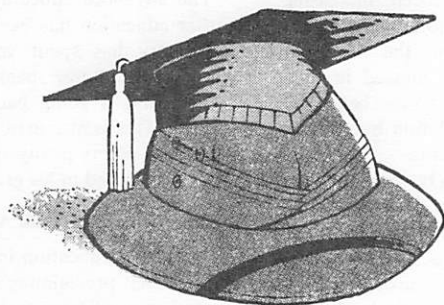


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**Advanced Education
for Missionaries**

Advanced Education for Missionaries

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The Church can obey the Great Commission better if it institutes advanced education in missions for its missionary leaders. Denominational and interdenominational boards can with profit give advanced education to many of their career missionaries, not as a favor to them but in order to be faithful stewards of God's grace.

Information about essential mission—by which I mean proclaiming Christ as God and only Saviour and encouraging men to become his disciples and responsible members of his Church—has been increasing. Churches have been multiplying in hundreds of different societies, languages, and cultures, and the means of propagating the Gospel that God has blessed in these churches can be learned. Missions can now be guided not only by the timeless truths of revelation but also by the experience of past and present missions.

True, this information is as yet largely unavailable. It exists in thousands of beginning clusters of congregations in remote lands and widely separated cultures. It has yet to be assembled by patient research, squeezed into a reasonable compass, written into histories, texts, manuals, and lectures, and taught; but this can readily be done. It is being done on a small scale at the graduate School of World Mission at Fuller Seminary. In addition, it should be done, on a much larger scale, at several well-equipped graduate schools of missions scattered across America, Europe, and eventually every continent. Empirical data concerning the way churches grow is the substance of that professional education which missionaries need. Without it, they go blindfolded about their work. This is fortunately unnecessary. Light on the complex business of liberating mankind through God's grace can now be obtained.

The advanced education I am advocating is not that

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commonly given to missionary and ministerial candidates. Prospective missionaries need preparatory instruction in linguistics, phonetics, comparative religion, area studies, anthropology, agriculture, life in a revolutionary world, the delicate relation between nationals and missionaries, the biblical basis of the Christian mission, and the application of the Gospel to all of life. Many missionary training schools, Bible institutes, and seminaries offer valuable courses along these lines.

The advanced education I advocate assumes that this earlier education has been received, and that the career missionary has spent years in his adopted land, has learned its culture, speaks its language, understands its people, and is going back to his most fruitful term of service. This is the man who can profit from advanced education. Every penny spent on his professional training will be recouped in his greater effectiveness.

The Task Abroad Is Different

Advanced education in missions is made necessary by the fact that proclaiming Christ and multiplying churches abroad is a different task from doing the same thing in Europe and America. The Eurican missionary has grown up and been educated in Eurican society but now must propagate the Gospel in Afericasian societies. These differ not only from Eurican society but also from each other in culture, history, income, education, power, and religion. Each has had Christian missions in it for a different length of time and each mission is now at a different stage. Most societies have younger churches in them; each church is at a different stage and is a different kind of church.

Until the missionary learns how churches grow in the specific population to which God has sent him, he will grope in the dark. He will spend years exploring dead-end roads. He may turn from church planting to secondary objectives and defend his turning on impeccable theological and practical grounds.

If a medical student were trained in anatomy, pathology, materia medica, and hospital management and

then sent out to do appendectomies, mastoids, and amputations without any knowledge of how others have done these, he would be in an analogous situation. In time he might become an excellent surgeon—but more likely he would quit medicine. Planting churches involves many delicate operations, each suitable in a specific kind of society. Missionaries should know how these operations have been performed on *their kind of patient*. What has caused failures? What procedures has God blessed? This is neither history of missions nor linguistics—though both branches of knowledge can be harnessed to this end. This is not anthropology—though God has used men's skill in anthropology to increase the number of his households. This is not knowledge of the revolutionary world or of national sensitivity—though both are ingredients in it. This is a specific discipline, missions.

Some may think that hundreds of Bible institutes, seminaries, and state universities teach so many subjects that the missionary can readily find what he needs, but this is not so. Advanced education in missions is difficult for career missionaries to get.

If they attend seminaries, they take courses designed for devout young Americans entering the American ministry. More Bible is, of course, always good; but the missionary has usually had several years of Bible before going to the field and has been studying and teaching it ever since. If he studies theology, he learns about systems designed to meet the thinking of Western man. The issues are social justice in America, secularism, universalism, and erosion of biblical authority and certainty. What missionaries really need on their battlefields is not taught.

If they attend state universities they will get useful courses in medicine, surgery, and agriculture. Much of what they learn can be used overseas. If they take education, however, they will learn about American education in million-dollar schools. Less of that is applicable where they work. Anthropology for the most part is taught by men who do not believe in conversion. Some are anti-missionary.

Usually missionaries on furlough can study the discipline of missions only in an elementary fashion, with a few missionaries and many young theologs all in one class, and the teaching geared to the American who will remain in America.

The missionary enterprise cheats itself when it does not provide professional education in missions and encourage workers to use their furlough to become more proficient in communicating the faith. Missions is a divine calling; it is also big business. Keeping it running smoothly, raising the money needed, recruiting new missionaries, solving problems as they rise, and keeping the whole undertaking financially responsible and spiritually blessed—these are without question a part of the task. But only a part. The whole machine exists to propagate the Christian faith. It needs to be staffed and guided by men who are educated in propagation, that is, in bringing nations to faith and obedience (Rom. 1:5, NEB). If 10 per cent (3,300) of the missionary force

had received some advanced education in missions, 3 per cent (1,000) had received much, and mission executives were all highly educated *in missions*, the discipling of the nations would be farther advanced, the treasure of missions would be spent to better advantage, and the Church would be able to give its Lord a better account of its stewardship.

Graduate Schools Described

Graduate schools of missions would give career missionaries the best possible education in discipling the nations—a vast body of knowledge. They would be manned by devout missionaries who were also top-flight scholars. They would be located near universities where advantage could be taken of libraries, computers, visiting scholars, and the accumulated learning of the social sciences. They would give graduate degrees in missions—professional doctorates, research doctorates, and, of course, master's degrees—and become centers for research and publication, providing the ever advancing knowledge so necessary to keep the propagation of the Gospel effective in this fast-moving world.

To make the proposal concrete, let us assume three such schools: one in the Midwest around Chicago, one on the East Coast in connection with the universities at Washington, Philadelphia, New York, or Boston, and one on the West Coast amid the university complexes of the Los Angeles area.

Existing seminaries with a clear biblical conviction concerning Great Commission missions will probably begin these programs. Certainly they have the academic experience required. But unless they are supported by many missionary societies, they will be severely tested at three points: (1) Buffeted by the gales of North America, they may veer from the objective of discipling the nations to "more pressing" stateside goals. (2) Burdened in raising funds for educating ministers for American churches, they may inadequately support education for career missionaries. (3) Not being in touch with the thousands of missionaries abroad, they will not know which hundreds should be encouraged to spend their furlough in concentrated study. Hearty support (or joint control) by the great missionary societies (more than 100 are affiliated with the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association and the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association) would go far toward insuring success at these danger points. It would keep the graduate schools committed to Great Commission missions, provide funds for professional missionary training, and select the men and women best able to profit by higher education and most likely to use it after return to the field.

Mission Degrees Are Necessary

Seminaries require their faculty members to have Ph.D. or Th.D. degrees. Teachers of theology get doctoral degrees in theology, Old Testament men get them in Old Testament, and church historians get them in church history. But teachers of missions get their Ph.D.s in linguistics, anthropology, education, and other fields.

Many have not had the chance to become competent in what European scholars call "the science of missions." Mission professors do, through later reading, come to know their field. Yet they would be the first to maintain that such reading is no substitute for several years of well planned education in advanced missions. There is no substitute for a broad, wide knowledge of missions gained by years of advanced study during which the future teacher of missions comes to learn intimately the many branches of the discipline—theory and theology of missions, apologetics in relation to non-Christian religions, history of missions, the social sciences and missions, missionary methods and techniques, the history of the ecumenical movement, and the intricate pattern of the growth and development of the churches.

Able missionaries of today should no longer be denied the advantage of higher education in their own field. It seems reasonable to assume that out of the 7,000 missionaries annually on furlough in this country, some hundreds would eagerly enroll in advanced courses. The missionary enterprise should see to it that, perhaps, a hundred Ph.D.s and five hundred M.A.s *in mission* should graduate annually from its advanced study centers. These men and women would spread throughout the entire missionary body, and, indeed, throughout the entire Church. In thousands of different tongues and cultures

they would shed a flood of light on reconciling men to God. Professors of missions in hundreds of theological training schools of various grades would be men who had seen in global setting the evangelization of the two billion who have yet to believe. They would have hammered out a sound theory of missions and mastered several branches of the discipline. They would be emissaries of Christ educated in missions.

Lack of advanced education in missions validated by higher degrees handicaps the whole missionary enterprise and should no longer be tolerated by the Church or by the missionary societies. Mission leaders should devote great effort to developing missions as a discipline in its own right. Its body of knowledge is large. Its practitioners, if Roman Catholic missionaries are included, number over 100,000. Its goals are clear. It is a strong, continuing function of the Church. Missions, considered as winning men to Christ and multiplying his churches throughout the earth, are increasing. This vast undertaking cannot afford to neglect the power that would come from controlled, directed, higher education *in its own field*. It will enter a new era of well-being and usefulness, and will be more pleasing to God and more effective in the healing of mankind, if it sets up an adequate program of advanced education for those of its staff best able to profit from it. □