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LEVELS, STYLES AND LOCATIONS OF TRAINING PROGRAMS

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“Give me this mountain” (Joshua 14:12) had been Caleb’s request and vision for years. In the prime of life he had been chosen for the team of surveyors of the promised land of Canaan. All agreed that the difficulties of possessing the land were enormous. Unlike the other ten tribal representatives, Caleb and Joshua gave a positive report, urging immediate occupation. They had to wait 45 years before action could be taken on their minority report. By then the difficulties had increased but God used Joshua’s military strategic skills and Caleb’s undaunted faith. They entered the promised land and divided it among the tribes. Caleb claimed and secured the difficult mountain of Hebron.

Penetrating the Muslim world for Christ requires the same quality of discipleship that Caleb displayed. Samuel Zwemer wrote nearly half a century ago:

“The Alpine climber who is trying to reach a summit can ‘on the upward path’ scarcely see his goal except at certain fortunate moments. What he does see is the stony path that must be trodden, the rocks and precipices to be avoided, the unending slope that gets ever steeper; he feels the growing weakness, the solitude and the burden; and yet the inspiration of the climber is the sight of the goal. Because of it all the hardships of the journey count for naught. The evangelization of the Muslim world is a task so great, so difficult and so discouraging at times that only the upward look can reassure the climbers. The evangelisation of that world is not a phrase to be bandied about easily; it is a deep life-purpose, a work of faith, a labor of love, a patience of hope – long deferred but undying.” (Zwemer 1924:70)

The Muslim world will be effectively penetrated by disciples who have these three qualifications:

- 1) Love, of which one test is intercessory prayer for individual Muslims by name and for groups. The Apostle Paul had this divine love (Romans 9: 1-3; 10:1-3).
- 2) Knowledge, which includes a personal knowledge of God through Christ Jesus, biblical knowledge and theology, and familiarity with Church history, especially early Church history. Some knowledge of the Quran and Islamic beliefs and practices is also required, including an acquaintance with folk or popular Islam. In addition, some knowledge of the extra-Islamic influences on local culture and belief is needed. For example, workers among students and other educated people in North Africa need to

be familiar with European secular philosophy. In Turkey an understanding of Marxism is essential.

- 3) Ability to communicate, which involves appreciating people's cultural setting and what questions they are asking, and going on from there. In this we follow Christ's example in John 4:7-26, and Paul's in Acts 17:22-34.

LEVELS, STYLES AND LOCATIONS OF TRAINING PROGRAMS

Diagram A indicates the following:

1. All the resources of personnel available must be tapped. Developing the potential involves training the "secular" as well as the professional missionary. Missions must see themselves in world perspective, and not as a professional elite, being willing to share any expertise with little hope of quick returns. Churches and missions have for too long seen the man, for example, who for Christ's sake becomes a university lecturer in a Muslim country, in which no mission works, as a second class disciple. His home church prays regularly for the missionary but not for the lecturer, even though the lecturer needs just as much prayer support. The average church member cannot understand why he did not become a missionary if he is so concerned with evangelism. Most missions feel no responsibility for him either.
2. Locations of training. All types of personnel need training both in their home countries and abroad, and the training is never complete. Bishop Kenneth Cragg in his paper on "Conversion and Convertibility" at the Bermuda Conference on Christ and Culture, in January 1978, said: "When mission fields are closed through revolutions or radical regimes, as of late in Ethiopia and Eritrea, is it enough to speak simply of a closed door for our evangelism and find the goodness of God in new opportunities for a visa in another place? Our wrestling is with 'principalities and powers' and the current meaning of that New Testament phrase is, precisely, these structures of power, of anger, of retribution, or ideology, or corruption, now on the stage in the world." (Cragg 1978)

No land is closed to the Gospel. Where the disciples of Christ are, there is the gospel. It is disciples whom we must train whether they happen to become missionaries or oil executives or construction workers. If we think only of missions, we will be training only a minority of disciples. We must make for the crisis areas as "seculars" before we are driven out of them as missionaries. Missionaries can only do a specialised job. Let us reminded by examples from the early church.

"By what means did Christianity spread? Here are four little lectures, and again how close to the spirit of the New Testament! First, there were full-time missionaries, sometimes described as 'successors to the Apostles'. About the year 250, Origen, who knew well both North-East Africa and Western Asia, wrote:

'Christians do all in their power to spread the Faith over the world. Some of them therefore make it their business to wander, not only from city to city, but even to

villages and hamlets, to win fresh converts for the Lord. . . and people give hospitality to these messengers of the Faith.

“Second, we hear of the witnessing of ordinary laymen, some of them of the humblest kind. Here is a non-Christian, writing about slaves ‘infecting’ a whole household with Christianity. The date is about 180, and the place may be either Alexandria or Rome:

‘We see in private houses weavers, cobblers, washerwomen and persons of the most uneducated and rustic kind. They would not venture to open their mouths in the presence of their elders or their wiser masters. But they get hold of children privately, and any women who are as ignorant as themselves. . . “We alone” they say “know how men ought to live. If you children do as we say, you will be happy yourselves and will make your home happy also.” While they are speaking, they see one of the school teachers approaching. . . or even the father himself . . . so they whisper “With him here we can’t explain . . . but you can come with the women and your playmates to the women’s quarters, the cobbler’s shop, or the laundry, that you may get all there is.” With words like these, they win them over.’

“Third, there is the witness of Christian example. Justin, born in Palestine, converted in Ephesus, and about 150 a Christian preacher in Rome wrote:

‘Our Lord urged us by patience and meekness to lead all from shame and the lust of evil. And this we have to show in the case of many who have come in contact with us, who were overcome and changed from violent and tyrannical characters, either from having watched the constancy of their Christian neighbours’ lives, or from having observed the wonderful patience of Christian travellers when overcharged (at the inn or the customs barrier), or from doing business with Christians.’

“And fourth, we must add the martyrs – the very words originally means ‘witnesses’. Men ready to suffer and die for their faith were a challenge to all who saw them. Tertullian of Carthage in North Africa about 197 wrote:

‘The oftener we are mown down by you, the more we increase. The blood of Christians is seed. Many of your own writers teach men to face pain and death bravely, but they do not win disciples as the Christians do, teachers not by words but by deeds.’”(Foster 1956: 16-18)

In the quotation above we see the varying levels of people to be trained: 1) the professional missionaries, 2) the semi-literate and illiterate labourers like many in the oil lands today, 3) the business people and the professional classes, and 4) those who suffer.

If we make the first our priority we will fail. Each demands our attention. Perhaps we are convinced about training the first three, but not about the fourth category. This last category includes all the others and relates to the universal Church. Our theology of suffering is weak. The 20th century documents of suffering come from Africa and Asia and not from North America and Western Europe. Those of us from the West must listen sensitively to what our suffering brethren are saying today and must re-examine the New Testament on the subject of suffering. Raymund Lull, the greatest missionary to the

Muslim world, demonstrated Christ's love by life, word, and death in the Middle Ages. In suffering and exile, Bishop Festo Kivengere shows this kind of love today. For President Amin. Dr Chaek Chun in her doctoral thesis writes:

“Suffering provides one way for us to participate in the Incarnation. *The Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us*. Jesus came down to where people were, even to the most lowly. He did this before he started any preaching or teaching. Thus, while suffering for the sake of suffering surely has no virtue at all, it is an effective way of ‘identification’ in order to get into the receptor’s frame of reference . . . The Acts speaks of suffering as though it were an integral part of missionary preaching. Paul’s long list of the things he suffered were all related to his missionary obedience. In his case, this service involved far more than the life style of poverty; it involved much physical danger plus the agony he felt and willingly embraced for the building and maturing of the churches in the eastern Mediterranean. For him suffering was inescapable.

This voluntary ministry of suffering is very basic to Asian missions. Suffering to serve is one of the paradoxes taught by Christ. The apostolic missionaries knew this path. They knew there would be no life and growth in the church without their suffering . . .

I think it is significant that today’s image of the Christian endeavour from the Asian receptor’s point of view is an image of comfort and privilege. Hence, Asians tended to reject the missionary and misunderstand his message.”

If we agree with Dr Chun, then all who are to be trained as Christian disciples for Muslim situations will be those who can overcome Satan “by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony and who love not their lives unto death” (Rev 12:11). Let us adopt a global strategy for training the types of people described above.

TRAINING IN HOMELANDS

1. A small corps of specialists needs to be formed – men and women from various lands of East and West who will study their own faith deeply as well as Islam and Arabic, who have experience in evangelism among Muslims and a gift in teaching others how to share their faith among Muslims.. Such people will have studied Islamics preferably to doctorate level. Some of them may do further research, while others will spend more time teaching. However, the researchers and teachers will keep in close touch with each other. This will ensure that the research is relevant and the teaching is informed. Without such a corps of specialists the Christian apostolate to Muslims will suffer from superficiality and probably be misguided in its approaches. These specialists can be trained using the Christian and secular universities, Christian and Muslim research centres, and through field studies.
2. Base training centres are shown by black triangles in Diagram A. I do not envisage the setting up of any new structures – only that each continent and major area

recognize one institution that can among its other functions act as a specialist training centre for missionaries, missionary candidates and those going to take up secular jobs in the Muslim world. Each centre would probably run short courses in various parts of the continent, as the need was identified. Each base training centre would need a person with high qualifications in Islamics, a gift for evangelism developed by some years of experience in the Muslim world and with ability to communicate his or her knowledge and enthusiasm at the required levels. One can be grateful for whatever is done to train people in their home countries for the Muslim world, but candidates of high calibre will not be attracted if there is no expert in Islamics. These candidates of high calibre may become the future specialist corps members.

3. Extension courses in various parts of each continent or major area. The base training centres will need to take initiative in contacting groups of teachers, doctors, nurses, technicians, builders etc who will continue to pour into the oil-rich lands of the **Middle East**. Where possible, local resource personnel, libraries and opportunities for practical outreach among Muslims will be utilized. In recruiting and training others in extension courses some Christians who have worked abroad in the Muslim world in secular capacities are needed. Missions send missionaries on deputation to churches and colleges, but where are the Christian “secularists” who are doing this? Is it not the responsibility of churches and missions as well as the individual “seculars” to be doing this kind of promoting? Finance is needed for a year’s leave so that the “secular” disciple can share the needs of Christian “seculars” for prayer, and challenge others to train for such a vocation. Some “secular” deputationists will be able to finance themselves but will need the encouragement of missions and churches. Others who work in countries like Turkey and Egypt will need financial support for the year of deputation.
4. Seminars on meaningful communication with Muslims.
 - a. For churches especially in areas where Muslims reside. My home church, which is near a part of London where a considerable number of Muslims live, plans to make use of me on my next leave by running a series of seminars inviting other churches in the area to participate.
 - b. For students who are in contact with Muslim students. Last December, the Finnish Inter-Varsity movement invited me to Finland for a teaching and training program on the Muslim world, Islam and methods of outreach. It was hosted by the Christian Union of Helsinki University, which invited students from other universities, and also sent me to a new University Faculty in central Finland, to share with those unable to come to Helsinki.

TRAINING IN LANDS OF WORK ABROAD

Training before a worker goes abroad is ideal. However, some go abroad without any training, and all need further training.

1. Communities. More experiments should be carried out in regard to community living. Dr Chaeok Chun has written her doctoral thesis on the theme of community and entitled it “An Exploration of the Community Model for Muslim Missionary

Outreach by Asian Women”. The type of community that Dr Chun envisages deals positively with three main problems:

- a. The Christian Missionary and his individualism – such a called community and its worship will help him to overcome his discouragement.
- b. The national Pakistani church and its divisions and nominalism – Dr Chun claims that in a community the divided and not too alive church will see a model of unity, fellowship and commitment.
- c. The Muslim enquirers and converts – Muslims can be welcomed into the community – in this case only women, as the community Dr Chun is describing is for single women missionaries. However, other types of community could be established for single men and for families.

In such communities converts might find a new community for themselves and a place of belonging before they re-establish themselves in a new way of life. The revival movement in the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt has brought the renewing and re-establishing of communities. I think of one in the desert, some way out of Cairo where men live together in a worshipping community, doing their daily work in the busy metropolis but strengthening themselves and each other in a shared life into which they can welcome guests and converts.

In North Africa I have stayed twice in a very small family community. The Christian family drew in two or three single team members and this nucleus worked as an extended family. Enquirers and converts were always welcomed for long or short periods. This family community, in conjunction with the local church group, proved an ideal group for training programs in outreach. Not only were expatriates of several nationalities present, but also come new national converts. Each person was able to contribute something to the seminar from his/her experience in evangelism. The group had a cohesion and was in fact a team. If national and foreigner, men and women, missionary and “secular” worker can train and work together, then new converts will more naturally fit into the group. Seeing “the mighty acts of God” together from a community base is convincing and strengthening. So often I have seen training programs for specialist groups which do not allow for such interaction, and which are generally academic and not practical. Intention to be practical after the course is no substitute for field work.

2. Teams. Christ spent most of his public ministry teaching groups through the events which arose. He taught groups of disciples, enquirers and antagonists. Operation Mobilisation has shown us the value of disciplined team work in the Muslim world. No-one climbs Everest alone – close-knit teams are essential. I recently visited a Muslim capital city in which there is no national church. The team of disciples is composed of several couples in secular posts, a women’s team living in an apartment, with the members studying at a local university or engaged in teaching jobs, and a single men’s team living in another apartment. The team unity is a witness to the meaning of belonging to the Body of Christ. Muslim enquirers are welcomed into the appropriate part of the team – a single man into the single men’s group, etc.. When one or two members of the team leave, there are always others to carry on. The team is committed to the Lord and to each other and to the task of making Christ known. The team can have regular and special training sessions to help in the accomplishment of its goals. The stimulus of friendship and fellowship should dispel

discouragement and loneliness, and provide a healing atmosphere for tackling those problems that do occur. I would like to see more teams of people who have trained together before going abroad. Cannot a doctor and his wife, a lecturer and his wife and a few single people while at Bible college, or as members of the same local church, form such a team and then go abroad with the specific backing of their church or Bible college?

3. Orientation Courses. Not only can orientation courses for missionaries be held on the field, but orientation courses for workers going to the Middle East could be held for Pakistanis, Indians, Filipinos, Koreans etc. The Karachi Institute of Theology in Pakistan held its first seminar in February this year for Pakistanis going to the Gulf areas. The Indian Missionary Training Institute in Nasik, India, is training Indians for service abroad. In July I shared in a three month program at Nasik which included some Islamic studies and a course on Muslim Evangelisation
4. Travelling bands. We need a small group of resource personnel who individually, in twos or in teams as the occasion demands would be able to give training to these communities, teams, seminar groups and local churches. Helping individuals would also be a significant part of this ministry. In Diagram A these resource personnel are shown as being linked to the base training centers but free to pursue their intercontinental ministry, which ensures that news and prayer information is diffused, that people are prepared and trained for living situations, and that the resources of East and West are shared.
5. House Churches. Training must take place in a creative milieu which will contribute to the further development of the disciples, to the welcoming of believers and enquirers and to the nurturing of the church. House churches can offer all of this. House churches most naturally develop where there is no central church structure and building, but where there is a central meeting place and organised structure there is no reason why house churches cannot be encouraged. "The local church can learn to be free of its obsession with self-preservation, in order to be a people learning to live dangerously in witness, planning and serving." (Jones 1974:10)

My last plea is for more written materials and cassettes for training, especially ones we can use with Muslims. We need Bible studies about methods of outreach, study papers for group participation on Islamics, but we need even more Bible study outlines that we can study with our Muslim friends, and cassettes, pamphlets and books that are especially written for them. We are in danger of so stressing preparation that we fail to do anything. The challenge of actual encounters with Muslims, friendships and mutual exchange of hospitality will send us back to our Bibles and our books about approaching Muslims, and stimulate us to request our friends to pray.

Climbing Everest is a dangerous pursuit. If we, as Christ's present-day disciples, lived more dangerously we would find more rewards for our climbing. If under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who is the supreme teacher and trainer, we were more willing to leave our safe confines we might find that the Divine Initiator would lead us into more fruitful ministries. God is great, and for His disciples to penetrate the Muslim world for Christ cannot be beyond His greatness.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. What parts to (a) the “seculars” themselves, (b) missionary societies and (c) local churches play in preparing, training and supporting in prayer and recruiting “secular” disciples?
2. What can be done to implement further global strategy for training as suggested on Diagram A, using the resources of both East and West?

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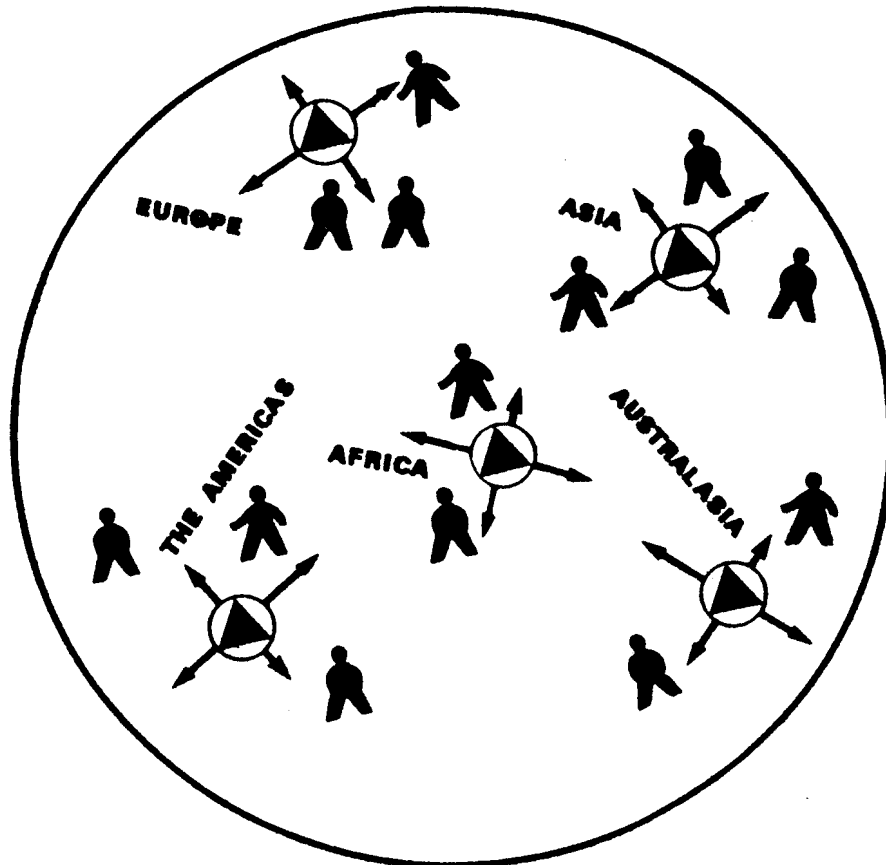
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DIAGRAM A

A GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR TRAINING PROGRAMS



-  :at least one strong base in each major area related to the Muslim world.
-  :extension courses in various parts of each major area.
-  :base personnel--mainly in one major area.
-  :resource personnel--interchanging, peripatetic between continents, continually renewing experience in the Muslim world.

FROM ALL THE WORLD:

- *1000 missionaries with specialized training for the Muslim world.
- *9000 "seculars" with specialized training for the Muslim world.
- *Develop training programs for all Christians in Muslim lands.