

RELIGION

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Religion in the Public Schools: Educational Issues*

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The whole problem of religion in the public schools has become progressively more acute as our cultural pluralism has come to characterize the local communities and school districts.

I believe enough time has passed, enough commissions have reported, enough church councils have studied and spoken, enough professional educators have deliberated and enough Supreme Court decisions have been handed down to allow for a few generalizations. The controversy, sometimes rising to the level of true dialogue, has provided a sufficient literature to illuminate the way at least a few steps ahead.

What we might reasonably call the "leadership" among professional educators understands the Supreme Court rulings to be tending clearly in the direction of the separation of church and state for the good of each, and they are adapting their thinking to this interpretation of the constitution in most of those cases where they had not formerly held such views on their own. For widely various reasons educational philosophers and historians, curriculum and methodology professors and educational administrators in leadership positions define a very clear trend in favor of the separation of church and state when this is interpreted to mean, as revealed by the rulings in the Schempp case, "If the purpose or primary effect of a practice is the 'advancement or inhibition of religion,' then the court seems to say that it is unconstitutional for the government, and hence the public schools, to require or support such a practice."

"At the same time the public schools are clearly enjoined from hostility to religion, and their essential neutrality may not be construed as support for antireligion or justification for the preferment of a nonreligious philosophy."¹

In contrast to the preponderant view among professional educators concerned with general policy, the local teacher, administrator, school board, layman and clergy are com-

monly of an opposing view. The school does not look like an arm of the state to them. It looks like *their* school, and they are often aggrieved at the very notion that the federal government should presume to interfere in local affairs. Filled with sincere and righteous indignation, or with a kind of parochial innocence of the law, they continue to use the public school and the compulsory school attendance laws to house and to check attendance of students for the purpose of facilitating sectarian religious instruction, public prayer and religious worship. But many a teacher and administrator who knows the law chooses to defer to the local sentiment or even the dictates of his own conscience, for in many communities it is much safer to violate the law than to follow it.

As a professional educator, I suspect I am pretty typical. I believe with the great majority of my colleagues that we should not teach religion in the schools. One must phrase it so in contemporary parlance to be understood, but in a deeper sense I am really denying in any such statement what I do greatly believe concerning religion in public education. In a sense not commonly understood, I believe that religion should be present, imparted, taught, in two discernibly different dimensions both in the public schools and in state institutions of higher learning.

All liberating education should be suffused with a sense of "ultimate concern," as Tillich and others use the term, an abiding concern for the destiny of man and the meaning of his life. And this pursuit should be characterized by faith, humility, discipline and love. There is a religious dimension to all education worthy the name. The very spirit of learning is not willful, boastful, prideful. Truth is not properly sought in this state of mind. It requires a kind of ultimate honesty about one's self, one's ideas and the ideas of others. This calls for disciplined self-restraint in the pursuit of truth; and, in order to carry on a successful dialogue, it calls for the entertaining of the alternative ideas of another as one would have his own ideas generously entertained. When one speaks of the religious dimension of education in this manner, the whole thing begins to sound pretty esoteric; but this whole process starts in the primary school with the sharing of interests, experiences and common learn-

* An abbreviated form of an address given at the K.U. Law School's Institute on Religion, Education and the Law, Sept. 29-30, 1964.

¹ *Religion in the Public Schools*, American Association of School Administrators, 1201 Sixteenth St., N.W., Washington, D. C., Washington, 1964, p. 25.

ings. In the presence of a teacher who exhibits the religious qualities of a mature love, reasonable consideration for others and a contagious curiosity about the world and ourselves, children tend to get into the spirit of wondering, thinking, and learning in an environment where it is safe to be spontaneous, honest, outgoing and responsible. In the course of time students will also have to learn the conditions under which the overt practice of these virtues becomes self-defeating.

This is a brief attempt to allude to rather than delineate in any fullness what we might call intrinsic religion as distinguishable from the forms of religion and the empirical church as a social institution. We are here calling attention to the inwardness of religion, the religious quality manifest in the lives of greatly religious and convincingly authentic men—in short, the existential dimension of religion. In the last analysis, reverence and awe are the condition both of an adequate religious and educational endeavor. Theodore Greene puts it well.

Both man's religious quest for God and his intellectual quest for truth have again and again succumbed to blind and rigid dogmatism. I can think of nothing in human history more ironic than that man should be most prone to dogmatic arrogance in the very ventures which originate in his ignorance and need and which, above all others, should induce in him the most profound humility. . . . Nothing could be more self-contradictory than an arrogant man of God, complacent in his own righteousness, or than an arrogant scientist or philosopher, complacent in his own creative power and rationality.²

We are dealing here with the cultivation of the human spirit which is attained more by contagion than by literal instruction. Dedication to the supreme importance of the *I-Thou* relationship cannot be taught in a carefully planned series of lessons, but we have little doubt that, as widely different and differing men as Emerson, Dewey, Whitehead, Maritain and Buber were all quick to recognize, such are authentic manifestations of the human spirit. Surely teachers living with their students as "those committed," but never departing from the educational program to teach sectarian doctrine or employ the language of worship, have a tremendously significant religious influence on their students but this is not commonly understood to be "teaching religion" in the public schools.

Not only does the teaching of religion in the public schools not mean the daily influence of students by an authentic spiritual presence, it does not commonly mean teaching in the accepted sense in which other subjects are taught. The community that decides the teaching of religion in its schools is imperative does not think of religion as another subject. If thus conceived, the teaching of religion might well meet with the Supreme Court's notion of propriety, for it would not be taught with the intent of advancing or limiting the development of any one or of all religions. It would be taught, excitingly and contagiously when possible, for the purpose of advancing understanding and appreciation

² Ehlers, H. and Lee, G., Editors, *Crucial Issues in Education*, Henry Holt & Co., New York, 1959, p. 155.

for what some consider to be one of the liberal studies. The teachers would have majored in the subject, would be academically biased in favor of its importance just as English, history and science teachers now are, and the result would be enlightenment and a contribution to culture. But one wouldn't become a "better" Catholic, Protestant or Jew in any sectarian sense and one wouldn't be concerned with the teacher's commitment to any of these or none. Concern would center on his competence.

But if education, if enlightenment, is all we can promise, the laity and the local clergy are not likely to be interested. What they want is instruction, I hesitate to say *teaching*, in a pre-determined deposit of beliefs and practices that have come to stand for religion for them—Catholic, Protestant, Jew, Moslem; and the teacher must not be primarily committed to the subject of religion but to the proper partisanship within the subject—like a history teacher, but with the proper bias. And the students must be segregated into faith groups for instruction. No wonder professional educators demur when confronted with a request that they depart from the work for which they were prepared and to which they are dedicated.

I would like to close with some comment on the proposal most widely supported by professional educators when caught in the dilemma indicated.³ Not wanting to appear opposed to religion, and not willing to meet the sectarian's demands, he commonly suggests that we teach *about* religion. This, he apparently feels, is respectful of religion and non-sectarian. There is merit in the suggestion and if we can do no more, it is doubtless better than nothing. Our contemporary religious illiteracy is deplorable to the educator because all illiteracy and ignorance is deplorable, and this would relieve the situation somewhat if indeed we had teachers who were religiously literate, but it certainly is a second-best solution to the problem. The reason for this is that the approach is essentially negative. It gets rid of the divisive effects of sectarianism but what it offers is unconvincing.

One doesn't teach *about* physics, history and painting; he *teaches* physics, history and painting. He doesn't hold a subject at arm's length and discuss it disinterestedly; he becomes unselfconsciously involved with it. He becomes absorbed in it, it takes up residence in him, he assimilates it unto himself and, as with any liberal study creatively engaged, allows it to effect its transforming power over him. Like any subject, it can be taught with passionate concern. And this is the point we miss, religion can be engaged in the spirit of scholarly inquiry and employed for educational ends, i.e., for the cultivation of the human spirit. When thus employed for the progressive rebirth of man into even larger realms of understanding, Cardinal Newman (*The Idea of a University*) attests to moments in the process of scholarly endeavor that can scarcely be discerned from prayer.

³ Sckaly, A. L., Editor, *Teacher Education and Religion*, AACTE, Oneonta, New York, 1959.

Kansas School of Religion, 1964-65*

I. Introduction

For forty-four years K.S.R. has functioned with singleness of purpose, expressed in the Constitution drawn up in 1921 as:

* Summary Report of the Dean at the Annual Meeting of the K.S.R. Board in May, 1965.

"scientific instruction in religion and its broad application to the problems of humanity."

According to a more elaborate statement of purpose formulated by the board of trustees in 1962:

"We believe that religion should be

studied with as much thoroughness and by as high academic standards as economics, civics, science, and other disciplines that shape the mind and outlook of a cultured man. We believe that religion should penetrate the academic community and confront our culture with its claims. We believe that while

the work of all of the academic disciplines should be examined in the light of the claims of religion, the Jewish-Christian tradition in particular, every form and expression of religion should itself be exposed to the critical inquiry that distinguishes the highest levels of education in a truly free society."

Year after year the school serves the young and intelligent and ambitious who come hopefully to a great state university by making available to them courses in religion taught by the standards of scholarship characteristic of that community of learning.

II. The Courses

This year the following courses have been taught:

- 21 Life and Teachings of Jesus 3 hrs.
- 25 Religion 3 hrs.
- 42 Old Testament Literature 3 hrs.
- 44 New Testament Literature 3 hrs.
- 47 Ideas and Men in the History of Christian Thought I 2 hrs.
- 48 Ideas and Men in the History of Christian Thought II 2 hrs.
- 51 Life and Teachings of Jesus 3 hrs.
- 56 History of the Hebrews I 2 hrs.
- 58 History of the Hebrews II 2 hrs.
- 62 History of the Church I 2 hrs.
- 64 History of the Church II 2 hrs.
- 83 Christianity and Modern Thought 3 hrs.
- 91 History of the World's Living Religions 3 hrs.

These courses are listed and described in the regular catalog of K.U.'s College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, for in reality they are credit-bearing university courses.

These have the solid content of good Biblical and theological learning at the undergraduate level and suffer nothing in comparison with curricula of departments of religion and schools of religion across the country.

They are all elective, for no course in religion could be required in the program of a tax-supported university.

This year for the first time in the history of the school students have been able to use 51, 56, 58, 62, 64, 83 and 91 to satisfy A.B. degree requirements in the field of Humanities.

Courses 21, 25, 42, 44, 51, 91 were taught both semesters.

We have had about 530 registrations in K.S.R. courses this year.

III. Teachers

K.S.R. courses have been taught this year by:

- B. Downey, O.S.B., A.B., M.A. (Oxon)
—Roman Catholic
- J. Graber, A.B., Th.M., Th.D.—Baptist
- P. Hasvold, A.B., M.A., B.D., expecting

to receive Ph.D. this year—Lutheran
D. E. Hull, A.B., B.D.—Methodist
J. S. Macauley, A.B., B.D., Ph.D.—
Episcopal
W. J. Moore, A.B., B.D., M.A., Ph.D.
—Christian (Disciple)
E. L. Sapinsley, B.S., B.H.L., M.H.L.—
Jewish
M. H. Strothmann, A.B., B.D., S.T.M.,
Ph.D.—Presbyterian

Professors Hasvold, Macauley and Moore are full-time teachers. The other five teach only one course each.

The Constitution specifies that a teacher must have a B.D. degree or its equivalent as well as an A.B. Actually not one of our teachers this year has less than four years of graduate preparation beyond a regular bachelor's degree.

Friends of the school should be appreciative of the work of the part-time teachers, who, though unsalaried, discharge their responsibilities with industry and dedication and competence.

IV. Miscellaneous

1. A Graduate Course

In the year 1962-63, Dr. Carl Bangs of St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City taught a short course in Myers Hall bearing one hour of graduate credit with St. Paul's. This year he taught a similar course. The good response to this cooperative effort on each occasion—especially by ministers in the area—indicates the need for courses at the graduate level in K.S.R.

2. Religion and the Law

K.S.R. cooperated with the K.U. Law School and the National Conference of Christians and Jews in sponsoring a conference on "Religion, Education and the Law" last September. It was a highly satisfactory project designed to clarify thought on important issues brought into focus by controversial Supreme Court decisions dealing with religion and the schools. Two years ago the K.S.R. board created a Committee on Religion and Higher Education, the members of which (Professor George Anderson, Professor Robert Casad and Dean James Logan) had a prominent role in the conference.

3. The Periodical: RELIGION

In its short life up to this point (born October, 1963) our K.S.R. quarterly has more than measured up to our expectations. There are requests for extra copies with the appearance of each issue. The two most popular issues have been that of April, 1964 (with Dr. Casad's article "On Teaching Religion at the State University") and that of

January, 1965 (with Dr. Littell's article "The Churches and the Constitution"). In the case of the latter the extras (6,250) amounted to more than the original printing (5,750). This sort of thing hurts us financially, but it is good for public relations.

4. Library

The library in Myers Hall has been improved much this year by new purchases. Thanks to the increase in contributions to the treasury from the religious bodies in the corporation we are able to spend at least \$1,500 on books and periodicals this year. There have been some welcome gifts of books, mainly from the Jewish Chatauqua Society and from Pastor I. M. Gjellstad of Lawrence.

Professor Paul Hasvold has been working industriously and efficiently in the oversight of library affairs.

5. On the Air

The class periods of the Dean's course 91, The History of the World's Living Religions in the first semester were taped by the K.U. radio staff and at the rate of one lecture a week are being broadcast from Lawrence over K.A.N.U.

V. The K.S.R. Development Campaign

The Kansas Bible Chair board at its annual meeting last year instructed its Executive Committee to confer with the Kansas School of Religion board about a common campaign involving the special interest of the Bible Chair in a new building and the special interest of the School of Religion in a more effective program. The Kansas School of Religion in turn instructed its Executive Committee to participate in such a conference. The two committees met on June 13 and prepared a plan for carrying on the joint project. Both boards by mail vote endorsed the plan. Since then the two Executive Committees, as the plan proposes, have been functioning as the Kansas School of Religion Development Committee with Paul Shivel as Director of Development and Leo Bishop and Irvin Youngberg as advisers. An enormous amount of work has been done and we are moving with definiteness towards our goals. I am highly optimistic about the outcome of our efforts.

VI. The Outlook for 1965-66

1. Another full-time Teacher

We are happy to report that Dr. Robert Bobilin will join the faculty in September, 1965 as Assistant Professor. His specialty is Christian Ethics. His basic financial support is coming from the two Methodist conferences in Kan-

sas. In addition to his work in K.S.R. he will teach the course Religion and Society in K.U.'s Sociology Department. His special preparation in East Asian religions makes him a welcome addition to the fine group of scholars in K.U.'s East Asian Area program.

2. Other Faculty Additions

Rabbi Sapinsley of Topeka, who has been teaching a course for K.S.R., will be unable to continue after this year. We are in consultation with an able Kansas City rabbi about a teaching role with us and the prospects at the moment look bright for him to join us in September.

Father Brendon Downey, representing the Catholics, teaches one of the sections of our course on an introduction to religion. We are hopeful that another Catholic scholar will teach an additional course next year.

3. The Conference on Medicine and Religion

We are working with the K.U. School of Medicine on a conference to be held on October 26 and 27, 1965 that will bring together hundreds of doctors and clergymen to consider the roles of these two professions concerned with human illness. The thinking of the conferees will be led by nationally known authorities from both professions and we expect this to be a highly profitable learning experience for the participants.

4. An Assistant

The school is in need of an assistant to the dean now. With the building up of the work of the office during the campaign for funds in the Fall, the need will increase. We are hopeful that funds will be available by September and the right person will be found for us to employ an assistant whose role will be primarily that of a business manager and a public relations man.

VII. New Wineskins

A long time ago we were warned of the danger that might ensue should we try to keep new wine in old wineskins. Perhaps the board of trustees

faculty of K.S.R. should in the coming school year seriously tackle the job of fashioning new forms for its expanding, vital program. For example:

1. A study might be made of the board itself, and organizational structures devised that will facilitate the work of the school.

2. Since, with four full-time teachers ably supported by competent part-time men, the school looks more like a regular department in the university, there is a need to define the teachers' roles accordingly and organize the staff to do the work of this department better.

3. We should give thought to the role of the dean in the growing school. Perhaps in coming years we will need a dean who is more an administrator than a teacher.

4. One of our chief needs is a committee, probably related to both the K.S.R. board and the K.U. administration, that will coordinate all the teaching of religion—the university offers about 40 hours beyond what is taught in K.S.R.—and advise on all curricular developments in the field of religion at K.U.

MEDICINE AND RELIGION

It is time to send in advance registrations for the symposium on October 26 and 27 at the K.U. Medical Center. Enrollment is restricted to physicians and clergymen, and the fee is \$15.00. For registration blanks and information on lodging one may write: Department of Postgraduate Medical Education, K.U. School of Medicine, Kansas City, Kansas 66103. Some of the elements in the program are:

October 26, morning:

"Physician, Clergy, and the Whole Man," Dr. Paul B. MacCleave

Baylor University College of Medicine, Houston, Texas.

"Prolonging Life: Experimental Procedures," The Reverend John J. Lynch, Professor of Moral Theology, Weston College, Weston, Mass.

Panel Discussion: "Man and Morals of Medicine"

October 26, afternoon:

"Religion and Psychiatry, a Polygon of Relationships," Dr. Paul W. Pruyser, the Menninger Foundation, Topeka, Kansas.

"Psychology and Religion," Rabbi Henry E. Kagan, Chairman of Commission on Judaism and Mental Health, New York Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, Mount Vernon, New York.

Panel Discussion: "Emotional Illness: Inter-relationships of Clergy, Physician, Psychologist, and Psychiatrist."

October 26, evening:

Movie: "The One Who Heals" Group Conversations

October 27, morning:

"Medicine and Religious Minorities," Dr. Carl Bangs, St. Paul School of Theology Methodist, Kansas City, Mo.

"Privileged Communications: Knowledge of One's Condition," The Reverend John J. Lynch.

"Prayer and Illness," Rabbi Henry E. Kagan

Panel Discussion: "Use and Abuse of Religion in Sickness."

October 27, afternoon:

"Good Grief!" Dr. Granger E. Westberg

"Anxiety and Depression," Dr. Donald C. Greaves, Professor of Psychiatry and Chairman of Department, K.U. School of Medicine

Panel Discussion: "Things are Tough All Over."

RELIGION

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