

Appendix II

Department Snapshot Co. 1968
(from Robertson; pp.82-88; 105f.)

Faculty: The University does have a Protestant-Methodist heritage, and this cannot be simply dismissed. However, the University guards its independence in terms of policy and of hiring its faculty, and this is the case in the Department of Religion as in other Departments. Chancellor Tolley recalls that over the years one of the issues which keeps coming up is whether the University should permit the Jewish community to designate a teacher of Judaism or the Roman Catholic church to designate a teacher of courses that look at Christianity through the eyes of the Church. Protestant groups have suggested the same privilege for themselves.

In each case we have taken the position that the University should not give credit courses that it does not completely control, whatever the group may be, including the Methodists. By the same token, we ought not to allow any outside group to name any of the members of our faculty. We have to name our faculty and control our standards. We would resent any such efforts by members of the Manufacturers Association, head of Chamber of Commerce, the American Legion, or the P.T.A., or any other group trying to run the institution.

The issue of “control” is not a serious one. Teachers in the Department are hired on the basis of professional qualifications, and we have “academic freedom” to teach our subject matter as responsible scholars in a community of scholars. But all of the members of the department have studied theology in denominational seminaries, and all but one member of the staff is ordained. In what way does this affect our function as scholars? Recalling the Chancellor’s recommendation of the Ph.D. in a Department of Religion as against seminary training, we have to face these facts: 1. As Paul Harrison wrote: “In contemporary society the status of a profession is increasingly measured by the extent of the profession’s identification with the University.”¹⁰ 2. In the future University Departments of religion are likely to train a goodly portion of those going into the parish ministry. Harrison knows of “no University department of religion which has registered a serious interest in educating ecclesiastical students for their professional degree.” However, many of the clergy are afraid this may happen. 3. The problem is sharply drawn because a new movement in universities makes religion a subject of rigorous academic interest by people who do not share the traditional interest of the cleric. “There is an increasing tendency for scholarship in religion to be pursued ‘objectively’ and for scholarly criteria to be developed that are universal rather than particular.” 4. Members of our Department represent various degrees and modes of commitment to particular traditions. We may assume that some members of the staff hired in the future will be outside the tradition all together. 5. In as far as we are truly academicians in the full sense, we share a certain “disinterestedness” in our subject matter. Further, we seek universal intellectual criteria in determining “truth.” We share in “the effort to avoid the apparent contradiction of establishing ultimate claims within a parochial setting.” 6. We are responsible, therefore, not only to keep alive our search for professional excellence, but we owe it to the church to share its concern

about the part we may begin to play in the future in the training of its ministry. What Departments of Religion such as ours do, as compared to seminaries, will be fateful for the life and the nature of the church and its ministry, when (and if) large numbers of parsons are trained in universities. If the problem of interpreting modern theological scholarship to the layman has been difficult for seminary-university trained men, what will it be like for those who study in Departments of Religion only? Other problems we faced in the past; this one is yet to be faced squarely.

Departmental majors: The Department has never had large numbers of majors. In recent years the number has run between twenty and thirty. It is the desire of the Department to attract more first-rate students as majors. The interest is not simply in numbers. We believe that a Religion major is, or can be, one of the best in the Liberal Arts options. As the course listings in the Appendix show, there is a range and richness of offerings which may well interest more students in the future. Enrollments in Religion courses have run to about 3,000 each year in the past few years. The Department intends to continue the development of a strong undergraduate program. As indicated earlier, all members of the staff, those heavily engaged in the expanded graduate program included, will continue to give course time and attention to teaching and advising undergraduates. It is believed that a strong graduate and a strong undergraduate program will supplement and complement each other. The opportunity for undergraduates to study with professors who are not only eminent in their areas of specialization but represent at the same time leadership in the nation will, we believe, attract some of the better minds in the student body. Individual courses will recommend themselves. The possibility of a major may become a "live option." Hopefully some of the better students, whether majors or not, may become applicants for our graduate program.

As a part of our intent to "upgrade" all Departmental work, special attention has been given to requirements for majors. Beginning with the incoming majors this fall (1968) thirty hours of work in the Department or in related, approved courses will be required of all majors. The Department will also require from this point that no one will be admitted to the major program who does not have an academic average of 2.0 or better – excluding credit for physical education and R.O.T.C. courses. Further, as soon as all information about present and future (as it is foreseeable) course offerings are available, a special Departmental Committee should work out "distribution requirements" for majors. It has been recognized that our advising of majors has not been uniformly adequate. The Department, therefore, adopted a resolution early this year to institute immediately a program of "permanent advising." In each case when a student declares his intent to major in the Department, the Chairman will assign him to a faculty advisor who will see the student through his academic career.

Graduate Program: Dwight Beck says that, from the beginning, Dr. Peritz assumed that graduate degrees could be offered, including the Ph.D. degree. Whether anyone ever earned a Ph.D. in the Department is problematical. It has been reported that one candidate made it some years ago, but the accuracy of the report has not been confirmed. Dr. Beck is skeptical. He does report, however, that both Dr. Peritz and he regularly offered a "graduate seminar." A sizeable number of students did begin work on a M.A. degree – mostly ministers in the Syracuse area. The resident M.A. candidate has, until recently been rare or non-existent. Records of any earlier

M.A. degrees granted have not been discovered. It is Dr. Beck's opinion that perhaps a half dozen or so may have finished the degree but not more.

If, in Dr. Peritz's time the Department could offer a Ph.D. degree, at some point along the line the privilege disappeared. The Ph.D. degree the Department now proposes to offer had to be formally proposed to the Graduate School and satisfy many formalized requirements before it could be announced. The Department program has been approved, and we have been receiving applications for admission to the program in the fall of 1968. Following is a copy of the announcement distributed to strategic persons and educational institutions across the country.

The purpose of the Department in instituting the Ph.D. program in Religion, as formulated to date is ". . . to add a new dimension to the humanistic focus of a liberal arts education by developing disciplined inquiries into the various aspects of the religious phenomenon." It is recognized that Syracuse, like most Universities, no longer sees its function as the dual one, originally stated, of educating people in "Christian character" as well as the arts and sciences. It sees itself as truly a university and not in the light of the "confessional function." Syracuse is intellectually and religiously a reflection of the pluralistic society in which it exists. Within such a context, Religion, as an academic discipline, can achieve its goals more nearly than in the context of a "church school" or a theological seminary. Such a purpose also recognizes the gradual disappearance of traditional theological education and the current "secular" orientation of theological speculation. Put another way, ". . . the study of religion is bound to find a fertile soil in the context of a university dedicated to the scientific pursuit of a sane mind in a sane body." Hopefully this point will be more explicit later in a discussion of the difference between the orientation of a department of religion in a university and that of church-chapel, whether on or off the campus.

In order to implement the stated purpose of the doctoral program, it is designed, as are the undergraduate and the M.A. curricula, to aid the student to do the following?

1. By intensive study of the central texts of a variety of religious and cultural traditions, the student may understand the context of the religious dimension of human life.
2. To acquire self-discipline in "the critical interpretation of significant religious models, whether linguistic or cultural." Such self-discipline will contribute to an understanding of both the past and the present.
3. To learn the art of critical analysis of the unexamined assumptions of his own commitments and the operating assumptions of the society which forms him and which he will in turn help to form.
4. There is perhaps a typically American element of justification in stating our purpose for the new doctoral program. We propose to train first-rate prospective candidates for positions as teachers in universities, colleges and high schools (where there is coming to be a demand for qualified instructors in Bible and Religion). The Department's present offerings, its participation in the degree programs in Humanities and the lesser involvement in the D.S.S. program – plus the projected graduate curriculum – will offer

prospective candidates a variety of “enabling acts.” That is, students who complete our program may be prepared to teach in college or university departments of religion, or in the broader-based Humanities programs, popular in so many of the larger universities, including state-supported universities. Depending upon the combination of disciplines mixed with ours, students with our doctorate may find satisfying and creative vocations in such areas as literature, history or philosophy. Current preoccupations with the ecumenical thrust and the central place of the laity in the church should permit others to perform significant service in the churches, in college or university chaplaincies, and in feebly-developed “fields” like religious journalism with further additions to staff and the curriculum, and with combined programs of other departments (particularly the social sciences), we should hope to entertain the possibility of training men and women sensitive to the social revolution, particularly in the inner-city, not only with “knowledge” and “tools,” but with a care for venturesomeness and imagination in exploring new ways of engaging old social facts and institutions.

In a significant sense, our projected program is an effort to “keep up with the times.” We venture no claim analogous to that of Dr. Peritz at the beginning of our existence as a Department. We were not the first to think of it or set it in motion. Since World War II, and particularly in the last ten years, university graduate programs in religion have burgeoned across the land. Examples are Princeton, Temple, the University of Pennsylvania, Brown, the University of North Carolina, the State University of Iowa, Western Michigan University, the University of California at Santa Barbara, and Indiana University. This is not an exhaustive list. We are not particularly concerned, incidentally, “that we also may be like all the nations (universities)!” The idea of developing a Ph.D. program in the Department goes back many years. Serious discussions were held on the matter during Dwight Beck’s later years as Chairman, and the suggestion had popped up periodically ever since. The fact is that, aside from the substantive arguments presented already for our program at Syracuse, there is additionally the significant fact that no other university in this area offers a doctoral program in religion; we are likely the only university in this part of the state that even has a Department of Religion! The purpose and function of our program are, we believe, clearly established.

For the information of those who have not kept up with the developments of the Ph.D. program, there may be some interest in a few details, remembering that what we propose to do in the immediate future “will be based upon the broad study of religious phenomena in their cultural context.” The initial offerings will focus on two areas: 1) Christian Thought and 2) Religion and Culture. These general categories will call for studies in:

“1. Biblical Literature, Patristics, the History of Theology and the Church, Theology, Ethics and Society, Philosophical Theology, as well as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam and cognate disciplines in other departments.

2. Mythology, Literature and the Arts, Esthetics, Theology, the Cultural History of various religious traditions, and cognate disciplines in other departments.

3. The Requirements (beyond those specified by the Graduate School):

- a. Competence in two foreign languages (normally French and German) must be demonstrated not later than the end of the first semester of residence.
- b. A minimum of three academic years of full-time study beyond the B.A. degree will be required for the Ph.D. degree.
- c. Comprehensive examinations in five fields (regularly administered twice a year, in January and May) to be taken upon completion of the residence requirements.”

THE MASTER OF ARTS and THE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREES IN RELIGION SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

The Department of Religion announces graduate studies leading to an M.A. in Religion and, in cooperation with the Humanities Division of the University, a Ph.D. in Humanities with concentration in Religion.

This concentration in religion at the Ph.D. level is based upon the broad study of religious phenomena in their cultural context focusing either in the area of religion and culture or in the area of Christian thought.

GRADUATE AWARDS

Assistantships and fellowships up to \$3200 are awarded each year.

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