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Reading Programs in Theology

In the midst of the intensifying "explosion of knowledge," the speed with which cultural changes are taking place, and an increased number of specialists, clergymen now are keenly aware of the need for continued professional growth. Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, is attempting to meet part of this need. The ideal answer, of course, lies in intensive retraining in terms of graduate programs, summer school study, and quarter-long sabbaticals from the parish for concentrated study. Regional institutes and workshops offer another level of educational experience.

We introduce at this time a program less intensive in nature than the preceding and yet of great potential value. Our reading programs in theology are designed as brief introductions to limited fields of study. The introduction will orient to the main questions in the field and to the key authorities, and they will suggest a sequence in which the material might be read. We currently envision a program of some 30 individual reading courses, to include all four subfields of theological study. Some courses will serve as bridges to ancillary disciplines. The first courses will deal with the subjects of pastoral theology, authority and tradition in the early church, New Testament theology, pastoral counseling, developments in the Roman Catholic Church, and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

From conversations with many men in the

field, we know that this approach will be met with enthusiasm. Many have been realistic enough to acknowledge, however, that the danger will be that one begins with enthusiasm but lacks the discipline to pursue sustained study over a longer period. Thus where feasible we recommend this material for use in small groups. Perhaps two or three men can agree on a designated period of joint study for a half-year. Smaller pastoral conferences might use some of the guides in developing their programs. Supervising pastors and their vicars might utilize these courses.

We have asked the authors to arrange their bibliographies so that a key selection of books — preferably paperbacks — will be included in Group I. As a service to you, the Book Store at Concordia Seminary hopes to make these books available at a professional discount. Details regarding this service will be mailed.

We hope to provide five or six guides per year. They will appear in this journal every two or three months. Reprints will be available at a nominal cost.

Nomination of additional courses and suggestions as to how the material might be made more usable will be appreciated.

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