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Miscellanea

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Miscellanea.

What Is Religion?

In answering this question, we find almost as many answers or definitions as there are authors in the field of the philosophy of religion. A selection of definitions taken from some of the foremost books in the field will prove interesting. Max Mueller (*Introduction to the Science of Religion*, 13) writes: "Religion is a mental faculty or disposition which, independent of — nay, in spite of — sense and reason, enables man to apprehend the Infinite under different names and under varying disguises." Romanes (*Thoughts on Religion*, 41) has the statement: "Religion is a department of thought having for its object a self-conscious and intelligent Being." James (*Varieties of Religious Experience*, 31) says: "Religion . . . shall mean for us the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine." Binder (*Religion as Man's Completion*, 36) offers the following definition: "Religion means a search for completion through powers with whom man cannot deal by ordinary means. At its lowest it is merely an attempt to secure physical comforts and avoid destruction; at its highest it is a desire to come into full harmony with the ultimate cause of all things, intellectually, emotionally, and volitionally." Galloway (*The Philosophy of Religion*, 57 f.) explains rather than defines: "In every form of religion man seeks to establish a helpful relationship between himself and higher powers. The impulse to form this relationship and to secure satisfaction through it, proceeded from a felt need; and this need must have been latent in human nature, only requiring stimuli from the environment to quicken it to utterance." Edwards (*The Philosophy of Religion*, 12) writes: "Religion is a man's reaction to the totality of things as he apprehends it; but that very reaction implies an apprehension. It is a way of life rather than a theory, but a way of life which by implication contains or at least suggests a theory." In his pragmatic approach to the subject, Hocking (*The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, 4) states: "Not only is it true that religion is itself an invisible and intangible object, best discovered as winds — and the spirit generally — are discovered, in what they move; but also our interest in religion is due to an opinion of its value or at any rate of its actual influence in the world, so that our identification of it and understanding of it are guided by these supposed consequences." The statement of Hoeffding (*The Philosophy of Religion*, 6) is somewhat abstruse: "In its innermost essence, religion is concerned not with the comprehension, but with the valuation of existence, and that religious ideas express the relation in which actual existence, as we know it, stands to that which, for us, invests life with its highest value." The learned monograph by Ormond (*The Philosophy of Religion*, 18) states: "The primary datum of the religious consciousness is the sense of a transcendent object to which we stand immediately related." In Richardson (*The Philosophy of Religion*, 3) the statement is very brief: "Religion . . . only means that man has a capacity to know of God and may have a long-

ing to approach unto Him. The untutored savage bowing before a fetish or idol has a consciousness of the supersensuous, however debased and erroneous that conception." The definition of Sabatier (*Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, 36) is, in effect, "some relation and some commerce with the Deity." Wilm (*The Problem of Religion*, 29 f.) writes: "Religion is not a belief nor an emotion nor an attitude of will exclusively: it is all of these at once. It is man's total attitude and outlook. I should define it as an emotion based upon a conviction that events are being overruled in view of a supreme and lasting good and an attitude of cooperation with the Power in the universe making for this good." Wilm also refers to definitions by McTaggart and Perry, according to whom religion may be briefly defined as theistic optimism. The statement of W. K. Wright (*A Student's Philosophy of Religion*, 5) is often quoted: "A religion is a certain kind of systematic effort to secure the conservation and enhancement of values. The character of the values depends on the degree of advancement of the religion and of the civilization in which it appears." The definition given by H. W. Wright (*The Religious Response*, 6 f.) is based upon Hoeffding: "Religion is not merely a response to valued objects, to ideals of excellence and worth; it is also a response to the real universe. Indeed, it is primarily a response of the intelligent human individual to Universal Reality."

What definition, on the basis of these and other explanations, would seem to fit the general concept of natural religion? We might say: Religion is the consciousness and the acknowledgment of a superior being of some kind, together with a feeling of responsibility to such being, a recognition of dependence upon, and an obligation to, usually accompanied by some attempt to enter into fellowship with, the divinity or to placate its wrath. As for Christianity, as distinguished from all other religions, it must be kept in mind at all times that it is the only revealed religion and hence the absolute religion. The essential difference, as Keyser points out (*The Philosophy of Christianity*, 71), consists in this, that the Christian religion is the religion of love and that its fundamental truth is the vicarious atonement through Jesus Christ.

P. E. K.

The Correspondence Course of Concordia Seminary.

The beginning of the new school-year usually means a renewal of interest on the part of the six or eight score of pastors who have availed themselves of the opportunity to do systematic home study, at the same time keeping in touch with the school by means of written digests and reports. To the many men in our circles who do not yet seem to be acquainted with this department of the seminary's activities we issue a cordial invitation to avail themselves of the opportunity here offered. It is true that very much excellent work is done at many of our conferences; but it is also well known that much of this work is of the sporadic kind and does not lead to a well-defined goal. The many testimonies which we have received concerning the work of our correspondence courses encourage us to ask for enrolments. A pamphlet of outlines and a folder giving the necessary information are yours for the asking, and all questions pertaining to the work of this division will be cheerfully answered by Prof. P. E. Kretzmann, 801 De Mun Ave., St. Louis, Mo.

The Pastor as Salesman.

The reading of a recent book on salesmanship suggested almost forcibly the parallel between the work of a good salesman and that of a missionary pastor.

Preparedness is given as one of the first essentials in good salesmanship, and this does not include a mere catalog knowledge of the goods to be sold, but a thorough familiarity with the use of the various goods in daily life. "The human nature of the buyer prefers to deal with one whose knowledge of the goods in question is superior to his own and from whom he therefore can learn. And in addition there is the instinctive admiration we all feel for the man who is on to his job and knows whereof he speaks." Thus it is true of a well-equipped pastor and missionary that he not only knows his goods, the Bible, the means of grace, in a theoretical way, but he should also have a good, practical, working knowledge of the material which he is handling.

With regard to work on the road, it is essential that the good salesman actually covers his territory, conserving his time, going over his route again and again, both in order to hold the old customers and to gain new ones. It is especially important that the salesman knows the particular needs of the individual customer, a matter requiring infinite patience as well as infinite tact. "Experience seems to indicate that the most successful plan, so far as selling a large volume of goods is concerned, is for the salesman to have a territory just large enough for him to cover completely." All these points also find their application in the work of a missionary pastor, the matter of patient and tactful work, much attention to the individual, the necessity of confining the size of the congregation to the abilities of the pastor.

With regard to the contact with customers, the salesman is required to show the proper deference and respect to the customer, although "a deference which descends to obsequiousness and truckling is always a serious mistake." This means also that the salesman must have full confidence in the goods which he is selling, that he knows them to be the best of that particular kind. A proper shrewdness is of great value. "Neatness and cleanliness of appearance count for much and can never safely be neglected, no matter how well the salesman may be acquainted with his customer." Also, "salesmanship is largely a study of applied psychology." All of which will find its application to the work of the pastor almost without commentary.

With regard to the matter of competition our author frankly states "that it is easier to get trade than it is to hold it and that the most difficult task of all is to get back trade that you have lost." One can learn much from one's competitors, but it is to be remembered that friendliness must never lead to the betrayal of the firm's trust. The best reply to competition "is for the regular salesman to become thoroughly saturated and familiar with the part of his own line similar to that handled by the special man." All of which, translated into the language of the missionary pastor, would seem to indicate that systematic, conscientious work will usually succeed, that unionistic practises are bad psychology, and that one cannot become too thoroughly versed with regard to the in-

formation pertaining to the holy office. There are hundreds of facts in every department of theological knowledge which the missionary ought to become familiar with, and it is poor policy, to say the least, for any pastor to discontinue systematic study.

In addition to these fine hints, taken almost at random from this discussion on salesmanship, one will do well to remember also the following maxims as emphasized by successful business men: —

"Strength of purpose is half the battle of life; ability to withstand rebuff, the other half.

"If a project is not worth honest effort, it is not worth time or thought.

"Life gives forth only what is put into it. Poor soil cannot yield good fruit; but that barren soil may be made good by proper application of effort.

"If you are gifted with talent, use it. If you have not the means of perfecting that talent, earn them; but do not let the talent lie dormant in the interim. An active mind helps you to a full life. If you have such a mind, rejoice in it; if not, cultivate thought and steer your course through a joyous life. Do not allow morbid thought a place in your mind.

"A self-centered life is a worthless life. Have a thought for others."

P. E. K.

New Christian Festival Day in Germany.

The committee which is organizing the Luther commemoration on November 10 (450th anniversary of Luther's birth on November 10, 1483) has decided to make the 31st of October of each year, from 1934 onward, if possible, a German commemoration day, to be recognized throughout all Germany. In the laws of the *Reich* this day is to be enumerated under the official Christian and public-festival days.

A special Luther number of the *Illustrierte Zeitung* (edited at Leipzig by the J. J. Weber Publishing Co.), one of the most recognized illustrated weeklies of Europe, will appear and by the aid of the government given to schools, institutes, hospitals, etc.

The Protestant ministers of the *Reich* have given their word that they will take part in the commemoration on November 10 of this year, which day will be a great day of the Nazi propaganda. — *Holland News Bureau.*

The Jews.

The wide-spread idea that the number of Jews in the world is decreasing is quite incorrect. According to the latest statistics the number of Jews in the world has risen during the last fifty years from 11 million to 16 million. About 1800 there were approximately only 2½ million Jews. According to the latest work of the sociologist Arthur Ruppin the number of Jews is larger than in any other period in their history. From 1800 to 1930 their annual increase amounted to an average of 180,000 souls.

Holland News Bureau.

