

# RELIGION

## *Bulletin of Kansas School of Religion at The University of Kansas*

Vol. 2, No. 3, April, 1965



### Teaching Religion at a Tax-Supported University—One Way

#### I. Various Ways

About 10 years ago a distinguished president of a Midwest university, addressing a group of educators remarked: "There is no longer any question as to whether a university ought to provide for the teaching of religion; the only question we face now is 'how?'" These remarks are concerned with how it is done at The University of Kansas.

There are some places where a department of religion has been set up within the university financially supported in full or in part out of university funds. Sometimes religion is taught in a department of philosophy and religion. At The University of Michigan religion courses are scattered through many departments and coordinated through a special committee. At some universities credit is given to religion courses taught in foundations or Bible Chairs maintained by different denominations operating independently. The school of religion pattern is found at the state universities of Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, and Tennessee.

Education in America from the elementary school to the university graduate school assumes many different forms. The variety probably has more advantages than disadvantages, but, good or bad, it is a fact. The development of different ways of teaching religion at state universities is consistent with the lack of uniformity characteristic of American education in general.

Schools of religion do have some things in common—for example, active cooperation between a university and a group of religious bodies, and control of the school by an independent board on which cooperating denominations are represented—but they each differ from one another in important ways.

#### II. K.S.R. Beginnings

In the Autumn of 1920 "The Council of Religious Workers at The University of Kansas" was organized. Its counterpart in these days is "K.U. Religious Advisers," made up mainly of campus ministers and pastors of Lawrence churches that have a K.U. student program.

One of the first efforts of this Council was to look into the matter of founding a School of Religion. A special committee after months of investigation and study, submitted a plan which, after many revisions by the Council, was

accepted. Bulletin of the Kansas School of Religion, Vol. 1, No. 1, September 1, 1921.

The "plan" referred to is the institutional structure described in the Constitution adopted in January, 1921.

The school began to function in September of that year. Its chief distinguishing features were clear from the beginning:

##### 1. An ecumenical project

The Constitution provided for the control of the school by a board of trustees made up of representatives of a number of Protestant groups. The Council that created the school was a Lawrence body and the groups represented on the board of trustees were restricted too much to the Lawrence area, but both Council and board were involved in a genuine ecumenical venture, which for those days was rare. It is significant that, according to the Constitution, the board had to include representatives from the Y.W.C.A., and the Y.M.C.A., the most vigorous institutional expressions of ecumenicity in that generation.

##### 2. An active board of trustees

It was originally intended that the board of trustees should assume an active role in the administration of the affairs of the school. The Constitution authorized the establishment of at least six board committees: Executive, Curriculum, Building and Grounds, Credit, Faculty, Finance. As an illustration of the thoroughness of the administrative involvement of the board, there is the Constitutional clause specifying that it had to choose a secretary for the faculty, a minor function that would normally be left to the faculty itself.

I interpret these Constitutional references to mean that the founders were aware that an ecumenical project could not survive and prosper without hearty, aggressive participation on the part of the religious bodies involved in it.

##### 3. A high scholastic ideal

According to the Bulletin that was published for the opening of the school in 1921:

It is designed that all work in the Kansas School of Religion shall be of University standards, alike as to preparation of lessons, outside readings, recitation periods and examinations.

The Constitution specified that as a minimum a teacher's preparation had to include a Bachelor's degree from a college of recognized standing plus a Bachelor of Divinity degree, which represented three years, sometimes only two years in those days, of graduate study beyond an A.B. Even today many instructors in K.U. have much less graduate preparation than was required of K.S.R. teachers in 1921.

The Constitution sets up a further safeguard for teaching competence. K.U. administrative endorsement for a man is necessary before he can teach in K.S.R.

#### 4. Cooperation between Church and State

Chancellor Lindley was continuing a long-standing K.U. tradition of understanding of, and appreciation for, the contributions of religion when he wrote in 1921:

Religion is an indispensable element in a liberal education . . . The University therefore welcomes the advent of the School of Religion.

It is more than coincidence that "The Council of Religious Workers at The University of Kansas" was organized and the Kansas School of Religion came into existence within the first year of E. H. Lindley's nineteen years of service as the chancellor of the university.

On its side, the Council and, when the school began to function, the board of trustees planned the school's affairs in such a way that it would fit into the university's educational program, as the Bulletin referred to above (II, 3) indicates.

As plans for the school were taking shape, there was an understanding that the university on its part would recognize it by allowing some religion credit towards a baccalaureate degree. Beginning in 1922-23, three hours of credit were allowed. Later the amount was extended until eventually everything taught was accredited and 25 hours could be applied towards an A.B. degree.

### III. Significant External Developments Since 1921

Much has happened since 1921 that is relevant to the operation of K.S.R.:

1. The concept of religious pluralism in American society has been generally accepted. We have gone a long way beyond the view that this is a Protestant country and people of other religious persuasions are with us by sufferance.

2. The ecumenical movement has been projected "into orbit," especially by decisions made within the last thirty years. The spirit of cooperation is abroad in our land and around the world, and it has become increasingly clear that cooperation must not be based on an acceptance of the highest common factor and a cancelling out of the differences between religious bodies. A new strength is coming to the churches as they recognize, first, that they have much in common, and second, that the distinctive features of each, while important, are partial and in need of the complementary contributions that others can make towards the well being of the larger ecumenical whole. Jews as well as Protestants and Catholics are involved in what we call the dialogue. As it continues, it is at least helping us to think straight on what each really believes and why, if at all, it matters what each believes.

There is no place where the dialogue could be more natural, more thorough-going and more fruitful than on the campus of state colleges and universities, where 75% of the nation's youth are gathered to learn and where we have a right to expect a minimum of narrow religious partisanship.

3. Leaders of the church have come to see more clearly than did church leaders in 1921 that the issue on the college campus is not whether one should be a Jew or a Christian, a Protestant or a Catholic, a Methodist or a Baptist. It is

not Christianity or even Americanism versus Communism, for Americanism and Communism are religions, even if pseudo, that call for personal commitment. The basic question is whether or not the student will commit himself to an Ultimate that can give meaning to his life. We who are Jews and Christians believe that the Ultimate worthy of youth's devotion can be interpreted best in terms of the God of Abraham, Moses, Amos, and Jesus, the God who made man in his own image and demands of his creatures primarily that they do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with their Maker.

4. In recent times citizens of America have become much more conscious, than I think those of 1921 were, about the delicate relations of Church and State in this republic. It appears now that, while recent Supreme Court decisions have been disturbing, we needed to be disturbed, for most of us had not been thinking straight concerning the distinction between religion in an educational curriculum and religion as a way of life, between teaching about religion and religious exercises. The Court has made it clear that the Constitution is not opposed to education in religious matters in the public schools. As K.U. Law Professor Robert Casad has pointed out:

A majority of the present Court recognizes that religion has a legitimate function in public education, and that the principles of the first amendment permit—may even require—the teaching of religious subjects. RELIGION, Vol. 1, No. 3, April, 1964, p. 4.

### IV. Recent Internal Developments

Since 1960 the following developments have occurred:

1. The number of religious bodies in the K.S.R. corporation has increased from seven to ten, and in these ecumenical times we expect others to be added. When the Jews became fully a part of the corporation in 1961, the school became interfaith as well as interdenominational.

2. In recent years the school has had wider representation on its faculty. In 1961, after a lapse of many years, a Jewish rabbi began to teach a course. Also in 1961, for the first time in its history, the school added a Roman Catholic member to its faculty.

3. The religious bodies in the corporation have become more deeply involved in the work of the school. This involvement is evidenced in various ways. In each of the ten instances K.S.R. is related to a religious body in the corporation of the school at the state level, whereas formerly the relationship with many of these groups was local, through a church in Lawrence or a campus ministry center.

4. Financial support for the school has increased greatly and it is now more equitably distributed over the religious bodies in the corporation, who are now functioning as mature partners in the school's affairs.

5. While there are evidences of an understandable concern for the welfare of denominations as such, there are more evidences of a genuine ecumenical spirit in the conduct of the religious bodies at work in K.S.R. To illustrate, in order to make it possible to bring a Lutheran to the faculty in September, 1963 two denominations, Episcopal and Disciple, each contributed \$1,000 to his salary. The lofty pronouncements at great ecumenical conferences are significant only as they are related to "grass root" situations such as we have at K.U. where ecumenicity becomes concrete and denominations join hands in doing together what they cannot accomplish separately.

6. The board of trustees is increasingly becoming the active administrative agency the K.S.R. Constitution calls for. An important factor in its assumption of a vigorous role

is the individual board member's awareness of the concern and the serious involvement of the religious body he represents.

7. The school has taken long strides in building a faculty of good scholars and able teachers. The faculty in the past has been made up mainly of part-time men, who generally have done a good job. But to function as a creditable department comparable to other departments in the university the school needed to have a faculty made up for the most part of full-time men. From 1921 to 1963 it had had no more than one full-time teacher at any time. Then the Lutheran Paul Hasvold (Oxford University) came to us. In 1964 the Episcopalian John Macauley (Cambridge University) joined the faculty. We now have a Methodist, Robert Bobilin (University of Southern California), beginning in September, 1965.

8. Through its faculty's interdepartmental connections the school is becoming more intimately related to the main stream of the university's academic program. The dean (whose specialty is New Testament) teaches a course in Classics and Professor Hasvold (Theology) one course each semester in Philosophy. Professor Macauley (Church History) has a teaching relationship with the History Department and Professor Bobilin (Christian Ethics) a similar arrangement with Sociology.

9. Library assets have improved radically, both in K.S.R. library and in Watson, the K.U. library. The university pays for the books on religion bought for Watson, and it is the privilege of the dean of K.S.R. to choose the books. In 1959-60, the university put about \$300 into books and periodicals in the field of religion. It has increased the amount to about \$1,000. In 1959-60, about \$100 went into books for the K.S.R. library. Last year the amount was about \$1,000. This year it will be close to \$1,500, thanks to the increase in financial resources provided by the religious bodies in the corporation.

The nine developments referred to above have strengthened K.S.R. and enabled it to do a better job academically. The consequence is that it has obtained a better status in the university curriculum. By action of the faculty of the College of Liberal Arts, K.S.R.'s junior and senior courses with one exception may now be used by students in satisfying degree requirements in the Humanities field.

#### V. The K.S.R. Ideal

This is only one of many ways of teaching religion at a tax-supported university. It has proved itself a good way. It accords with the most conservative interpretation of the principle of separation of church and state, and thus escapes criticism it might otherwise encounter. It has demonstrated that religion can be taught by the standards of scholarship that obtain in a good university. It has also shown that people of diverse ecclesiastical traditions can teach religion at a state university without generating damaging controversy.

The K.S.R. ideal calls for:

1. A university that goes beyond tolerating religion to working actively to make it a significant part of the curriculum.

2. A partnership made up of the major religious bodies in the area, who are prepared to pay the price of fellowship in a genuine ecumenical project and give it sincere and hearty support.

3. A board of trustees that thinks of itself as the focal point of the ecumenical concerns of the religious bodies it represents. A board member in this kind of school needs to be familiar with the field of higher education, informed

about the beliefs and practices of his own and of other denominations, and must himself manifest an ecumenical spirit as he works with people of different religious affiliations.

4. An ecumenical, in contrast particularly to a sectarian, philosophy of education. The school is concerned with the total field of religion in all its variety and vitality, not with one particular religious tradition, or even with the sum of those traditions represented on the board of trustees. The Lutheran Church provides the salary for a Lutheran teacher, but he does not function as the advocate of Lutheranism *vis-à-vis* champions of other denominations in the school. He is the Lutheran Church's contribution to a liberal education, making that contribution especially in the realm of the history of theology, in which he has special competence.

A K.S.R. teacher has the academic freedom accorded teachers in other sections of the university. He is also expected to exercise the academic responsibility characteristic of a scholar in a university community and be fair in his treatment of traditions other than his own.

5. A superior faculty. One on our staff needs to be a scholar in his field, for he must measure up to the scholastic standards of his colleagues in the university. He must be a good teacher, better than the university average, for he must be able to attract students into courses that in this situation cannot be other than elective. He should be a committed, practicing churchman who manifests enthusiasm for the subject he teaches.

When the writer was in college over thirty years ago, a student could go from a class in which one of the sciences was taught with evangelical fervor to a class in the literature of the Old Testament in which the teacher apparently couldn't care less about the religious and ethical concepts that made the ancient Hebrews great. The English teacher in a course in Shakespeare isn't really a good teacher unless after dealing with introductory, critical matters he gets somewhat steamed up about Shakespearean ideas. The civics teacher ought not only to be allowed to, but actually encouraged to display enthusiasm for democratic ideals. This he can surely do without using the influence of his position to persuade students to leave the Republican for the Democratic party or *vice versa*. It is often the case that a teacher of religion in making accommodations to an educational system that stresses objectivity and that seems often to be allergic to the field of religion betrays the cause he represents.

Perhaps the ideal for us in K.S.R. would be a scholar-saint, a breed as scarce as whooping cranes. Assuming the unavailability of this type, we should strive to have on our faculty scholars with deep appreciation for religious values, who can at least enter sympathetically into the experience of the religious genius and interpret it to others.

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*K.S.R. can be just as significant as The University of Kansas and the leaders of the religious bodies of Kansas choose to make it. The potential is great. The achievements of the last five years and the present mood in K.U. and in Kansas religious circles encourage us to believe that within the next few years attainments, too, will be great.*

We have calls for extra copies of each issue of RELIGION. The printer will hold the type for this issue until June 1. If you wish TO HAVE EXTRA COPIES for the bare cost of printing plus mailing charges, PLEASE NOTIFY US BY JUNE 1.

## The Conference on Medicine and Religion

The Kansas School of Religion is cooperating with The University of Kansas School of Medicine in setting up a graduate symposium on Medicine and Religion mainly for physicians and clergymen of all faiths. The event will be held on October 26 and 27 in Battenfeld Auditorium at the K.U. Medical Center in Kansas City, Kansas. It is designed to bring together at a high level of dialog the two professions most interested in the illness of man. Representatives of both professions, competent academically and in practice, will come from various parts of the country to contribute their wisdom in the areas of science and religion so that the care of the sick may be improved. Lecturers from outside the Kansas City area include: Rabbi Henry E. Kagan, chairman of the Commission on Judaism and Mental Health; Father John J. Lynch, S.J., Professor of Moral Theology at Weston College; Dr. Paul W. Pruyser of the Menninger Foundation in Topeka; Dr. Granger E. Westberg, Professor of Medicine and Religion in Baylor University's College of Medicine. The symposium will draw heavily also from the many talented people in medicine and religion in the Kansas City area. The program will soon be printed and available upon request from the K.U. Medical Center.

## C. Y. Thomas at the Helm

In its planning for a campaign for funds for an adequate, new building and for a dynamic, expanded program for the school, the Kansas School of Religion Development Committee has been able to enlist the support of a group of seventeen people as an Executive Board for the campaign. These are all leaders in American society; they have a passion for higher education; they are prominent laymen in church and synagogue; they believe in the cooperative, ecumenical way for religious bodies to do their work; they are intimately related to the business and professional circles of Kansas. Seven Protestant denominations,

the Roman Catholic Church and Judaism are all represented on this board of seventeen. With such people planning the strategy of the campaign and giving it careful oversight, we feel confident of the outcome of this effort to strengthen the teaching of religion at K.U.

It should be understood that this board will have a short life, for the campaign for funds cannot be extended over a long period for various reasons. This is not to be confused with the board of trustees appointed by the ten religious



bodies in the school's corporation and charged with administering the program of the school year after year.

The campaign's Executive Board is being chaired by Mr. C. Y. Thomas, chairman of the board of Spencer Chemical Company. Mr. Thomas has exercised efficient leadership in many good causes including some in the field of higher education; for example, he served for a number of years as the chairman of the board of Baker University and is presently an active member of the board of Southern Methodist University.

## Another Full-time Teacher

Dr. Robert T. Bobilin will come to Lawrence in September as an associate professor in the Kansas School of Religion. His appointment followed the pattern characteristic of the school in its other appointments. Upon the recommendation of the dean, he was endorsed first by a committee on faculty set up by the board of the school, second by Dean Waggoner of K.U.'s Liberal Arts College, third by K.U.'s Chancellor Wescoe, and finally by the executive committee of the K.S.R. board. Financial support for this new teacher is being provided by the two Methodist conferences in Kansas.

Dr. Bobilin comes well-equipped academically. He has an A.B. from Adrian College and a M.Th. and Ph.D. from The University of Southern California. He was awarded a National Methodist Scholarship in 1948-49 and 1952-54, the Faculty Teaching Award at Whittier College in 1958, a Hill Foundation Fellowship in 1961 allowing him to study in Japan for three months, a State Department Grant for study in India in the summer of 1963, and a fellowship by the Society for Religion in Higher Education providing for study at Harvard University and in Japan in 1964-65. He will be in Japan from April until the end of August.

His teaching career has been with Whittier College and Hamline University. The teaching has been mainly in the areas of Christian Ethics, the Great Living Religions, Bible, and the History of Thought. His academic emphasis and his teaching experience in Christian Ethics make him especially useful to K.S.R. while his secondary emphasis upon Asian Religions will make him welcome to the community of scholars in the East Asian Area study program at K.U. In addition to his teaching in K.S.R. he will teach the course Religion and Society in the Sociology Department.

Mrs. Bobilin is a graduate of Lawrence College and has a master's degree in social work from The University of Southern California. The Bobilins have three children.

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