

INTERNATIONAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

for

world churchmen in asia

singapore

August 3 through September 14, 1969

REPORT FROM SINGAPORE

I. THE DESIGN OF THE INSTITUTE

1. Location. The International Training Institute for World Churchmen in Asia was held at Trinity Theological College, Mount Sophia Road, Singapore, from August 3 through September 14 of this year. Churchmen of the area gathered with the participants at the opening banquet. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, a Muslim representing the Prime Minister of Singapore, spoke on the role of religion in world development. The keynote address on the renewal of the Church in Asia was delivered by the dean of the Cathedral, Bangalore, India. Singapore was an ideal location for the ITI not only because of its location and climate but also because it is a signal demonstration of nation-building in the East. The facilities at Trinity College were excellently suited to the program, and the support of the college faculty and the religious community in Singapore contributed greatly to the success of ITI.

2. Constituents. One hundred and two delegates representing sixteen Asian nations and seventeen denominations participated in the six-week Institute. There were eighty men and twenty-two women. Among these there were eleven couples. The delegates as a whole represented the emerging church leadership in the East. Most of them were in their thirties; a few were still in their twenties, and perhaps four were over fifty. The largest delegations came from India, Malaysia and Australia. From the seventeen church bodies the largest representations were Methodist, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic. In total there were fifty-six clergy and forty-six laymen. The lay-

men were doctors, civil servants, housewives, secondary and college teachers, businessmen, social workers, nurses, laboring men and the like.

3. Objective. The aim of the Institute, simply put, was to enable the participants to be effective forces of renewal in their own local churches. This required a program of formal education, practical training, and spiritual motivation. The formal education had to do with understanding the real world in which men live today and how the Word in Jesus Christ can be effectively articulated in it. Practical training meant first of all, enabling the delegates to become skilled teachers to begin the re-education process of the local church, which is the first requisite for church renewal. Secondly, it meant equipping them with the methods and tools for social change relative to the reformulation of local churches and their communities. Thirdly, spiritual motivation was perhaps both the most important and the most difficult. It required inspiring the delegates to initiate action and then giving them the resources to maintain themselves in the almost impossible tasks which initiating action would eventually lay upon them.

4. Construct. The accomplishment of this end required a specially designed educational vehicle. In a manner of speaking, the International Training Institute was this vehicle. The ITI was a method, not in any detached, mechanical or routine sense. It was a method relevant to the human element in world development. In the broad sense, the design involved three intents: first, it was an endeavor to bring together in one educational construct intellectual understanding, practical training and motivating inspiration; secondly, it intended to catch up the total time and experience of the participants during their six weeks together into a single educational process; and finally, it was an effort to bind together in one unified educational construct a wide variety of pedagogical devices, instruments and techniques for the sake of a comprehensive gestalt of creative impact.

II. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCESS

5. Formal Studies. The more formal part of the curriculum was an exercise in crash education. It was comprised of some fourteen courses in all. Nine of these were content courses, conducted in sequence, one on every Monday and Tuesday and another on Thursday and Friday. These two-day courses were composed of four sessions, each five hours in length, which included a lecture, a period for individual study and a discussion seminar. The subject matter in the nine content stud-

ies was theology and sociology. The objective was to obtain a depth understanding of contemporary society and the role of the People of God in it. The other five formal studies in the total of fourteen were social, religious and educational methods. These methodological studies were constructed as four one hour lecture courses. They were held four mornings a week and dealt with the basic principles for social change, spiritual growth and the educational process.

6. Practical Training. Major emphasis was placed upon training the participants as grassroots teachers and leaders in church and community action programs. Three extended pedagogical laboratories, each covering a two-day span, were held during the six weeks. In these labs the delegates created their own lesson plans, lecture models, and course constructs, while they pushed for clarity in study methods and imaginal teaching procedures. In addition, small group, practice-teaching tutorials were held each day of the Institute. Here the participants taught each other both in giving lectures and conducting seminars. There were also three two-day workshops on the practices of local church renewal and community reformulation. Most important, the whole last week of the Institute which was called a Council was given over to working out the concrete strategies and tactics necessary to the renewal of the People of God in the various regions of Asia. The students produced, during these workshops, thirty-five documents ranging from four to one hundred pages, which provided the practical tools for their use on return to their homes.

7. Extra-formal Education. The academic curriculum of the Institute was set in a carefully designed context of non-formal educational procedures aimed at the motivational aspect of the learning process. The range of this effort was wide and complex and can only be touched on here. It began with the place where the school was held and with the decor that provided the immediate imaginal and symbolic environment of the students. The decor was a labyrinth of maps, art forms, charts and symbols that quietly but unceasingly communicated the necessity for globality, the wonder of the gifts of the East, the possibility of a renewed Church and the imperative for a new vehicle for society. The timeline or internal rhythm of the day, the week, the month was another crucial factor and can be seen through studying the attached schedules. Every Wednesday was set aside for special happenings. These included a missionnal exploration of Singapore; a train trip to Kuala Lumpur to study the urban, industrial and racial situation in Malaysia; a corporate work-day on the campus of the college; and a cultural festival in which the delegates demonstrated through food, song, dance, ikons and drama the unique quality of hu-

manness within their own people. Each Friday evening offered an encounter with some other renewing force in society. Illustrative of this was a meal and dialogue as guests within a Buddhist monastery and a Ramakrishna mission. Sunday mornings were given to visiting various Christian churches as a spiritual exercise in ecumenism. Many attended Catholic Mass for the first time in their lives. All of this was not extra-curricular but very much a part of the one educational process.

8. Spiritual Nurture. Development of spiritual depth and disciplined corporateness are two sides of a single coin without which the Church will not be renewed and without which the human element in world development will not be fostered. To accomplish this with any authenticity today is no easy matter. The total student body was divided into four colleges for this end. These colleges in turn were divided into teams of eight and work units of four. Their first function was mutual human care for intellectual, spiritual, material and vocational needs. The second function was discipline of corporateness for the sake of a common mission. The teams worked together daily in chores called obediences, relating to housing, meals, and the like. The four colleges met separately four times a week around a common evening meal for two hours. During this time, they discussed the meaning of the devotional life, meditation, contemplation and prayer, for the secular world. They studied together Kazantzakis' Spiritual Exercises. They reflected upon the nature and meaning of corporateness for effective action, and they dealt with the business of the day and the progress of the Institute. The college construct was the place where deep personal relations developed and spiritual motivation for common mission was generated.

III. THE EFFECT ON THE DELEGATES

9. Basic Impressions. The comments of the participants in the appendix to this report indicate what they felt were the significant consequences of the Training Institute. Here the concern is with the faculty's impressions of what happened to the delegates. For more than a few, it was obvious that their whole lives underwent radical reorientation. For almost all, it took at least half the six weeks to adjust to the long hours, hard work, intellectual rigor and experimental nature of the Institute. By the end, the group as a whole, with almost no exception, was grateful and impressed with this kind of discipline. The requirement that each participant lead a seminar and give a lecture was frightening to most, but having done it they were excited and released by the experience. Many such detailed observations could be listed. The paramount effects upon the delegates can be summed up with the categories: asian unity, practical know-how and church renewal.

10. Asian Unity. Those who came to Singapore, however broad their past experience, found their lives altered by a vision of a new way to be significantly involved in the world. Required as they were to live, work and study together with others of foreign and in some cases alien nations, with radically different educational, economic and cultural backgrounds, they learned not only that they could exist together but that as Asian churchmen they shared a common identity and mission. More important, they discovered as they worked together on the problems and plans for their local churches that the Asian Church as a whole must have a single corporate thrust in history. And thus during the six weeks they became authentic missional colleagues with one another. It was in this context that they began to appreciate the necessity for a common discipline relative to the use of time and space, and relative to common strategical relations and mutual accountability. Indeed, before the Institute was finished, the delegates rescheduled their own rest periods for further planning together for the impossible tasks they were taking upon themselves as the Asian Church.

11. Practical Know-How. This new sensitivity intensified the desire of the participants to acquire practical skills to fulfill their role as comprehensive spirit men and leaders of the local church. With enthusiasm and intentionality they struggled with the formal content and the practical techniques of the courses. Many became exceptionally adept in preparing lectures and leading seminars. For the first time, some saw that there was a way in which they could grasp the scope of the social problems that confront them and transpose it into goals, strategies and tactics by which society can be changed. They experienced in the college care structure the way in which the local congregation may know relevant intellectual, physical and spiritual care, and became sensitive in a fresh way to how they may deal creatively with other lives.

12. Church Renewal. Perhaps most important, the participants grasp anew that the church is significant and renewable both locally and globally. They say that the local church can not only change individual life but actually influence the direction of the course of history. They caught a fresh vision of the potentiality of the historical church. Seeing in a new perspective its broad structures, its store of spiritual resources, its deep concern for humanness, new hope was born relative to the church's being an effective instrument for restructuring and enabling human society. They were impressed with awareness that the vital leadership for social change in Asia was directly or indirectly impacted by the missionary activity of the church in the last cen-

tury. Their attitude of self-depreciation relative to Christians being a minority in Asia was radically challenged by the insight that the People of God are always a minority and that a dedicated few can alter the course of history. It was this kind of understanding of the historical church that elicited their own commitment to the renewal of the church in Asia. The Singapore graduates are not only equipped to enable their churches, they are resolved to give themselves to this task.

IV. THE IMPACT ON THE FACULTY

13. Institute Model. The criticism by the participants throughout the six weeks played a signal role in giving form to the Institute. The most important contributions had to do with time schedules, presentation of material, seminar constructs, arrangement of curriculum, study structures, food, and on and on. They were invaluable teachers of the faculty. They were also colleagues. Out of this creative relationship, Singapore was a genuine pilot project for such training institutes of the future. The practical layout which issued from this joint effort is reflected in the accompanying weekly schedules, curricula charts and constructs of the common life. The most important effect of the six weeks upon the faculty was this experience of developing along with the participants a workable model for an International Training Institute. In addition to this, the collegiality developed in this effort means that future Institute faculties will be international.

14. Eastern Christianity. The second significant impact the Institute had upon the faculty was the intensified clarity that came relative to the ability of the East to minister unto the sickness of the West. Most obviously, the West has developed its unique gifts in an astonishing fashion. Indeed, those gifts have altered the destiny of every man and nation on the globe. Yet, in this very process the West has developed a double malaise. It is first of all a dwarfed sensitivity after the discontinuity, the transrationality, the raw mystery in the deeps of human existence. This has occurred as a result of the important emphasis upon objectively knowing and practically doing. The second form of Western illness is the blindness that has occurred to the essential sociality of humanness as a result of a creative concern for the individual that decayed into a reductionistic individualism. It has become clear that Hinduism, not as a religion but as an understanding of humanness, has stored up wisdom relative to the first form of Western illness. And Sinicism has the wisdom for the second. The problem of the Eastern Church is that they no longer understand their wonderful gifts. Or they have been taught, mostly

by Western Christianity, to be ashamed of their gifts. The task, then, of the East is to recover and affirm the greatness of their understanding of what it means to be human. Then they must transpose that understanding into the context of the post-modern world. And finally, practical viaducts must be built to channel this understanding with authenticity to the modern world. It has taken perhaps too many words to get this said. But it is crucial to the future well-being of both the Church in the East and the Church in the West. The practical beginnings are indiginization conferences, the ground for which is laid by such efforts as the Singapore Institute.

15. Global Renewal. The third awareness forced upon the faculty relates to the need and readiness for church renewal within the Christian bodies of the East. One might think that just because the younger churches were younger that they would not be in need of renewal like the older churches. This is not the way it is. The Western Church necessarily brought the Word in Christ back to the East from which it came, in the intellectual and practical framework of the West. For this reason, when the Church in the West was in trouble the whole body was in crisis. The awakened edge of the Church in the East is vividly aware of this and is ready to move. Clearly, renewal in the East as in the West is beyond the intellectual or theoretical phase. Eastern churchmen are now concerned with the practical or sociological aspect of church renewal. Reformulation of the Church structures for the sake of effective missional impingement is the passion of the Eastern as well as the Western Church. Both are in need of adequate tools and workable methods for that task. Furthermore, it became dramatically clear that the tools and methods can be the same for both East and West. Of course, in each culture and every local situation they must be adapted to the unique circumstances. This was signally demonstrated in the practices of the Singapore Institute. However, while the particulars may vary infinitely, the vision is singular. As the Church is one, so the effort in century twenty to renew the Church is a common enterprise on a global scale.

16. Missionary Movement. As the faculty observed the progress of the participants at work day after day it began to dawn upon them that a new kind of missionary movement was coming to be within the Church as it endeavored to renew itself in the twentieth century. After the fact of such an awareness, it is not so surprising. For whenever the Church is the Church it is missionary. And whenever it renews itself it creates a new missionary thrust, each unique in itself. The one emerging today is radically different from the great movement now passed from the scene of history. This one is not a matter of one part of

the globe bringing gifts to the rest. It is rather the complex image of every part of the Church serving every other part of the Church and the world. Again, it is not an effort to make Western Christians out of non-Christians, but rather that of being the suffering servant on behalf of all men everywhere. It is the Church awakening and nurturing the human element in world development. All of this became evident as the delegates recommitted themselves to be the forces for renewal in Asia. Furthermore, the motivating force here was a vision of the total mission of the Church as a vital necessity to the civilizing process. The vision of a Church that dares to transcend the national idolatries and cultural chauvinism which cripple our time; that risks the identification of itself with secular society; that freely lays down its life for the needs of humanity is bearing the new missionary thrust of the People of God.

V. THE FOLLOW-UP IMPERATIVES

17. General Training. The initial planning for ITI included a carefully conceived and effective follow-up program that was both comprehensive and intensive. As the Institute evolved, the participants became increasingly vocal about the need for an effective continuing program for training. It is very clear to the faculty that this imperative for follow-up must be met without delay. The help the participants need is, first, the opportunity for practice teaching in actual re-education courses in their own countries under the guidance of experienced teachers. Second, the participants need the assistance of on-the-spot catalytic consultants who can help them begin their own parish renewal and community reformulation. Third, advisory assistance must be provided whereby the area and regional structures are created through which the re-education and reformulation of the church in their area can take place.

18. SEAPAC. If these needs are to be met, there must be both a long-range plan and an immediate nine-month plan whereby the most pressing needs of the participants can be met. This nine-month follow-up program, the most urgent concern, will be implemented in both the Asian sub-continent and in South East Asia-Pacific. Participants from South East Asia and the Pacific sphere made concrete requests during the Singapore Institute which we propose to meet through the following four point plan:

- 1) South East Asia. Three family units (six well-trained teachers) will be assigned to Kuala Lumpur and Singapore at the request of churchmen there. They will conduct courses, teacher train-

ing and consultations with local churchmen in Singapore, West Malaysia, Indonesia, East Malaysia and Thailand. A significant number of those who participated in the ITI will provide leadership in these ventures.

- 2) East Asia. A teaching team will be sent to this area in January-March, 1970, where they will be joined by several ITI participants in holding courses and consultations in Hong Kong, the Philippines, and other countries of East Asia. Two members of the team will remain in each area for six months as consultants and teacher trainers, in response to invitations as they are received.
- 3) Pacific Islands. At the request of one of the ITI participants, four teachers (one of whom is an Australian) are being sent to Samoa as secondary school teachers. They also will offer courses and consultations for local churches throughout southern Polynesia. During April to June, 1970, a teaching team assisted by nationals from Samoa and the Marshall Islands will conduct courses recruited by local church leaders in Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia. Additional teachers trained in church renewal and imaginal education will be sent to other parts of the Pacific to meet the crucial need for secondary school teachers.
- 4) Australia and New Zealand. Six teachers are already working with awakened churchmen here and in one sense no special follow-up program is needed. However, the Australian participants have projected intensive work in two areas, training teachers and consultants for other countries, and work among the Aboriginal people (three of whom attended the Singapore Academy). Special help will be given in the development of these crucial areas of work in imaginal education.

19. Sub Asia. The vast and densely populated sub-continent presents a more difficult follow-up task. A first phase, culminating in the summer of 1970, will be undertaken step by step as follows:

- 1) September-December, 1969: Two faculty members, both presently in Singapore, will visit each of the six areas of the sub-continent: East India, South India, Ceylon, West India, Central India,

North India and Pakistan. They will provide consultative assistance for all those who participated in the Singapore Institute and will assist in setting up educational programs for the winter quarter.

- 2) January-March, 1970: Two teaching teams, comprised of Institute faculty and participants from the sub-continent will conduct educational programs in each of the six areas.
- 3) March or April, 1970: Teachers from the two teams will conduct a special all-India educational conference which has been requested by several church leaders.
- 4) 1970. A follow-up consultation will finalize plans for the summer Institute by working out curriculum, developing a systematic recruitment plan, and providing further pedagogical training for indigenous teachers.

20. Further Institutes. In the concluding workshops of the Singapore Institute, participants from both the South East Asia-Pacific area and the sub-continent began planning similar Institutes in their respective areas. An Institute for each area was projected for the summer of 1970. Possible locations are Ceylon (which would permit both Indians and Pakistanis to attend) and either Hong Kong, Manila, Singapore or even the Pacific Islands. Both Institutes were envisioned as greatly increasing the number of people available for the tasks of conducting mass re-education of grassroots churchmen, beginning the necessary reformulation of existing forms of the local church by the restructuring of the local congregations and developing of signal parish or community projects that would point the way for missional involvement in society, and cultivating the deep spirit resources necessary to sustain the Church in mission. Participants and faculty share the conviction that the follow-up programs outlined above and these two summer Institutes will not only increase the forces of renewal, but also amplify the movemental dynamic within the life of the Church in Asia.