

## CHAPTER 2

### RESIDENTIAL TRAINING

Residential programs usually "bring students to a campus where adequate building facilities, an extensive library and a staff of specialized faculty members are located. These excellent provisions for education are expensive and usually require some source of subsidy in addition to student tuition. . . . The academic prerequisites for entrance are high, but no previous pastoral experience is required, and the location of many seminary campuses limits opportunities for most students to gain experience in pastoral leadership while they are in the seminary."<sup>27</sup>

In many places, it is "generally accepted practice that proper theological training can only be acquired in the context of a university, theological college, or seminary. . . . In practice, training has concentrated on the need to reach a certain intellectual excellence, measured largely in terms of the ability to pass exams (although an exception is often made for older students). . . ." The approach is content-oriented based on "the belief that students will only work for a prize or from pressure of desire to be first or to receive a certificate, and without

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<sup>27</sup>Viertel, A Guide to Decentralized Theological Education, 19-20.

these inducements most students will not work at all."<sup>28</sup> Traditional theological training "works on the assumption that it is preparing men and women for the 'professional' job of leadership within the church. Many theological educators are happily committed to this task. . . ."<sup>29</sup>

Educational values of residential education are detachment; a change in environment; concentration, time for absorption, assimilation, integration, practice, and application; intimacy of constant association; and community.<sup>30</sup>

### Criticisms Leveled against Residential Training

Various criticisms of traditional residential programs have been mentioned by those who have studied and analyzed these programs. The following were found in this author's research.

#### Professionalism

Viertel indicates that some are raising questions about the viability of university-trained pastors as leaders of churches whose memberships are composed mostly of uneducated persons. He goes on to state: "Suggestions are now being made that an over-educated pastor has as much difficulty functioning effectively as an undereducated pastor. . . . University-trained men

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<sup>28</sup>Anil D. Solanky, "A Critical Evaluation of Theological Education in Residential Training" in Missions and Theological Education in World Perspective, 156-157.

<sup>29</sup>J. Andrew Kirk, Theology and the Third World Church (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1983), 48-50.

<sup>30</sup>Henry Kornfield, "Seminary Education toward Adult Education Alternatives" in Missions and Theological Education in World Perspective, eds. Conn & Rowen, 199.

are needed, but a survey of church needs reveals that men without university or seminary degrees, but who have natural leadership ability and an understanding of the gospel are also needed."<sup>31</sup>

Emilio Castro states that the matter of professionalism "conditions the students to aspirations of success and motivates them to climb the promotional ladder provided by the church hierarchy. Pastors in some places are considered successful according to the level of salary they receive, the degrees they accumulate, the titles they hold."<sup>32</sup>

Kinsler concludes that "existing institutions and programs are imperialistic, . . . for they maintain the privileges and power of an elite and foment an attitude of dependence. . . ." In the years gone by, "western missionaries concerned with the formation of well-trained leaders naturally established the kinds of institutions they were accustomed to and inculcated a concern for ever higher standards. Today there is a perennial struggle to 'upgrade' the seminaries and Bible institutes in the Third World, producing an increasingly select group of pastors and leaders to serve a progressively smaller circle of churches and church institutions."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Viertel, A Guide to Decentralized Theological Education, 18-19.

<sup>32</sup>Emilio Castro, Foreword to Ministry by the People by Ross Kinsler (Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications, 1983), ix.

<sup>33</sup>Kinsler, The Extension Movement in Theological Education, 43.

Newbigin declares that the "standard type of seminary training aligns the leadership of the Church with the privileged elements in society instead of with the poor and the marginal."<sup>34</sup>

#### Academic Requirements

In traditional theological education, the academic level and the residence requirement often eliminate those who most badly need a theological education, the mature leaders of congregations. These "are usually married men with limited formal education and little or no preparation for their church-related ministry. They have jobs to hold down and a wife and children to support. Their families and their churches depend on them. They cannot and should not be uprooted from their communities. For them a residence seminary is not the answer, and since alternate modes of preparation are seldom provided, the church suffers from a lack of developed leadership."<sup>35</sup>

#### Cultural Imposition

Castro also affirms that the "western model of ministry has been exported to the rest of the world and tends to develop a life style higher than that of most of the nationals, creating a burden on the resources of the churches. . . . It takes young people out of a given cultural milieu and makes them totally unsuitable to

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<sup>34</sup>Newbigin, "Theological Education and Missions in a World Perspective" in Theological and Missions in World Perspective, eds. Conn & Rowen, 7.

<sup>35</sup>Lois McKinney, "Key to the Growth of the Church" in Discipling Through Theological Education by Extension, ed. Gerber, 182.

come back to that milieu. Christian leaders should be involved in the realities of the daily life of the people they want to serve."<sup>36</sup>

Newbigin makes the accusation that models of ministry and therefore ministerial training introduced by western missions is seen as having imposed a style of leadership which is foreign to the cultures in which churches are planted-- a style which "can only exist in a colonial situation where there are large foreign funds to support it."<sup>37</sup>

Kirk alleges that "residential and academically oriented training is elitist and culture-bound. It is only open to people who have succeeded in a particular educational system. . . . Those who do not respond favorably to the present norms of literary study and aural learning, or who find difficulty in expressing themselves articulately, will be unable to fulfill present training requirements. . . . The leadership of the church inevitably falls into the hands of people formed within one cultural and intellectual mold."<sup>38</sup>

Weld maintains that even in institutions with a 100% national faculty, "a cultural change may occur in the student who comes from a rural church to study in an urban residence program. After becoming accustomed to a higher standard of living, it is very hard to adjust to the more primitive conditions from which he came. Even if the seminary student were willing to return to his people, he might

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<sup>36</sup>Emilio Castro, foreword to Ministry by the People by Ross F. Kinsler, x.

<sup>37</sup>Newbigin, "Theological Education in a World Perspective" in Theological Education and Missions in World Perspective, eds. Conn & Rowen, 5.

<sup>38</sup>Kirk, Theology and the Third World Church, 49.

not be able to fit into the situation. His training was for the urban ministry. His very education separates him from those who were his peers. He talks a new language and thinks in different patterns. Many of his values have changed."<sup>39</sup>

With reference to "young men and men with higher levels of education who receive scholarships for theological studies abroad," Weldon Viertel states that "the churches cannot depend upon their returning to give leadership in pastoral ministry, especially to begin new work without support. Some will return, many will not--especially in countries where economic conditions are low and institutions of higher education are few."<sup>40</sup>

#### Weaknesses in the Content Approach

In residential training, there often is "too much content to master," making "meaningful coverage . . . impossible." Sometimes there is "lack of a clearly defined idea of our end product--what do we expect the students to be and do at the end of their course of study?" There is the "tendency to set up a system and expect people to fit into it, instead of seeking to understand the needs of people and setting up a system that meets those needs. . . . The exam says 'Pass' or 'Fail'. There is no measure of improvement an individual has made, and there is no recognition of personal input, of personal effort. . . . Many times there is a "disregard for the affective [or emotional] domain [which is] the key to all motivation. . . . and is vital in religious experience. Only mental achievement is

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<sup>39</sup>Weld, The World Directory of Theological Education by Extension, 12-13.

<sup>40</sup>Viertel, A Guide to Decentralized Theological Education, 33.

recognized. . . . Competition, not cooperation [is] the prime motivation. . . . One wants to go higher and higher even at the cost of others. Hence our examination ridden classrooms are no training ground for honesty, sincerity and free growth towards maturity."<sup>41</sup>

### Candidate Selection

Kinsler asserts that "theological institutions are equipped primarily for young men and almost exclusively for candidates to the ministry. . . . They have little experience as responsible members of society or as leaders in their congregations. . . . They are excluded from the normal processes of leadership selection and experience. They are drawn out of their homes, communities, and churches, set in an esoteric religious-academic environment and after several years are sent out into local congregations as the top leaders. Placed over mature men and women who have struggled with the problems of daily life, have demonstrated their gifts and Christian character over the years, have perhaps preached and taught and pastored, and have earned the right to lead, these young graduates come with only artificial credentials, a diploma and ordination, and as professionals who demand a salary generally above the level of the average church member. This pattern discourages serious participation by local leaders, dampens the natural dynamics of corporate ministry, and often produces mediocre leadership. It forms in the mind of the pastor complexes which are

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<sup>41</sup>Anil D. Solanky, "A Critical Evaluation of Theological in Residential Training" in Missions and Theological Education in World Perspective, eds. Conn & Rowen, 156.

difficult to surmount: a sense of trying to be something that he is not, of having to justify his role, of attempting to carry out all the functions of the ministry, of being the one who is called and trained and paid to do the job. . . . Thus the minister (servant) actually becomes the ruler; the concept of the ministry (service) is inverted to mean privilege; and the members maintain their dependence upon an 'imported' clergy to direct the life of the churches."<sup>42</sup>

Speaking to this subject, Weld claims that "many times the Seminary or Bible Institute receives candidates who have demonstrated no evidence of a pastoral gift. The seminary can provide certain academic preparation which does not necessarily produce pastors." He asks the question, "How do such men get into the seminaries?" and then answers, "Part of the blame rests with the institutions which sometimes bend the entrance requirements a little in order to expand enrollment. However, the main responsibility lies with the missions and conventions or unions which provide the scholarships and of the pastors and congregations which recommend the students. There is hesitation to offend by rejecting or expelling one of the students. Even if some of the leaders of the denomination recognize the lack of pastoral gifts, they feel an obligation to use the man after he has invested several years in study and they have invested a considerable amount of money in his preparation.

"The criteria for choosing pastoral candidates need to be carefully reexamined. It is . . . sad when men go to Bible School because they couldn't

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<sup>42</sup>Kinsler, The Extension Movement in Theological Education, 43.

make it in secular schools. The pastorate remains the only profession open to them and the teachers will push them through somehow."<sup>43</sup>

#### Financial Subsidies

Weld has indicated that in 1972, the "true cost of theological education" in the United States was four or five thousand dollars a year. On the mission field, "in addition to operating costs we must add salaries of missionary pastors. When the dollar total is divided by the number of students at institutions with small enrollments, the cost per student suddenly appears astronomical." Because of high living costs in urban areas where seminaries are often located, a student may receive a scholarship which is "higher than the salary he will later receive as a pastor. . . . Some theological students feel that the more (free) education they receive, the higher their pay should be upon graduation and placement. Those receiving scholarships find it difficult to become independent on graduation. . . . Candidates usually expect job security with minimum salary scales and other benefits."<sup>44</sup>

Kinsler refers to the fact that even in remote missions fields, theological education is one of the most expensive fields of education. He says that full costs have been hidden in various ways. For instance, "Often the missionary [and national] salaries are not reported in the institutional budgets. Student subsidies may or may not be included. The drop-out rate is rarely considered,

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<sup>43</sup>Weld, The World Directory of Theological Education by Extension, 13-15.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 10-11.

certainly not the number who abandon the ministry after graduation. Capital investment is taken for granted."<sup>45</sup>

Herbert M. Zorn, reporting on a viability study done concerning theological education in the "Third World" [sic] in the seventies, claimed that about 70% of the operating budgets of theological education institutions was coming either directly or indirectly from overseas sources, that most buildings had been built with foreign funds, and that approximately 30% of theological educators were expatriates (in Africa over 50%) sent by mission organizations in North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. He added that most national faculty members had taken advanced studies in North America and Europe with scholarships, travel and maintenance grants from overseas resources and that those who study locally or regionally receive major assistance from foreign resources for study at heavily subsidized institutions under expatriate professors or national professors with overseas training.<sup>46</sup>

Zorn asked an obvious question in his preface: "Can theological education as it has developed in the third world . . . support itself with local . . . resources in finance and personnel?"<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Kinsler, The Extension Movement in Theological Education, 19.

<sup>46</sup>Herbert M. Zorn, Viability in Context (Bromley, Kent, England: The Theological Education Fund of World Council of Churches, 1975), 13.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, vii.

### Inferior Quality of Instruction

Some eyebrows might be raised at this criticism, but note what Weld says. He indicates that lectures, abstract thinking, one-way communication, and rote memory constitute an extremely distasteful way for an adult to learn. He declares that in Guatemala, it was discovered that "the lecture methods of the residence program permitted the students to complete their studies without having acquired good study habits or the ability to continue their education in a meaningful way once they left the classroom." He further charges that little attempt has been made to determine what a pastor "in the local situation needs to know. The study of Greek or Hebrew usually has little value for a pastor." He adds that a study of professional education in the United States indicates very little relationship between course grades and occupational success and examinations show little about the person's ability to apply truth in his local church situation.<sup>48</sup> Happily there are some professors in residential institutions who are dealing with and doing something about this criticism.

### Inability to Supply Enough Pastors and Leaders

Kinsler notes that "thousands of congregations continue to grow and multiply and develop indigenous leaders with gifts and dedication but with little or no training. It is doubtful whether traditional institutions could ever train enough pastors for these churches."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Weld, The World Directory of Theological Education, 18-19, 29.

<sup>49</sup>Kinsler, The Extension Movement in Theological Education, 43.

Weld further explains that a shortage of pastors is felt in many areas of the world such as the United States, Central and South America, Indonesia, and some areas of Africa. He laments that the lack of trained leaders has tragically resulted in "the formation of schismatic and syncretistic movements whose understanding of Christianity has been seriously distorted."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Weld, The World Directory of Theological Education by Extension, 10.