



Summary

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THE PROFILE OF THEOLOGICAL LIBRARIES etched by the preceding papers makes clear certain distinguishing characteristics. Also suggested are other involvements which are not fully amenable to precise articulation. Let's look briefly at both classes of conclusions.

Theological libraries are indelibly tied to theological education. Analysis and judgment in every paper in this issue springs from the ever-present question: "What is the content, structure, and purpose of theological education?" So sensitive to this foundation have been the contributors that no portion of the picture could be developed without some expression concerning the nature of theological education.

While this situation does not suggest the theological library is any more, or any less, aware of its educational purpose than any other type of special library, what has been demonstrated is that theological librarianship is a dynamic, changing, growing discipline because theological education is a dynamic, changing, growing discipline.

At the same time that the theological library is an instrument of today's educational need of the church, it is also the unique guardian of a vast and rich historic past. While responding to the theological conversation of current courses, it seeks to make available in contemporary coinage an extensive history. Microfilm programs, cataloging and classification reassessments, a new interest in denominational origins are all geared to the enlargement of bibliographic control and availability. The impetus toward this is something more important than the bulk increase of holdings. It is most basically the result of a dialectical concern which pushes toward a total perspective in the consciousness of the religious community.

The theological librarian works within the context of an historic spread in materials of incredible depth and breadth. He must be on Mr. Turner is librarian, Bridwell Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas.

speaking terms with Camus and Jeremiah, Hammurabi and Tennessee Williams, William of Occam and William Styron. The extensive literature of theology makes far more fundamental an expertise in subject matter than in library science, although theological librarians have both taken from and given to the central common core of experience known as library science.

The theological library is the visible, undeniable manifestation of the reality of a central unity which prevails in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Ecumenicity exists in theological libraries whether it gains or fails of vocal and structural substance in the higher councils of the churches. Upon a common basic body of materials, theological library associations and committees build even larger superstructures of united effort.

Theological librarianship is marked by a commitment to the value of its end product—better prepared pastors, priests, and rabbis. The sense of vocational calling is strong in theological librarianship. Some librarians are ordained to the ministry of their group; others, while remaining laymen, are no less skilled nor dedicated.

Responsibility of the theological library and its librarian to the church does not end with the June graduation list. Continuing theological education is one of the tragic lacuna in the theological library structure. While one of the papers in this issue gives eloquent testimony of how one library has addressed itself to this problem, it also, by implication, fingers the many who have not.

Theological librarianship is impatient with current "standards" applicable to their institutions. Only the progress within the immediate past keeps dissatisfaction from being more organized and articulate at this point. Current standards are too low to support the corporate image the profession bears of itself.

There are many other areas where this issue has not trod. Failure to do so suggests no lack of concern, but points to the inadequate nature of available facts and studies. For instance, theological librarians have been quite cautious in making statements regarding recruitment. This is something of a paradox. Theological librarianship is the oldest facet of librarianship, and yet it is still insufficiently decided about its image to draw a picture of what is actually involved in becoming a theological librarian.

Theological libraries which are part of a university center are still trying to find some proper collecting pattern in relationship to an Arts and Science Library, or a Law Library, or other types. Philosophy,

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literature, sociology, psychology, classics, and communications media are all heavily involved in the program of contemporary theological education. Where and how shall the responsibility and usage of these materials be shared or divided with the university system?

Or, how will the theological librarian find a way to gain recognition for his own staff in the general university library staff structure for the subject skills demanded of his staff? Who is "professional"—the beginning laborer in the reference room or on the circulation desk who holds a strong B.D. degree, or the person who has just finished library school directly after a B.A. or B.S.?

If as yet no clear pattern has emerged of a proper division of responsibility of the theology library and the other libraries on the same campus, how strongly could one hope for widespread acquisition cooperative programs with other seminary libraries? Perhaps, there is much stronger reason for hope here than the comparative nature of the question suggests. However, cooperative acquisition programs have not been tried on a large scale because most of the theological libraries of America are still engaged in the preliminary effort to assemble a collection of basic theological literature. Cooperation becomes the luxury-necessity which only relatively strongly developed libraries can indulge. That cooperation has not loomed large as an issue in the past is eloquent testimony of the amount of labor to be done.

What of rare books and the theological library? The tendency of theological libraries has been to set far less distinctive emphasis on rare books than other libraries simply because theology as a discipline is strongly involved with a large portion of those volumes adjudged rare by today's standards. While this does not cause any less concern for proper usage, it does work against the building of walls between a "working" collection and a "rare" collection.

This issue has attempted to draw in broad strokes the general picture of theological library service today. Theology is a book-centered discipline, and the aim has been to illustrate how the instrument of the discipline functions.

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