they must be successful—success in numbers without any institutionally strategic development related to graduates who can make an impact on the church.

Let's go back to the fact that two out of three seminary graduates in my denomination don't really want to stay in the ministry. The questions that they were asked when they joined a seminary student body may not have related to their ministry goals. Let's imagine, "Do you have enough money to pay for tuition? How big a loan do you need? Do we need to give you a scholarship?"

I don't mean to say that these are unimportant questions; it's just that they themselves do not relate to the ultimate goals of pastoral or missionary training. We have to ask ourselves, "What is the seminary for besides keeping itself in business?" I'm all for seminaries, but they are cheating themselves and the church if they

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only think in terms of their own survival.

But someone can say survival is a reasonable goal! After being in the Philippines for a couple of weeks, I remember, to my chagrin, asking missionaries why all their schools taught in English. One told me, "The students wouldn't come if they couldn't learn English. They want to learn English."

Teaching English, of course, is not the goal of the eighty-some ministry schools, but they say, "That's the only way you can get students." I ask you, if you want to avoid poisoning the church, is that the right kind of student? You cannot be indiscriminate in selection when you are dealing with spiritual reality or passion. Spiritual passion is not so much grown in seminary as it is selected and trained in the church! It's easier to train people who have passion than to impart passion to trained people.

Years ago, after speaking at a major seminary with which all of you are acquainted, I was driven to the airport by one of the students. (This was at least 15 to 20 years ago when seminaries really weren't talking much about missions, though this seminary has changed a great

deal for the better since then). I remember my driver telling me, "Not many students from this seminary graduate with missionary interest. A lot more come here with that vision than ever leave here with it. They bring their vision, but they lose it in seminary."

Thus, the selection process, the associations, the motif, the goals of the seminary—if these are defined by the self-interest of the institution itself—the tendency will always be to obscure and drift away from the fundamental, founding purposes of the institution. No healthy institution can possibly be what it ought to be if its goals are purely internal. Institutions can

only justify their existence if their goals are external, subordinating all questions of meeting the budget or what they will have to do to attract students, keep afloat, etc.

Degree Completion Recent years have seen an interesting new development. Somehow, man's necessity may be God's opportunity. Only a few years ago secular schools began to look forward eagerly to the arrival of a mass of baby boomers. As the tremendous surge of boomers flooded in schools built more buildings, added more faculty and bolstered their libraries. The seminaries also profited from the baby boom. But the wise schools knew that this "boom" would eventually bust. Someone specialists even predicted that when the boom collapsed, a thousand private colleges as well as many universities would go out of existence.

Well, the boom has now come and gone, and what actually happened? The peak of 12.5 million college-age students has now dwindled to 5.6 million. That's less than half of what it was before. But guess what? The schools are still in business. They simply shifted gears, the secular schools in particular. They still enroll 12 million students! How does that work?

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This phenomenon is not often talked about. I almost called it a syndrome, but that's exactly what it isn't! It's a healthy development, an invention mothered by necessity which schools would never have otherwise thought of. I'm speaking of the "degree completion" concept. Almost every college today is either doing this or thinking seriously about it. This shift has rescued dozens of Christian colleges as well as a thousand secular colleges.

What is the shift? Schools pick up the phone and call one of two companies that will—for a very hefty price—come running to re-tool and re engineer their operation for this survival technique. Degree completion is an off-campus program for people with two years of college who are beyond college age, 25 or older. (There are 40 million such Americans). As a result, by now over half of all university students are over 25—not the "normal" 18 to 22. They are not full-time students; they're off-campus. A great deal has changed. These students are older and more mature; they think and pay attention and do their homework, and they don't need loans. It's amazing!

Will we ever realize that that this might have been a better way to go in the first place? Forget the 18 to 22 year olds! In Germany they put them into apprenticeship, and both train and educate them on the job, which is essentially what this type of thing is. It's education on the job, right in the classrooms of the businesses.

This is, I believe, a pattern to think about. In a sense, it's been forced on the schools because few schools chose this without the financial pressure. It's ignominious. The accrediting agencies have smoldered and gritted their teeth and don't know what to do. But they recognize that a lot of their customers would go broke if they didn't go along. Note that accrediting agencies ultimately follow the lead of their institutional customers who support them! As a result, accrediting standards tend to be significantly related to school realities rather than educational desirabilities.

One momentous global fact is a really indigestible problem to the seminaries, the way they are now. You go out into the villages, small towns and cities in the mission fields of the world and you will find about two million pastors in harness who have no formal theological training and never will, the way things are. You go to those people and tell them you want them to take one course on Romans, another on Ephesians, etc. For them, this is like eating big lumps of something indigestible.

It's like going into the pantry when you're hungry and being offered a five pound sack of flour or sugar or five dozen eggs. If you go through the front door of the restaurant and sit down at a table, all those things come to you mixed together invisibly, and the integration is not only digestible but tasty! As David Wells indicates, however, our formal training programs present the different theological ingredients in an unintegrated form.

The Septuagint

Let me give you one example of what happens when seminary studies are not integrated. In our shop we've been trying to weave these various disciplines together into a completely new curriculum.

In this process we've realized afresh is that the Septuagint has fallen between the cracks in our seminary studies. It was the Bible of the early church and the most influential translation of the Bible ever made. It was very widely used in the early centuries and had an incredible influence. Indeed, 80 percent of the quotations in the New Testament come from that book and its vocabulary. The very order of our books today comes more from this Greek translation of the Old Testament than from the Hebrew Old Testament. Yet the Septuagint is rarely spoken of in many seminaries.

To trace a word through the New Testament is no great achievement

compared to being able to trace that same word all the way back through the Greek Old Testament, where the weighty terms in the NT likely came from. Do you learn to do that in seminary? I've talked to many seminary grads who don't own or perhaps don't even know the name of a Greek concordance of the Old Testament. Yet, the meaning of most of the loaded terms in the New Testament comes out of the Greek Old Testament, not the Hebrew.

The basic problem is that in the seminaries each of the Old and New Testament Departments has its own agenda, its own scholars, its own saints and its own literature. Most Old Testament scholars feel that to master Hebrew is all they can be expected to do. And while the New Testament scholars understand their specialty to be Greek, they don't often recognize the importance of studying the Old Testament in Greek.

Thus, by dividing Biblical studies into Old and New Testament departments, with one stroke the seminaries abolish from sight the single most important document that could inform us about the New Testament and the nature of the Christian faith in the early church. Isn't that amazing? Yet this fragmentation goes on and on and will continue unless and until the different professor specialists can give up their own individual classes and agree to work together on courses of instruction which combine their knowledge and skills.

Absence of Goals

One thing about goals has to do with their absence in certain areas. Here I have in mind the question of what goals should a seminary—or any kind of a training program—have regarding who should be trained? Again, two-thirds of the pastors in my denomination went to seminary in good faith, hoping to become something useful. Like Luther, they probably went into a religious milieu to solve their own spiritual problems. Often it is said that people go into

psychology because of some personal problem. To a great extent this is true for people in seminary. Surely seminaries are the place where you can learn about the things of God. Think of all the leading Christians who are there—fine, marvelous people. So by going to seminary you'll be better off, no doubt. But note, that's not the way the Bible talks about the selection of a pastor—by choosing young people with problems. The Bible talks about choosing older people who have solved their problems, not young people who haven't.

Thus who goes to seminary is at least as important as what is taught there. Example: the Pentecostal movement has very successfully focused more on the who than on the what. More recently the Assemblies of God in the U.S. has established its own seminary and is heading down the primrose path that the older denominations have followed.

However, down through Latin America, the Assemblies are still growing "to beat the band" by employing a completely different selection system. The Assemblies of God operates the largest extension operation in the world. In Latin America they have tried to enroll every single person in the congregation in one of their night Bible schools—not just pastoral candidates. And they always discover that some of those they enroll are born leaders. In their system people with leadership gifts can rise to the occasion. It may take years. In Chile it sometimes takes 14 years to be come a pastor. You have to go through many, many steps, and if you can't hack it at each level, you'll never get there. But in such a system, there's never a question as to who becomes a pastor, and they rarely make a mistake.

In the professionalized system—to which mainline churches in the U.S. bow and scrape—by contrast, a person goes through lengthy training during which he or she may be considerably isolated from the world in which ministry is later to take place. He then gets out into a church and, in my denomina-

tion anyway, can immediately become the moderator of a session, which is a group of elders in a local Presbyterian congregation. As the pastor, the newly graduated seminarian can be the chairperson of that group without having ever before even attended such a meeting. Is this the best way to train ministers?

The Bible talks about choosing older people who have solved their problems, not young people who haven't.

I think of Pedro Carasco, who lets people get out in the field early and get on-the-job training after they get there. The most valuable knowledge any missionary will ever get will be on the field. But most agencies and schools are not working at that. They could easily do so. Off-campus educational techniques and programs are a highly developed skill today. For example, ACCESS.

Off-Campus Training

ACCESS (Association of Christian Continuing Educational Schools and Seminaries) focuses on the education of people off-campus. Born over twenty years ago, it uses continuing education, not the somewhat whimsical new phrase "Distance Education."

America was born with what you could call an inferiority complex. The fearful assumption was that if one year of school was good, then two would be better. We have elongated that fear until an American liberal arts B.A. has no equivalent (in number of years) in any other country in the world, where people are ready for life much earlier. In a sense

we're just overdoing it, competing with Europe for "higher standards." Social historians say Americans shifted the fork to the right hand so that our people would not be tempted to eat with their knives. We have been hypersensitive about inferiority, comparing ourselves to what "proper people" were doing. "If in England they study X number of years, we'll study twice as many here."

We must suspect goals, both social and cultural, which dog our tracks and bedevil every mission field in the world. It's impossible in most mission fields to sit down and think the situation through and deal with it without admitting the enormous

power of social momentum from the West, which has structured the accrediting associations now girdling the globe like iron chains. They force us to do things, like it or not. The extent of this kind of insensitive cross-cultural transportation of cultural forms is just horrendous. In America, we got along for 250 years without all that. So can the barefoot pastors and elders around the world who can't even read. I worked for ten years in a non-literate society. The average church member knew the Bible far better than people in literate congregations. But we will find it very difficult to examine these fundamental, culturally encapsulated goals—even if they are killing our own churches back home!

Well, that's a good place to stop. I'm eager to hear what these other men add to this discussion. I have a lot to learn, I'm sure.

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