Periodical Literature of Theological Libraries

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From the viewpoint of modern theological study, it is the periodical which serves as a kind of weather vane indicating shifts and trends within the disciplines that comprise the field of theological study. Many of our most outstanding theologians contribute to the widest variety of journals, many of which are far from theological in their main content. Publication of the collected essays written by various well known theologians testifies to this tendency. A collection of P. J. Tillich’s articles recently published contains an essay that appeared in The Journal of the History of Ideas. Several of the papers by Reinhold Niebuhr collected in Pious and Secular America appeared in such diverse sources as the Atlantic Monthly, Confluence, The Reporter, and the Yale Review. A similar though distinct trend is illustrated by the publication of Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks, selecting and translating communications shared at those unique conferences held annually since 1933 at the home of Frau Olga Froebel-Kaptein near Ascona, Switzerland. Tracing the names of several outstanding theologians through the International Index would reveal the breadth of the community addressed by these men. Similarly, to trace through the same index the subject headings relevant to theology would disclose how significant are the communications from disciplines not usually thought of in direct connection with theology. This state of affairs only serves to underscore the necessity for a theological library to represent in its periodical holdings as many facets and dimensions of the interdisciplinary conversation as its budget will permit.

An optimum acquisition policy for periodicals in a theological library is a product of several distinct but related factors. A theological seminary whose curriculum consists of a large number of rigidly required courses taught in dogmatic manner as reflected in the narrow scope of reading required in a few relatively elementary

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textbooks will have little need or use for an extensive collection of periodicals. On the other hand, a theological school whose curriculum and teaching stance are responsive to the best insights of general education theory will want maximum coverage in periodicals not only in the immediate areas traditionally connected with theological study but also in those areas contiguous to and in communication with theology. Financial limitations as well as those imposed by available storage space will tend to scale down the wants of such a school to a program of acquisition steering somewhere between the Scylla of blind unconcern and the Charybdis of profligate spending. The ideal program of periodical acquisition conceives of this literature as a series of concentric circles, the indispensable materials occupying the inner circles and the valuable but less requisite materials lying in the outer circles varying in distance from the center in inverse ratio to their indispensability.

On such a model the very inmost circle would encompass the bibliographic aids to periodical literature rather than the literature itself. In the library of a small theological school removed from the immediate vicinity of a university library, it is vital that comprehensive indexing of periodicals be available to the patron. If the caliber of education envisioned by such a school is to be alert to the live concern for issues prevalent in current theological thought, faculty members and students both must have access to the indexing services provided by such publications as the International Index (H. W. Wilson Co.), the American Theological Library Association's Index to Religious Periodical Literature (Published at the Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, N.J.), the Catholic Periodical Index (Catholic Library Association), and, if interest and scope demand, the Christian Periodical Index (Buffalo, Christian Librarians' Fellowship, 1958-). Alongside these aids and hardly less valuable are the Union List of Serials and New Serial Titles. While indexes offer a perspective of what is being written in periodicals, the latter indicate where the actual periodicals can be located. By proper use of Interlibrary Loan Service, the small theological library can acquire for limited use the periodicals necessary for broad inquiry without incurring the expense of subscribing to periodicals only infrequently consulted. In the case of a library located near a university complex, access to these and other more extensive bibliographic aids may relieve the burden of expense in acquiring them and free such money for concentration upon strictly theological materials thus enhancing the total value of the entire
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complex. In this regard, however, proximity is not to be confused with access.

Of a similar nature to the index is the periodical which abstracts the literature of journals relevant to a given field of inquiry. In this category we should cite New Testament Abstracts (Weston Mass., Weston College, 1956-) and the younger Religious and Theological Abstracts (Youngstown, O., Theological Publications, Inc., 1958-). The outstanding example of this type of resource is International Review of Biblical Studies (Düsseldorf, Patmos-Verlag, 1952-). This publication appears biennially, covers about 380 journals and more than fifty monograph series and similar publications, and averages about six dollars a year. Although restricted to the biblical field and its near environs, it covers this wide range of journals through the collaboration of some fifty abstractors, mostly German professors, whose work is coordinated by an editor and two assistants. Because it does not attempt anything so complete as Internationale Bibliographie der Zeitschriftenliteratur (Osnabrück, F. Dietrich, 1861-; reprinting by Kraus, New York, 1960-), it may have a lesson to teach American indexers in this field. Having left the job of indexing to those more qualified to do so, the International Review of Biblical Studies draws upon professors and students in the field to abstract the material and then arranges it under convenient subject headings coinciding with the subdivisions of the discipline familiar to those who want access to the literature; a sufficiently large number of cross-references point up the articles that may properly fall into more than one category. This approach is the one employed in a somewhat modified form by Religious and Theological Abstracts, although on a much wider front.

Very close to the center lies a circle marked bibliography, and it comprises those serial publications that scan and sift the material of given disciplines to be found in books, monographs, and periodicals. Of a somewhat general nature ranging widely across the entire theological spectrum are three German journals. Theologische Literaturzeitung (Berlin, Evangelische Verlagsanstalt; originally published at Leipzig, J. C. Hinrichs, 1876-) is a monthly consisting of two or three relatively long review articles, a goodly number of shorter book reviews arranged in sections corresponding roughly to Protestant theological encyclopaedia, notices of periodical articles on these same subjects, an occasional summary of the contents of a Russian or other Slavic theological journal, and miscellany. As a sort of companion to
it is the Roman Catholic *Theologische Revue* (Munster i.W., Aschendorff, 1905-) made up predominantly of book reviews from the entire area of Catholic theology together with a lucidly arranged bibliography summarizing the contents of each book cited. *Theologische Rundschau* (Tübingen, J. C. B. Mohr, 1898–1917; Neue Folge, 1929–) is made up of comprehensive articles done by masters in each field chronicling the progress of research in a particular discipline or with reference to a specific problem (*Forschungsberichte*). The significance of this journal is emphasized by the fact that working scholars survey the literature of the subject or problem over a wide variety of media and an equally wide spread of languages.

Within special subject areas, attention may be directed to the annual *Elenchus Bibliographicus Biblicus* published as a regular supplement to *Biblica* (Rome Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1920–). The periodical literature on the Qumrán discoveries has appeared in so many different journals and in so many media that a bibliography has become a *sine qua non*; *Revue de Qumrán* (Paris, Letouzey et Ané, 1958–) provides a central outlet for articles and reviews on this specialized subject, but its most significant contribution is a bibliography of the material published on Qumrán running to more than thirty pages an issue. Renewed interest in the Reformation from a historical rather than a purely polemical viewpoint has produced so much literature in the past two decades that a new *Bibliographie de la Réforme: 1450–1648* (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1958–) has begun to appear gathering and classifying the books, monographs, and articles that have been published since 1940. The burgeoning literature on the historical and phenomenological study of religion has also called forth the *International Bibliography of the History of Religions* (Brill, 1954–) which reports upon the literature since 1952. In themselves, these bibliographies open up a way toward more than two hundred periodicals ranging from specifically theological journals through anthropological and antiquarian publications.

Similar in format to *Theologische Literaturzeitung* is the younger *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* (Berlin, Akademie-Verlag; Leipzig, J. C. Hinrichs, 1898–) now in its fifty-fifth year; as a resource for fields contiguous to Old Testament study and for the history of ancient oriental religion and culture it falls within the purview of theological literature. Of particular interest because of its being edited in Israel is *Kiryath Sepher* (Jerusalem, Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1924–), a quarterly bibliography published for the Jewish
National and University Library. Although it is mainly in modern Hebrew, it provides essential bibliographic data on materials that are all but completely out of the reach of even the most competent Christian scholars. Far less pretentious, but for that reason probably more useful to American teachers and students is Hebrew Abstracts (New York, National Association of Professors of Hebrew, 1954–) which summarizes in English the most significant literature on Hebraica appearing in the Hebrew tongue.

Another important bibliography just beginning to appear is Bibliographia Patristica (Berlin, W. de Gruyter, 1959–), the first number of which gathers together by title all the studies on patristics published during the year 1956. As we learn to use this bibliography, we shall better be able to pick our way through the spate of monographs and periodical articles dealing with one aspect or another of the early church.

None but the most complete theological libraries will even consider subscribing to all or most of the publications just described. Nevertheless, these serials represent fairly the bibliographic tools available for the study of theology and the numerous fields bordering thereon.

The typical journal of the sort comprising nearly 70 per cent of the periodical collection of a theological library will consist of a few fairly long papers, running sometimes to fifty or more pages, a number of shorter studies or extended notes, and a bibliographic section. Not infrequently, because of the extensive reach of Theologische Revue and Theologische Literaturzeitung, German journals will omit the bibliographic department unless there is a specific reason for including it; on the other hand, certain of these journals include not only critical reviews of books but also a gleaning from various other journals of articles pertaining to the discipline that forms the main focus of the journal concerned. In certain cases, especially for periodicals in Slavic languages or other little used languages of scholarly communication, this journal survey (Zeitschriftenschau) can be extremely valuable.

The bulk of serious theological journals now being published owe their origin to the desire of divinity professors and other scholars to communicate with one another and with students of theology sharing the results of their problematic studies and submitting these results to the judgment of their scattered colleagues. A not inconsiderable number of the journals are the organs of professional societies of scholars engaged in the study of one of the theological disciplines. A
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hundred or so years ago, these disciplines could be named easily and
their boundaries from one another described quite adequately. The
last century has witnessed a lively debate as to how the theological
field should be organized for study and teaching. Consequently, the
hard and fast lines once discernible in theological study have been
blurred, and one result of this blurring has been the appearance of
many journals which are hard to classify as to subject matter. Roman
Catholic theologians tend to preserve a division and organization of
the field which stems from late medieval times, but Protestant thought
on this question has fluctuated between the classical quadrivium
(Bible, history, theology, and practicalia) and the more modern trivium
(historical, interpretative, and applied fields). As new journals have
appeared, replaced older ones, or consolidated the concerns of formerly
distinct disciplines, it has become necessary to understand which
of the three conceptions of theological encyclopaedia (one Roman
and two Protestant) has been responsible for the new thrust repre-
sented by a journal at any given point. The Protestant trivium has been
responsible to a marked degree for extending the boundaries of theo-
logical concern beyond its former confines; concomitantly, although
probably without direct causal connection, Roman Catholic journals
have begun to venture into the region where theology meets culture.

Because it provides a convenient framework, we shall employ the
Protestant trivium as a scheme for surveying the major journals of
theological thinking.

1. The historical area: Comprises biblical studies and church history.
Within the compass of the former it is proper to include the languages
of the Bible as well as those needed to understand the context out of
which the Bible arose and the versions into which it was rendered.
A basic journal to be noted in this regard is the Journal of Biblical
Literature (Philadelphia, Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis,
1881–); right behind this are to be mentioned the Jewish Quarterly
Review (Philadelphia, Dropsie College, 1910–) and the Catholic
Biblical Quarterly (Washington, Catholic Biblical Association, 1939–)
and the Journal of Bible and Religion (Boston, National Association
of Biblical Instructors, 1933–). For an adequate introduction to the
antiquities of the biblical world as well as of the Classical and Hellen-
istic periods, we note the Bulletin of the John Rylands Library (Man-
chester, University Press, 1903–), the Journal of Near Eastern Studies
(University of Chicago Press, 1942–; continues American Journal of
Semitic Languages and Literature, 1895–1941; a continuation of
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Hebraica, 1884–95), and Journal of Semitic Studies (Manchester University Press, 1956–); to these may be added the publications of the American Schools of Oriental Research, several periodicals in English devoted to general archaeology, and such journals dealing with the archaeology of Palestine as Israel Exploration Journal (Jerusalem, Israel Exploration Society, 1950–), Palestine Exploration Quarterly (London, Palestine Exploration Fund, 1869–), or 'Atiquot (Jerusalem, Ministry of Education and Culture, 1955–), the last being published in both English and Hebrew editions. From the English language journals we turn to foreign language and polyglot journals. As a sample we can point to Revue Biblique (Paris, Librairie Lecoffre, 1892–), a French language quarterly edited by the Dominicans at the Convent of St. Stephen in Jerusalem. Another excellent Roman Catholic organ is Biblische Zeitschrift, Neue Folge (Paderborn, Schöningh, 1957–) which continues the tradition of the well known and most complete Biblische Zeitschrift (Freiburg i.B., Herder, 1903–). From the Protestant viewpoint we should single out Zeitschrift für die Altestamentliche Wissenschaft (Berlin, Töpelmann, 1881–) and Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft (Töpelmann, 1900–); both of these journals are supplemented by Beihefte, the former by seventy-eight of them and the latter by more than twenty-five. More recently founded polyglot journals in this area include Vetus Testamentum (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1951–), New Testament Studies (Cambridge University Press, 1954–), and Novum Testamentum (Brill, 1956–); we have already mentioned in this field Revue de Qumrân.

The discipline of church history actually includes biblical studies as a preliminary chapter, but for purposes of analysis we can separate it from biblical studies. Here we find journals devoted to the whole field of church history as well as those dealing with particular periods or special traditions. (This area is discussed more fully by R. M. Pierson in the preceding chapter of this issue of Library Trends.) In this connection, it should also be noted that ecclesiastical historians are frequent contributors to general historical periodicals on the ground that church history is but a facet of the total picture of any period. Among the more general periodicals in this field, three in English are of superior quality: The Catholic Historical Review (Washington, Catholic University of America Press, 1915–), Church History (American Society of Church History, 1932–), and Journal of Ecclesiastical History (London, Faber and Faber, 1950–). From the numerous journals whose focus is on ancient church history we can select as
exemplary *Vigiliae Christianae* (Amsterdam, North Holland Publishing Co., 1947–), or a leader in Roman Catholic scholarship, *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte* (Freiburg i.B., Herder, 1907–); of more recent foundation but equally thorough is a Roman Catholic annual, *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* (Münster, Aschendorff, 1958–), which not only contains significant studies in its field but also supplements articles that have already appeared in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* (Stuttgart, Heersemann, 1950–).

Medieval history is amply covered by such outstanding Roman Catholic journals as *Recherches de Théologie ancienne et médiévale* (Louvain, Abbaye de Mont César, 1929–) and the exceptionally comprehensive *Revue d'Histoire ecclésiastique* (Louvain, Bibliothèque de l'Université, 1900) whose bibliographies are peerless for any aspect of the subject. For the Reformation it is natural to turn to the Protestant *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* (Gütersloh, G. Mohn, 1903) whose articles are competently done and whose periodical surveys make it doubly valuable. As an indication of the high quality of scholarship we note these journals, but they are only representative.

The history of Eastern Orthodoxy has come in for considerable attention recently as would be concluded from a perusal of *Ostkirchlichen Studien* (Würzburg, Augustinus-Verlag, 1952) which explores problems of the history and praxis of this province of the church. *L'Orient Syrien* (93, Avenue Paul-Doumer, Paris XVI, 1956–) is a joint venture of Roman Catholics and Syrian Orthodox; by publishing monographs, textual studies, and bibliography of communions using Syriac in their liturgy, this journal opens an important area to the study of historians.

2. From the historical field we move to the interpretative wherein should be classified those journals concerned narrowly or broadly with systematic theology, apologetics, or the study of religion as a phenomenon of culture. Because interpretation precedes application but is fruitless unless it yields application, many of the journals listed herein could equally well be put in the following category.

More than thirty current English and American periodicals alone could properly be called journals of systematic theology and apologetics. At the relatively popular level one could single out *The Christian Century* (Chicago, Christian Century Foundation, 1884–), a weekly commentary on the stance of Christian faith toward the American scene; from a conservative viewpoint a similar task is per-
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formed by Christianity Today (Washington, 1956–). At a more academic level we may point to Religion in Life (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1932–), or that peculiar product of American participation in World War II, Christianity and Crisis (New York, 1941–); German Roman Catholicism surveys the Christian impact on social and political structures in Ordo Socialis (Münster, Regensberg, 1953–). On the frankly academic level are Theological Studies (Baltimore, 1940–), a Roman Catholic quarterly of broad range and high standard, Journal of Religion (University of Chicago Press, 1921–), continuing the wide concern of the American Journal of Theology (University of Chicago Press, 1897–1920), Canadian Journal of Theology (University of Toronto Press, 1955–), Downside Review (Bath, Eng.: Downside Abbey, 1883–) edited by British Benedictines, Scottish Journal of Theology (Edinburgh, Oliver & Boyd, 1948) viewing the theological spectrum from the Reformed perspective, Kerygma und Dogma (Göttingen, Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1955–) doing the same from the evangelische tradition, Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie (Lausanne, Académie ancienne, 1868–) reflecting Swiss and French Reformed traditions, and Scholastik (München, Berchmans Colleg, 1926–), the leading German representative of scholastic theology.


Ever since the nineteenth century, the scientific study of religion has been an independent inquiry and a heavy contributor to missionary theory. In this category we might simply list Muslim World (Hartford Seminary Foundation, 1911–), the Roman Catholic Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft (Münster, Aschendorff, 1917–), Der Islam (Berlin, de Gruyter, 1925–), Archives de Sociologie des Religions (Paris, Centre de Recherche scientifique, 1956–), and that organ which has done so much to anchor the study of religion deeply in the humanities, Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1949–). Belonging here, but also having much affinity with the journals just previously mentioned is Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche (Tübingen, J. C. B. Mohr, 1891–).

Discussions looking to church unity comprise a large segment of the literature we would describe. The Ecumenical Review (World Council
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of Churches, 1948—) is an official journal of communication, but on a less formal basis is Cross Currents (New York, 1950). Responsible Roman Catholic discussion comes from two significant journals: Irénikon (Chevetogne, Belgique, Prieuré, 1928—) carries articles, documents, chronicles, and an extensive bibliography, while of more recent origin is Istina (Boulogne-sur-Seine, Centre d'Études "Istina," 1954—) deeply interested in Eastern Orthodoxy.

3. We pass to the applied field while granting how cursory has been our review of the interpretative. Church administration and related disciplines are covered by a number of technical and popular magazines, while pastoralia or Seelsorge embraces a diverse collection of disciplines arising from serious concern on the part of the church to adapt and employ secular techniques and insights. Christian education has developed a responsible literature as Lumen Vitae (Westminster, Md., Newman, 1935; American agent) can demonstrate. In Religious Education (Religious Education Association, 1906—) Protestant, Catholic, and Jew meet in common effort to relate religion and education. Preaching is fed by all of the journals listed under the interpretative category, while the peculiar concerns of asceticism and mysticism are amply treated in the Jesuit Geist und Leben (Würzburg, Echter, 1927—); other special pursuits have produced journals equally competent.

Perhaps the most arresting development in modern Christianity is the Liturgical Movement; in Protestant, Reformed, and Catholic circles this area has gathered together the results of the biblical revival and the theological renascence and brought them into focus in the worship of the church. It would require a separate essay at least as long as the present one to discuss this literature even superficially. Fortunately a bibliography of some forty periodicals together with a large selection of books dealing with this subject has been compiled within the past six months, and the reader is referred to it.7 To this bibliography must be added Verbum Caro (Neuchâtel, Delachaux et Niestlé, 1947—) edited by the brothers of Taizé, a French Reformed common life movement centering in the vicinity of old Cluny.

As the various religious bodies work out their faith affirmations in the context of modern life, the journals cited in the previous section and in this one show how the depth of commitment raises problems not only of interpretation but of application as well. Very few theological journals fail to express concern for the anxieties of this
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age, and most of them are responsive to those problems which exercise responsible observers whatever their commitment.

The gathering and selecting of representative titles for this essay has presented numerous problems, but this is really only the leading edge of a much deeper question. The proliferation of journals, the inclusive view taken by many of them, and the difficulty of assessing the relative permanence of their contents all help to make the task of retrieval almost impossible. We have already discussed indexes, bibliographies, and abstracting services, but from the viewpoint of the scholar engaged in active research the constantly increasing flow of printed matter from periodical presses only increases the burden of his responsibility which is already too heavy to bear because of the quantity and variety of books already in print and in printing. The tension between summarizing what has already been done and producing new ideas and approaches is no less real for the scholar in theology than for his counterpart in the humanities or in the sciences.

Along with developing the peaceful use of atomic energy, we must also find ways of applying our vast technical knowledge in electronics and cybernetics to the task of information retrieval in the humanities which will, of course, include the field whose literature we have been discussing. A concordance of the Revised Standard Version Bible was recently prepared with the aid of Remington Rand's Univac I. On the admission of the editors, the concordance could be exhaustive but not analytic because of the limitations of indexing by computer. It has been alleged that such a use of Univac I was uneconomic, yet we now have a concordance which might have taken many years to produce far less accurately. Computer specialists and others involved in electronic processing of data can help us discover what is the most efficient method of processing the data of theological periodicals while preserving us from grossly uneconomic use of certain types of machines. Surely not all of the problems involved in missile production that were fed into Univac taxed the full capacities of the machine; as mathematicians gained experience in handling such problems, they downgraded them to simpler machines.

The supreme obstacle in any project of electronic processing of data for information retrieval is financial; but this is also the case even for the simplest card file of typed and classified references. When we understand the value of our periodical literature, it is quite possible
that we shall be able to convince those responsible for assigning foundation funds of the value of this literature. Before the question of the feasibility of electronic retrieval can be argued, however, a comprehensive program for processing it must be worked out jointly by scholars capable of evaluating the material and computer experts thoroughly aware of the capabilities and limitations of the various possible methods. Consultation with other similarly constituted groups who have already made a start in this sort of indexing would result in consolidation of techniques acquired and the elimination of more obvious difficulties encountered in the early stages of the development of such a program. It would be foolhardy to ignore the question of the adaptability of certain devices to this sort of problem, but pilot operations would benefit us both in regard to acquisition of techniques and in greater accessibility of small segments of a body of literature which is growing in size and significance but which almost defies reduction to some manageable form for retrieval. The importance of the material seems to demand the development of a team of specialists who can make it more readily available to the scholar who contributes to it.

References