

PROGRESSIVE REPORT ON FUNCTIONAL GROUP

Saphir Athyal

*Dr. Athyal, Yeotmal, Maharashtra, India, is
Principal of the Union Biblical Seminary in
India.*

I. Primary Goals or Priorities

The priorities in theology and theological education for the rest of this decade are:

1. *Training leadership* with respect to the Third World Church training of national leaders and teachers.
2. *Post-graduate level training* to strengthen the teaching program of theological seminaries and Bible schools. This training should be done in one's own country or continent if at all possible.
3. *Research* in particular issues of relevance and a few *centers* should be established with needed resource materials. Related to this is the greatly needed publication of books in the Third World; books written in one's own cultural context.
4. *Training of the total church* in the mobilizing of the church for the task of evangelization.
5. *Development of theology* which will be wholly true to the teachings of the Bible and at the same time will speak to contemporary issues in meaningful terms.
6. *Specific goals* to be spelled out from time to time.

II. Strategy To Be Followed

1. One or two *key centers* already existing to be selected from each continent especially within Third World, to be *developed and strengthened*. This is much preferable to having one such center only in the world. These centers may be developed to offer master and doctoral level training and provide resources for creative and contextual research.
2. *United effort* wherever and whenever possible in the areas of developing theology and theological education. Evangelicals have often fragmentalized their efforts which has hurt our cause.
3. *To develop creative theology*, relevant issues should be carefully studied on national and continental or regional levels. Because churches on the continents of the Third World face certain common problems and issues, even a *Third World Theological Consultation* may prove to be a catalyst in developing contextual theology. Theology always should have a missiological task and not just be the pastime exercise of a few intellectuals.

4. For the training of the whole church, some lay-training programs should be implemented on a local congregational level. Theological education by extension may be of great service in the area and may help in training pastors also.
5. Many sections of the Congress raised serious questions on the traditional patterns of theological training. New patterns of training should be experimented with and any structure for theological education should be servant to the goals or purpose of theological education. Theological teachers should be given training in *teaching methodology*.

III. Post-Congress Coordination

1. There is need for national level coordination, with an international network of fellowship, passing of information, etc. An international commission of four or five members may be appointed to help the national bodies in their theological concerns.
2. W.C.E. and T.E.F. have helped to strengthen theology and theological education in the Third World. An international committee for the coordination of raising finances and lending assistance where needed, may be set up.