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THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

THE LOST DIMENSION IN RELIGION

Under this heading Professor Tillich, in the *Saturday Evening Post* (June 14, 1958), propounds the thesis that the Western man has lost, in his religion, the "dimension of depth," which means that he has lost an answer to the questions: What is the meaning of life? Where do we come from, and where do we go? What shall we do, and what should we become in the short stretch between birth and death? Dr. Tillich admits that there exists today a revival of interest in religion, that the churches report a rapidly increasing membership, that there is a mushroomlike growth of sects, that religion is being widely discussed on college campuses and in the theological faculties of universities, and that men like Billy Graham and Norman Vincent Peale attract masses of people. Nevertheless, as he maintains, there is no reasonable answer to the question regarding the meaning of life. That is true of the two main modern schools of thought: the analytic and the existential. There certainly is an answer to the religious question of our period, but it may not be available to us. The answer is not given by increased church membership or church attendance, nor by conversion or healing experiences, but it is given by the awareness that we have lost the dimension of depth and that there is no easy way of getting it back. "He who realizes that he is separated from the ultimate source of meaning shows by this realization that he is not only separated, but also united. This is just our situation. This does not mean that the traditional religious symbols should be dismissed, though they have lost their meaning in the literalistic form into which they have been distorted. If the resurgence of religion would produce a new understanding of the symbols of the past and their relevance for our situation . . . it would become a creative factor in our culture and a saving factor for many who live in estrangement, anxiety and despair."

Dr. Tillich's tragic "if" implies the admission that neither philosophy nor scientific research can supply the answer to the "lost dimension of depth." That answer is given only in Christ and His message of salvation and is apprehended by faith. The present revival of interest in religion, the rapidly increasing church membership, the mushroomlike growth of sects, and whatever other religious phenomena appear today, are so many urgent monitors to the Christian church to answer the question regarding the meaning of life by the Biblical truths of the Gospel.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

REFLECTIONS ON TWO FRENCH BIBLES

Theology Today (July 1958) under this heading offers a brief "review-article" on two recently published French Bibles which show, on the one hand, a new interest in Biblical studies by Catholic scholars and, on the other, the fact that Roman Catholic Biblical studies "in many ways run counter to or at least transcend the formal, traditional dogma of the Roman Church." The two Bibles are known as the *Bible de Jérusalem* and the *Bible de la Pléiade*. The former is so named because it originated as a project of the *Ecole Biblique et Archéologique Française* in Jerusalem. Many of the initiators, editors, and translators are members of the Dominican Order and disciples of the late Father Lagrange, who founded the school. The chief characteristic of the Bible is its doctrinal orientation to the official theology of the Roman Church, though, as the writer says, the introductions and notes are remarkably free from narrow dogmatism. It seems, however, that the editors of this Bible are convinced of the autonomy of tradition. Scripture is scrutinized by them for the objective value of its testimony instead of being used as an arsenal of prooftexts for the defense of dogma. At any rate, the freedom with which the editors handle such problems as the sources of the Pentateuch, the authorship of the various parts of Isaiah, and the literary and historical origins of the four Gospels cannot very well be reconciled with the early decrees of the Pontifical Biblical Commission.

The *Bible de la Pléiade* is edited by Edouard Dhorme, who formerly directed the *Ecole Biblique*. So far only the first volume of this Bible, containing the Torah and the historical books of the Hebrew canon, together with I and II Maccabees, has appeared. The second volume will include the Prophets and the Poetical Books, together with the Apocrypha, but not the books of the New Testament. The general scope of the work is not primarily doctrinal. The editor's attention goes rather to the cultural and religious values which modeled the soul of the Hebrews. His method is exclusively philological and historical. Of Dhorme the writer says: "He sees in the Bible much more than a historical record of the past, or even the sacred Book of the Hebrew people. It is rather [to him] the Book through which all men may find comfort and counsel, and attain to full human stature."

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

BRIEF ITEMS FROM THE NATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL

Thousand Oaks, Calif.—Financial commitments totaling more than \$775,000 were made in a single month by three Lutheran church bodies

toward the establishment of a new college here. Expected to open in 1961, it will be California's first Lutheran four-year arts college.

The commitments were in the form of subsidy allocations and fund campaign goals for 1959 and 1960 approved at national conventions in June by the Augustana Lutheran Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church, and United Evangelical Lutheran Church. At later dates decisions on financial support for the college project in the next two years will be made by the other two participating bodies, the American Lutheran Church and the Pacific Northwest Synod of the United Lutheran Church.

Dr. Orville Dahl, president of the college's developing agency, said that "if our present plans take shape and we open the college in the fall of 1961, it now appears as if we may have made an investment of approximately \$3,000,000 by that time in the first phase of the college program."

The developing agency, known as the California Lutheran Educational Foundation (CLEF), has established its office on a 206-acre ranch which was acquired here for the college campus. Thousand Oaks is in the Conejo Valley, 15 miles west of Los Angeles, near U. S. Highway 101.

Dr. Dahl said the five participating church bodies have adopted a plan by which each one is giving consideration to assuming a pro-rata share of a \$2,600,000 development program for the next three years leading up to the scheduled opening date of the college. The shares are calculated on the bodies' relative confirmed membership in California.

Dr. Dahl also reported that three of the church bodies backing the large educational venture have previously made available \$380,000 which, together with \$50,000 of operating capital supplied by local church bodies, has been used to provide financial undergirding and reserve funds for the launching of the project, acquisition of the college, and the first year's operation of CLEF.

Warsaw. — Opposition to the proposed establishment of a Lutheran World Federation institute for the study of Roman Catholic theology was expressed here by the federation's Polish National Committee. The committee told the LWF that it felt the undertaking could not "promote better understanding with Catholicism." It stated that the Polish Lutheran churches regard any attempt to reach understanding with the Catholic Church as likely to be fruitless.

Enumerating current problems in contacts with Catholicism in Poland, it said negotiations on these matters are difficult. According

to the committee, the Church of Rome proceeds on the assumption that the Polish Lutheran Church, lacking priests and apostolic succession, is not really a church. The Polish view was given in a lengthy reply to an LWF invitation to its member churches to comment on the proposal, which was made at the Minneapolis Assembly of the federation in August 1957.

A decision whether or not the "confessional research institute" should be established will probably be made by the LWF executive committee at its annual meeting in Strasbourg, France, October 27—31. The committee is expected to act on recommendations to be made in Germany in mid-October by an international conference of Lutheran theologians convoked by the federation to discuss the institute proposal and related matters.

The conference will deal with the broad topics of the ecumenical responsibility of Lutheran churches with regard to Roman Catholicism and the possibilities of confessional research and contact with Catholic theology. Arrangements for the meeting are being made by an LWF advisory committee which was appointed after the Minneapolis Assembly to explore the "practical possibility" of the institute idea.

Geneva.—The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan has now been constituted as an autonomous church body, it was reported here by the Lutheran World Federation. The new church, composed of five congregations with about 1,300 members, was scheduled to hold its first synod on August 10. Organization of the body followed acceptance of a constitution which has been in the process of preparation for the past three years. The Rev. Joachim W. O. Weigelt, a refugee from East Germany, has been in charge of the spiritual ministry to German and Arab Lutherans in Jordan since 1954 as provost of Jerusalem.

Curitiba, Brazil.—Dr. Ernesto T. Schlieper, 49, has been elected president of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil, a federation of four synods with a combined membership of more than 500,000. He was vice-president for six years and acting president since the death of Dr. Herman G. Dohms in December 1956. With the approval of the member synods the federation decided at its recent quadrennial meeting here to place the president's office on a full-time basis, and it is expected that Dr. Schlieper will devote all his time to the post in the near future. He is now a pastor in Rio de Janeiro.

Sigtuna, Sweden.—A budget of \$570,162 for 1959 was adopted by the Commission on World Mission of the Lutheran World Federa-

tion at its recent annual meeting here. The amount allocated for next year is somewhat less than the expected expenditure of \$587,488 in 1958 and the \$601,309 spent in 1957.

The funds will be used to subsidize various churches and missions in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East and to underwrite several special projects. The program is under the direction of the LWF's Department of World Mission. Dr. Arne Sovik, department director, pointed out that most of the funds are provided by U.S. and Canadian Lutherans through contributions to Lutheran World Action appeals conducted in their respective countries.

Nearly half the 1959 budget represents grants to Lutheran Mission New Guinea, the largest Protestant mission in the South Pacific. A total allocation of \$234,532 includes \$163,239 for operating expenses, \$50,706 for capital investment in buildings, and \$20,587 as a loan for evangelistic work in large centers of New Guinea.

A grant of \$123,652 to Indonesia includes \$85,547 to the committee on reconstruction and interchurch aid of the Batak Protestant Christian Church and \$38,105 for other phases of the Batak Church's activities.

In addition, the budget includes: \$40,000 for work in Jordan; \$28,436 for the work of the Berlin Mission in South Africa; \$25,000 as a contingency fund to meet possible emergency needs, particularly in Indonesia; \$20,066 as the first third of a three-year grant to establish a new theological seminary in the vicinity of Rustenburg, West Transvaal, South Africa, as a training center for ministers and evangelists; \$20,000 to provide scholarships for Asian and African students to study in Europe and the United States; \$17,375 for operating expenses of the All-Africa Theological Seminar, a two-year course that is scheduled to begin next February at Marangu, Tanganyika; and \$10,000 as a loan to the Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Church to purchase army barracks erected by the government in the church compound during the war.

Sigtuna, Sweden. — Formation of an indigenous Lutheran Church in Ethiopia that will have some 30,000 members seems likely in the near future, it was reported here at the annual meeting of the Commission on World Mission of the Lutheran World Federation. Work on a constitution for a church body intended to include all Lutheran groups in Ethiopia has been proceeding on the field in close consultation with mission boards in Europe and America, the Commission was told.

The proposed organization, it was said, will give full autonomy to

the various synods in their own church life and order but will also provide legal advantages that could not be gained in a federation. According to present plans, the constituting assembly of the "Mekane Yesus Church in Ethiopia" is scheduled for next January.

It is contemplated that with the formation of the new group, the Mekane Yesus Evangelical Congregation in Addis Ababa will withdraw from membership in the Lutheran World Federation and that the church body as such will seek to affiliate with the Federation. The Commission was also informed that plans are under way to establish a joint Lutheran seminary at Addis Ababa, to be opened in the fall of 1960. Negotiations are now in progress for the purchase of a site for the school. At the present time theological training is given at an institute conducted by the Swedish Evangelical Mission in co-operation with the German Hermannsburg Mission. Seven young men were recently ordained there, almost doubling the number of Lutheran pastors in Ethiopia.

Also active in Ethiopia, in addition to the Swedish Evangelical Mission and the German Hermannsburg Mission, are the Norwegian Lutheran Mission, the Danish Lutheran Mission, the Swedish Bible Believing Friends, and the American Lutheran Church, the latter having entered the field in September of 1957.

More than 100 persons, including consultants and visitors, attended the nine-day session of the LWF's Commission on World Mission from July 31 to August 8. American representative and vice-chairman of the six-member Commission is Dr. Fredrik A. Schiotz of Minneapolis, president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

In the course of its deliberations, the Commission:

— Announced that the second All Africa Lutheran Conference will be held in Antsirabe, Madagascar, Sept. 10—20, 1960. The first such conference took place in November of 1955 in Marangu, Tanganyika.

— Appointed a committee to study the problems of polygamy in Africa for report at the 1960 All Africa Lutheran Conference.

— Took steps to provide a spiritual ministry to Asian and African students studying in Great Britain.

— Heard that the Evangelical Church of Bavaria is giving serious consideration to pioneering a missionary project among some 300,000 natives in the unexplored mountains of West New Guinea.

— Received a report that the American Lutheran Church has sent out a five-member team of young men to assist in the building pro-

gram of Lutheran Mission New Guinea, to serve for two years without salary and only expenses paid. This is the fourth group of mission builders, making a total of 29 young men sent to the field for this purpose.

— Approved preparation of a history of Lutheran co-operation in world missions since World War I and allocated \$1,000 to the project.

— Accepted offer of assistance from Schleswig-Holstein Mission in Germany and Lutheran Church of Holland for work on orphaned mission fields in Tanganyika which are administered by the National Lutheran Council.

— Commended the five-year program of the World Student Christian Federation on the theme "The Life and Mission of the Church" as worthy of interest and support and urged financial contributions to the program through national committees, churches, and societies.

— Voted to hold the 1959 meeting of the Commission in Nyborg, Denmark, July 30—August 6, and its 1960 meeting in Bukoba, Tanganyika, the exact dates to be determined.

In addition to Dr. Schiotz, other Americans present at the Commission's meeting here included Dr. Arne Sovik, a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, who is director of the world missions department; Dr. Carl E. Lund-Quist, a member of the Augustana Lutheran Church, who is executive secretary of the LWF; and the Rev. Oscar R. Rolander, secretary of the NLC's Department of World Missions Cooperation.

A special guest was Dr. Alfred O. Fuerbringer, president of Concordia Theological Seminary, as a special representative of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. With Dr. Paul M. Bretscher, also of Concordia, he was also scheduled to attend the meeting of the LWF's Commission on Theology in Oslo, Norway, August 11—16.

Present as consultants to the Commission were the mission executives of several church bodies, including Dr. Earl S. Erb, United Lutheran Church in America; Dr. Rolf Syrdal, Evangelical Lutheran Church; Dr. Theodore P. Fricke, American Lutheran Church; and the Rev. Rudolph C. Burke, Augustana Lutheran Church.

Bogota, Colombia.—The Evangelical Lutheran Church—Colombia Synod (Iglesia Evangelica Luterana—Sinodo de Colombia) was organized here during the last week in July. The new body is comprised of five congregations, with a sixth in the process of organizing. All are the product of the mission endeavors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United

States, which began work in Colombia in 1944. They have about 500 members in all. There is also an Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia, composed of congregations serving some 2,000 European Lutherans of many nationalities.

New York.—A German Lutheran orphan who came to this country early in the 18th century was honored here for the part he played in establishing freedom of the press in America. A bronze plaque in memory of John Peter Zenger, printer and newspaper publisher, was dedicated at the old Subtreasury Building, Wall and Nassau streets. The site—now Federal Hall Memorial—marks the place where Zenger was held, tried, and acquitted in 1735 for publishing “seditious libels.”

Unveiling of the plaque took place on August 4, the 223rd anniversary of Zenger’s trial. The ceremony was sponsored by Sigma Delta Chi, national journalism fraternity, and was attended by sixty news executives and editors. The plaque, imbedded in the sidewalk, bears this legend:

“On this site, August 4, 1735, John Peter Zenger was acquitted of charges that he published libelous statements about the Royal Governor of New York. The jury proclaimed truth to be a just defense against charges of criminal libel, thereby establishing the cornerstone of a free American press.”

Also inscribed on the plaque is a statement by Zenger that “everyone who loves liberty ought to encourage freedom of speech.”

Born in 1697 in the Palatinate, a state of the old German Empire lying along the Rhine, Zenger was only 13 when he arrived in New York in 1710.

He was apprenticed to William Bradford, then the only printer in New York, and rose from apprentice to employee and then to partner. In 1773 he left the partnership and started an independent newspaper called the “New York Weekly Journal,” which soon became the organ of those who opposed the English governor.

Charged with libeling the governor, Zenger was arrested and imprisoned. Patriots of the colony rallied to his aid, and Andrew Hamilton was engaged to defend him in the first test case on the issue of freedom of the press. Hamilton appealed to the jury to uphold the right of the American people “to expose and oppose arbitrary Power by speaking and writing Truth.” In spite of contrary instructions from the judge, the jury returned a verdict for Zenger.

Zenger later became the public printer for New York and also for New Jersey and edited his newspaper until his death in 1746.