

A PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS FOR DECENTRALIZED THEOLOGICAL TRAINING

I. EXCERPTS OF REMARKS GIVEN AT THE ASSOCIATION OF THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS OF THE CARIBBEAN, DURING ITS FOUNDING MEETING IN MEXICO IN 1964.

(These remarks were made by Dr. Ralph Winter, a missionary serving with the United Presbyterian Church in Guatemala)

In a way it is a curious fact that a "primary education" for a city boy going to minister in a particular Indian group will logically include learning not only a different language and thus even a different set of ABC's, but also a different system of weeks and months in some cases. It is interesting that a 6th grade Indian already knows more about both outer space and ancient history than did Thomas Aquinas. And his attitude toward the Bible, if not his factual knowledge of its contents, can easily be superior to that of Marcion, Origen or even John Wesley (on those occasions when he would drop his Bible open to get guidance on an immediate problem).

One great discovery in the fresh, new U.S. after its revolution was that for future pastors Plato and Aristotle were not so terribly important. Perhaps in revolutionary Latin America, it will be discovered that the immense accumulation of theological verbiage in our Western Civilization is not all so terribly important or vital either to the modern city or to the rural congregation.

All churches are certainly called to participate in the preservation of a scholarly Christian tradition, and we must hold this in high regard. Scholars we need, but it is questionable if it is necessary to take everyone who is called to the ministry and train him for research, however essential and right that is for a man of a different calling.

This tendency is bad enough, but it is even worse when those of us who may be called to a kind of scholarship rather than to the parish ministry have so lost sight of the essential Christian insights within all our bag and baggage that we catch our breath at the thought that a man with only a 6th grade education could possibly function effectively in any culture as a true minister of Christ, ordained of God, if all he has is 3 additional years of specialized training.

As a matter of fact, technically speaking it is not clear just how important it is for a Tzeltal Indian in Chiapas, Mexico to learn Spanish much less take 6 years of primary and 3 years of theology in that language. Is such a leader's actual Christian ministry (leaving aside for a moment his citizenship) in Spanish more important than is an English education for a pastor in Quebec? What essentially is the Christian ministry?

Granted the disciples took quite a long time to catch on to some of the rudimentary matters of the Gospel. But was this because their theological faculty didn't have enough full-time teachers? This isn't intended to be a joke. Of course we can't draw parallels between their world and ours but are there not parallels between their cultural elaboration and that of the context of some of the institutions we think we want or need in our field program? What would have been the typical American missionary's approach to theological education had he been in Galilee of old? Might not Jesus' training of the twelve have seemed as a matter of fact distinctly shallow and slipshod?

This is not to deny any value to a scholarly tradition nor to put any premium on ignorance. The intention here is simply to raise a small voice as courteously

and respectfully as possible in favor of a recognition of the profound simplicity of the Christian ministry, and therefore the technical parity of any program at any academic level that really does prepare men for an ordained ministry in the church. Are not all such programs, in terms of their purposes and end-products, seminary programs in the most substantial sense of that word?

No one is more convinced than the writer that the trend of global cultural levelling is such that all minority languages and cultures, including all rural men will soon be extinct. He does not even join the sentimental anthropologist in his tears. But this inexorable death is painful enough without the ascendant cultures in their own unwitting provinciality attempting by their pronouncements to deny these people the last rites, so to speak, of an indigenous ministry. What is the use of calling one institution a seminary, and another not, if in the sight of God they are each in their own culture performing precisely the same function equally well? Is the role of our proposed association primarily that of a fellowship of institutions dedicated to the preservation of a scholarly Christian tradition--essential as that is--or to the training of the ministry of the Christian church, primarily at the local level?

God will constantly call some men to preserve and to draw contemporary light from our immense, and by now tremendously complex Christian tradition. This is as priceless and essential a role today as ever. But precisely those men so called by God as guardians of this resource ought to instruct us how simple the essentials of the training of a minister can be; at the same time they ought to make us aware that it is perfectly possible that even in the most advanced theological course these essentials are sometimes obscured or even partially omitted. Very simply, it is perilous for the custodians of the Christian scholastic heritage to confuse their role with that of the parish minister and thus unconsciously seek to train for the former all the candidates for the latter.

One wonders if this assembly in its discussions of purposes ought not to be able to do at least two things 1) point the way to a series of higher-level scholarly degrees than have hitherto existed, encouraging every institution to participate in the scholarly Christian tradition insofar as the economic resources of its constituency permits, but at the same time, 2) avoid any carry-over of this entirely legitimate concern to a scaling or a grading of either Christian ministers or of institutions whose accomplished purpose is in part simply the preparation of Christian ministers on the parish level. That some rural people seem to resist the city culture with a seeming "anti-intellectualism" may be no more surprising than the very legitimate "anti-gringo" intuition of many Mexicans, the anti-Mexican intuition of many overshadowed Guatemalans, the corresponding anti-Guatemalan intuition of many Salvadorenans. It is basically not a ladder of inferiorities but of a legitimate feeling that says "who are you to define for me the proper characteristics of my culture?"

This plea then in part refers merely to a desirable attitude. Perhaps one helpful way to implement that attitude is not the adoption of greater kindness and forgiveness toward the institution laboring in an outlying community, but boldly to call a seminary any institution attempting to prepare men for Christian ordination, and to maintain carefully as a thing apart our scale of degrees that refers to scholastic breadth and not as such to a scale of better and better training for a minister in any absolute sense.

Dr. Baez Comargo has emphasized that a city boy needs special, additional training to work effectively in the rural community, just as a rural youth would need special additional training to work in the city. But our ladder of degrees does not

actually constitute preparation for the rural pastor in the same way as it does a preparation for a ministry in the city culture, since the "secular" correlates of its rungs are levels of urban enculturation. There is unfortunately no public school level of preparation that as specifically transmits the village or Indian mind as it does the urban mind, for the public school curriculum is frankly designed by urbans for the transmission of the urban culture. If this is true, then our respect for our degree ladder must be correspondingly conditioned by its evident partial cultural relativity.

Among other things therefore we must willingly admit that some of these rungs, to some candidates for the ministry, are not necessarily superior to that based on a "lower" rung. The village congregation may recognize this fact intuitively, while the "highly trained" outsider is baffled by such an attitude and generally concludes that the villager is shifty or stupid or stingy or all three. Instead of our association caring little or less about the nature of the "lower-level" degrees, it is possible that we ought to engage specialists where our powers fail us to help those in our association working at those "levels," not just tolerate them or carelessly exclude them. Is not our job that of being as useful and as helpful as possible not just that of measuring their success by our yardstick? Are they "lower" or "different?"

Finally, our very fellowship with the believers in these "different" cultures is in peril so long as we feel we must look down on them. Anything we can do to avoid that stance will help us help them--and they us, for "the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of thee.'" Our relation to them is not optional.

II. EXCERPTS FROM THE PAPER EVENTS IN CENTRAL AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN SEMINARIES
given by R. Winter in March, 1966.

"Yes, we can teach them all of this in class, and we do, but the reality in which they live, including us their teachers, contradicts the teaching. We are about to build an impressive institution. We prepare professionals who will expect corresponding remuneration. We know from experience in all of the participating churches the problems connected with institutionalism.

"We do not know if it is still possible to change the direction we have chosen since deciding in 1960 in favor of forming this theological center. Perhaps it would have helped all of the participants in the preparatory discussions to have investigated more deeply the need of the church instead of beginning with the premise that a seminary is a need beyond all discussion.

"Undoubtedly we can proceed building (the seminary), increasing the number of students, etc. as has been done up to the present. But, it seems to us extremely harmful to confuse this growth of an institution with the well-being of the Church."

THE DECENTRALIZED SEMINARY

Impressed with the three-year-old Presbyterian experiment in regional training centers, the Berea Bible Institute (Friends) in Guatemala closed out its lower level workers course last year. This year they have 100 students enrolled in 15 scattered centers for the three year course. A somewhat similar extension program is about to be undertaken by the Southern Baptist seminary.

These events indicate something of the enthusiasm found in Guatemala for a radically different conception of theological education; which I believe to be one of the most exciting of current developments in Latin American seminaries. The

teaching of students within their own environment and in connection with their secular employment is not merely a gimmick. The Presbyterian scheme is drawing a different type of man into the ministry and is equipping him in a way which gives at least some indications of being far superior to that gained in a residential full-time course.

How? The following benefits are described by the instructors at the Presbyterian seminary:

- 1) Older men established in a profession are given an opportunity to study theology. These men are already tested as leaders in their communities.
- 2) Their method of study forces them to rely upon reading and self-expression. Passive acceptance of lectures is minimized.
- 3) The variety of centers permits instruction at different levels - post-sixth grade in some instances, university level courses in the capital city.
- 4) Transition to a tent-making ministry is natural, indeed anticipated. Types of vocational crises that afflict full-time seminary students in other countries (one in Mexico City recently vowed that he did not want "to make money out of religion") are largely avoided.
- 5) Pastors utilize the courses as an effective type of continuing education.
- 6) Costs are surprisingly low. Because they all work, students pay for their courses and require no subsidy for living expenses.
- 7) Enrollments have increased more than tenfold.

During this trip I had some opportunity to satisfy two major doubts about a decentralized program:

Is the quality of education maintained?

Much depends upon the capacity and ingenuity of the teachers -- and their willingness to spend long hours in travel and the preparation and grading of workbook materials. These characteristics are blessedly evident in the small staff at the Presbyterian seminary -- dedicated men with impressive doctorates for the most part. The crucial point, however, is that they are working with students whose intellectual gifts are demonstrably superior to those attracted to the refuge of the residential seminary.

Is there a sense of community, an opportunity for vocational growth?

I was impressed by the intensity of fellowship gained in the evening hours by men who had made a sacrifice to be present at a regional center. Worship and Bible study preceded class sessions. A consistent effort is made to relate studies to the milieu in which the men live.

I attended the inaugural sessions of two new evening courses, one in Guatemala City and one in the more rural town of Quezaltenango. Enrolled in these evenings were about 20 men and women, including a physician, a secondary school principal, a lawyer, a carpenter, a weaver and a manager of a large farm. These desire a new form of Christian service. We may best help them by not offering scholarships or a new building or a remote dormitory on a missionary compound.

III. THE EXTENSION-SEMINARY PLAN IN GUATEMALA

An informal sketch of the current situation in regard to the Guatemalan experiment - R. Winters

BASIC CONSIDERATIONS

1. That the Latin American culture permits the development and perhaps even favors the role of an ordained, professional ministry which is at the same time not necessarily a full-time task for the individual involved.
2. That for both economic and cultural reasons, even the study for the ministry is not possible as a full-time activity for the vast majority of those whose spiritual calibre and leadership capacities would ear-mark them for the ministry.
3. That a strong Christian witness must depend upon formal (but not necessarily full-time) training for more of the protestant movement than its ordained leadership.
4. That in view of the booming growth of evangelical protestant congregations all through the hemisphere, perhaps the one area in which U.S. churches can most effectively help is on the level of leadership training.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

1. What can we do when the human diversity of Guatemala is so great? Two million out of three million total population are pure American Indians (of 5 major and 20 minor languages). There are "latins" so poor that their physical culture is indistinguishable from that of the Indian. On the other hand many of our churches partake of the modern urban culture with many professionals as members. Can one seminary course serve both the Indian Presbytery and the Capital Presbytery?
2. Should we then establish separate seminaries? Will this tend to harden rather than erase social distinctions? Is an inferior lower seminary for inferior or lower people, people who are yet expected to mix together on the floor of Synod? Shall we simply train one level in a single seminary? Which level shall we choose? If we choose the lower level (one of them) how can we help the city churches? If we choose the high level, how can we help the rural areas? If we have both available will not the keenest rural candidates seek the higher-level institution? Are rural people best helped by their more competent leaders being taken from them? Are rural people less intelligent in general? Shall we in actual practice merely wait until the rural people go to the cities, letting their rural churches collapse behind them, producing inner-city churches before them?
3. If we concentrate on it as a specific task, can we not design a seminary that will take any person anywhere who is outstanding in leadership traits and take him, where he is, as far as his desires, gifts, and situation require? Can this be part of a single seminary hub, this fact symbolizing the inherent and intrinsic aspect of the equality of the various social levels in the Christian ministry?
4. If a fairly elaborate and highly efficient apparatus can be set up, with "Regional Centers" in operation under a single, fully-equipped central institution, will not this mechanism have a by-product value in the accomplishment, or the possibility of accomplishment of several additional goals? For example:
 - a. Can we not train more than strictly pastoral leaders, others being workers in Christian Education, church music, and church finance?

b. Can we not give many more people training, including older people (30-45) married people, persons of mature and proven dedication to the church, give greater benefit of doubt by letting their performance describe their calibre? Can we not let men train themselves in ways that will enable them to go on to full ordination if they wish (and Presbytery agrees) but also be able not to go on without being branded as "denying the call?"

c. Can we envision to some extent a substantial ministerial category that will be that of a tent-making ministry (i.e. partially or fully self-supporting)? Will this foster Christian insight into the holiness of the secular, especially in the cities? Would not perhaps workers-become-priests be better in some ways than priests-become-workers?

d. Would it not be possible, with the proper kind of technically trained men on the staff, to make a significant attempt to decentralize certain industrial activities in order systematically to provide tent-making activities for pastors and also a new hope and way out for rural people who are otherwise consigned to poverty or evacuation? How about the seminary operating in the capital, as one phase of its vocational program, an "industrial liaison center" - this being one means of active entry into the secular world as well?

e. Does not the Latin American even more than the North American have less confidence in the purely religious leader, and more in the man who knows and is known in secular life and work through personal experience--something like the "complete man" of the renaissance?

BASIC OUTWARD CHARACTERISTICS

1. No residential program, except in the university-level Regional Center as an adjunct to the Student Center on the new university campus.
2. Contact with students: maximum - daily; minimum - weekly in the Regional Centers; two days per month in the Central Campus.
3. No subsidy or scholarships to anyone of any kind except the neutralization of the transportation costs to and from the seminary on the two-day monthly visit-- those costs are handled by the seminary, while the students pay for their food during the two days.
4. Training level both less and more advanced than the usual Latin American Seminary, depending upon the students.
5. Divisions of secular education as well as vocational in addition to theological, since for 90% of the area covered these first two are not available.
6. No school year. Time taken to complete a B.D. course, for example, might be less, would likely be more than the usual period. It is a fact that more mature students can cover a lot more ground in the same amount of time.
7. Generally far higher competence in the student body, despite far greater enrollment, since the non-residential "reach" of the seminary brings 10 times, perhaps 30 times as many worthy men into potential studies.

BASIC PURPOSE

1. Our direct purpose is not to train theologians since that kind of training almost by definition involves direct contact with the theologians of the world

themselves, and that involves going where they are. Yet we do expect to invite outstanding people to the seminary for special conferences several times a year.

2. Our direct purpose is that of refining and enhancing the skills that already are manifest on the congregational level. There are 200 Presbyterian congregations in Guatemala and another 3,000 in Latin America, with more than 40,000 other congregations of various evangelical traditions, many of them less able than we to provide this kind of training. We believe the Presbyterian church just happens to have a unique ministry in Latin America where it is in some ways the most acceptable of the historic traditions.

COMMON OBJECTION

Why do we not have residential as well as non-residential students?

1. This creates the idea of superiority of the residential training when it is not actually justified. We are giving higher-level course materials right now to some of our non-residential students than we ever gave to residential students before.

2. We attempted this in 1963. We spent 70% of our personnel and 80% of our budget on 5 students, and the rest on the 65 in the extension program. We are now relocating the five in one or another of the seven Regional Centers for 1964.

3. By turning all our resources into a non-residential program, we omit no one who really wants to study for the ministry, and we find we can supervise from 10 to 20 times as many students with the same funds and personnel.

MAJOR OBSTACLE

This is the matter of entirely re-vamping pedagogical materials from Church History to Greek. We feel "programmed instruction" is a technique with much to offer us. But it will be a taxing problem to produce all of these materials and also work out the details of the new program as it unfolds.

SUMMARY

We moved the seminary in 1962 to a new campus in the rural areas, having found that it was hopeless to train rural leaders by asking them to move to the capital. At the new rural campus, now 3/4 built, we discovered that rural people could not any more easily leave their homes and go to another rural spot than to a city. Thus necessity became the mother of invention in our development of plans to go to the student in our decentralized program. But it then dawned on us that such a decentralized program, with its Regional Centers in both town and country, could just as well reach the most sophisticated citizen of the capital as the barefoot Indian furthest out, and at least the former on a higher level than ever before.

POINTS OF REFERENCE

Bishop Mervin Stockwood of Southwark, for example, has looked to mature laymen as a source for church leadership in his area.

The Church of South India has pioneered in stressing the necessity of training people for and at the congregational level.

Recent trends in the U.S. are toward a new understanding of the importance of "Continuing Education"--the name of a new division of theological studies at Princeton.

In-service training and university extension divisions are daily carrying a greater and greater proportion of serious contemporary education.

A "tent-making ministry" is now being rediscovered as applicable in modern times as well as in the days of Paul.

With "rapid social change" to contend with, it is more important than ever to set up a seminary that will be expressly designed to help people do solid study in the midst of daily life, lest their education become obsolete no matter how formal or advanced it once was.

IV. EXCERPT FROM THE BOOK CHURCH GROWTH AND CHRISTIAN MISSION

This was written by Melvin Hodges, Latin American Secretary of the Assemblies of God Board.

How easy it is to accept the established pattern as the right one! Yet experience is teaching us that the traditional pattern of modern missions is not sufficient to meet the demands of the day. We will never reach the world for Christ if we simply follow in the groove worn for us by our predecessors. The New Testament approach is FLEXIBLE. It leaves room for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Are we spiritual leaders of sufficient stature to be able to determine the mind of God for the problems of our particular field?

We must integrate our training program with the national Church. Its pace should be synchronized with the tempo of the national Church and its program should meet the true needs of that Church. There is a tendency for institutions to become an end in themselves instead of a means to an end. A missionary may feel that the Bible school is his particular sphere of influence and carry on quite independently of the national Church. The Bible institute may become an island isolated from the mainstream of the life of the national church. But the Bible school must serve the national Church. The Church should feel that the training program is its own and that the trained workers produced are its own, not the mission's.

The workers should be trained to the task, not away from it! Some institutions seem to have for an objective the sealing off of the student from his ordinary life. The directors feel that it is necessary to separate him from communal life so that the school's spirit can be infused in him and his character can be built under the direct supervision of the school. Such separation may have advantages, but it is difficult to know how a student kept in the artificial climate of a theological school for three years or more can make the proper adjustment to the demands of rugged pioneer work when his schooling is finished. In the New Testament we read of effective on-the-job training. Jesus taught His disciples, but He also took them with Him. When He said, "Look on the fields, the harvest truly is great," He was in the midst of human beings who could be won. The harvest field was not something found on a missionary map of the world, but visible in the needs of the sick and sinful surrounding them on every side. Jesus taught His disciples, then sent them out to preach and to heal the sick. When they were confronted by failure, as in the case of the man with the lunatic son, He gave them further instruction. He taught them "on the job." In the 19th chapter of Acts we find that Paul had a training school in Ephesus. He taught them two full years. Lest anyone think this was classroom instruction only, the statement that follows reads, "So all Asia heard the word of the Lord." Certainly Paul himself did not take this message personally to all Asia. He taught others. With on-the-job

training, the workers and elders raised up under his ministry accomplished this tremendous task.

TAILOR THE PROGRAM TO FIT THE NEED

We must tailor our training program to fit the need. If unlearned converts feel the call of God, we must provide the elementary training needed so that they can fulfill their ministry. We should not neglect the older converts. In New Testament times, the Church laid hold of the more mature converts and these became the elders. Some had ministry in the Word and others helped govern the Church. Because we cannot give these men proper training under our present set-up, we are inclined to neglect them. By so doing we set back the development of an indigenous Church by ten or fifteen years, perhaps longer. Consider the benefits of short courses in Bible schools. For years the Assemblies of God have experimented with terms of varying duration. At present we have settled for a four-month term. This particular period has proved its worth. Note the advantages: (1) mature workers can attend, since it is for a short period out of the year; (2) the worker does not need help to support his family since he can return to his farm and raise a crop between school terms; (3) he does not lose contact with his people and customs; (4) he gets practical experience while he is learning; (5) if he is pastoring a small group, this relationship need not be terminated; but only interrupted, while he attends school.

THIS SEMINARY GOES TO THE STUDENT

by Ralph Winter

Unusual things are to be expected in Guatemala. It is an unusual country. Not least unusual is the current experiment of the Presbyterian Seminary.

No country has anywhere near so high a percentage of American Indians as Guatemala (about 70 percent), and no country in Latin America combines such great social diversity in so small a place. In this light the Presbyterian Church of Guatemala has engineered a new system of theological education expressly to take into account the great degree of cultural diversity.

In so doing, it may have forged a tool that can be used to deal with cultural minorities in other countries where the problem is not quite so acute.

Guatemala's diversity is displayed in at least three dimensions: Spanish versus Indian tongues, affluence versus poverty, and rural versus urban culture. The first two are clear enough. The last needs a bit of elaboration in order to understand its effect upon theological education.

RURAL MAN BERATED

The rural man is used to being berated for his slowness and stupidity or because he really does think and act differently from the city man. Some of the most puzzling differences of viewpoint between the two areas arise very simply from one of the most obvious differences between the city and the country, namely, the lower density of population outside the city.

City concentration of population permits and promotes specialization in all walks of life, including the ministry. But somehow, where people are scattered over the countryside they end up each one working at a variety of tasks. They don't live close enough together to serve each other as specialists. You might say they are specialists in doing things for themselves. Their final security is the land. No respectable person is without land and the knowledge of how to use it.

Rural people instinctively doubt the feasibility of specializing in any one thing. This is the first reason they are not eager to dig up full-time support for the man who comes to them trained only in an ecclesiastical vocation. Nor will such specialized pastors care to adopt the part-time pattern which is logical to the rural mind.

It is easier to see how a rural part-time pastor could put aside some of the many things he knows and restrict his efforts to a full-time ministry in the city than to see how a man trained only for the pastoral ministry could successfully work part-time in a rural area where he is ill equipped both technically and psychologically to earn his living by controlling an amazing variety of factors in order to be self-sufficient.

A second automatic result of low population density is the fact that a rural church movement must be able to survive and grow as a small-group phenomenon. In these days when city churches are discovering the vitality of the small group it is ironic that both missionaries and national ministers who are city-trained are so greatly at a loss in the face of the "hopelessly small congregation" typical (and

inevitable) in areas where population density is low. It is all too conceivable that a city minister can achieve success without ever learning how to care and feed the small group. A rural minister must acquire this skill as a primary tool. It is the small group, too, where leadership is more likely to be born and developed.

TRADITIONAL TRAINING IMPRACTICAL

When you stop to think of it, it is truly impractical to train a group of young men in the traditional way, in a single classroom, and expect them to go out and succeed in anything from an urban to a rural church, let alone in either an Indian or a Spanish congregation, or in a middle class or lower class group. The diversity is too great.

On the other hand, each of these subgroups has already developed many leaders from within its own group. These men's gifts begin to show up after they have become rooted in the soil of their group. They have families and jobs where they are.

The traditional seminary passes by such men for purely practical reasons. You can't pull them out of their communities for three years (or six, or ten) depending upon the level of education canonized for all ministers. Even if you could order them out, they could hardly be combined in any one course or classroom or curriculum because of the radical diversity among them. And what about their wives and children? Where would the money come from for all this? Would these men be readily assimilated back into their congregations?

Another possibility is to create separate training programs. This was actually tried for a number of years, but it only produced a caste system, dividing rather than uniting the church.

How can a single seminary prepare ministers for a diverse group of churches?

In a radical move several years ago, the Presbyterian Seminary of Guatemala boldly launched a program based on two assumptions: (1) that you can find leadership gifts in the specific subcultures of a church, be they Indian, rural Spanish, professional, or some other subculture, and (2) that you can train them where they are. Such a program treats the subcultures seriously, yet is unified in a single institution.

THREE YEARS OF STRUGGLING

After struggling for three years under this new mandate, the shape of the result is plain:

1. The school is primarily an extension institution. It has had to go to the existing leaders rather than try to uproot them from their various subcultures and combine them with their families in a resident student body.

2. The seminary now has 100 students instead of 10 or 15 as in years past. The students range from rural Indians to professional men in the cities, on levels both higher and lower than before. Remarkably, the students now include many of the younger men typical of a seminary as well as many of the keenest lay leaders of the church in both the city and the rural areas.

Accused by some of closing the door to younger men, the seminary actually has trained more than ever. But it is literally opening the door to men of greater maturity, men whose love for the church and whose Christian character are gratifyingly well established.

3. Eleven regional centers gather students in their own localities, once a week as a minimum. There are centers in two different Indian subcultures, five centers serving rural Spanish communities, three centers in cities, and one composed exclusively of professional men. Each center has a small reference library, visual aids and simple furniture. This equipment is the gift of the Theological Education Fund.

4. All students make a trip monthly to the seminary headquarters for a two-day review and spiritual refresher. This is a socially integrating experience.

5. A whole new set of study materials is in process of preparation. A modified form of programmed materials seems to be the most promising direction. The Theological Education Fund is supporting this also.

BILINGUAL STUDY SUCCESSFUL

6. Leaders in the Indian areas are for the most part sufficiently bilingual to do at least part of their study in Spanish, though their ministry may be mostly in their mother tongue.

7. For our church in Guatemala, it is necessary to offer an entire ministerial curriculum based on each of four different academic levels of previous secular training. With 15 basic courses this makes 60 academic packages which must be stocked. The curriculum offered is basically the same as the former three-year-ministerial curriculum, but depending on the level, it may be easier or a good deal more advanced than before. Most students now take longer to get through since they may not carry a full load.

8. Graduates of a given level who go on in secular training can get a higher theological degree only by supplementing each of the courses they took on a lower level. This adds 15 more educational experiences between each of the four levels, making another 45 packages.

9. The same extension network is now offering post-graduate courses to pastors and hopes soon to offer special courses to specific laymen who hold down jobs such as church treasurer, Sunday school superintendent, choir director and the like.

10. Finally, the regional bodies of the church, the presbyteries, decide whether or not to ordain a man, or if already ordained in another area, whether or not to allow him to work in their own area. It is the local church in all cases that actually originates the call. This automatically sorts out the right people for the right jobs. The big difference is that there will now exist for the first time well trained, fully ordained men for the rural churches and the Indian churches, something that a single, traditional seminary could never hope to accomplish.

"WE HAVE TO SHAKE OURSELVES"

We who come from the States have to shake ourselves every now and then in realizing what we are doing. We don't hold anything against the usual image of the kind of student who is picked for a full-time ministry in the city church, who doesn't really work at or even know any other vocation. Yet we cannot close our eyes to literally hundreds of congregations so different that no one seminary product could minister to them all, groups outside of the cities so small that specialized men can never fill the bill.

California Friends Mission in Guatemala and Honduras is adopting this system. It now has 13 regional centers and some 35 students and is collaborating with us in producing some excellent self-study materials.

In Latin America there must be 35,000 natural leaders heading up congregations without trained pastors. No traditional seminary is capable of reaching any of these men, yet it is folly to train people from outside to take their places.

From the standpoint of church growth, the well trained part-time man is a natural for starting and nourishing new churches. Even in urban areas, new churches must begin small.

The church that is unable or unwilling to create a competent leadership for the small congregation may be no more effective than the farmer who is a good hand at harvest time but can't be bothered with seeds or small plants.