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Pray! Or Not to Pray: The History of Chapel at Indiana University: An Illumination of Institutional Practice and Policy

Camille B. Kandiko

Part of the history of religion can be analyzed using Indiana University chapel's structural, political, economic, and societal policies, practices, and relations with the university. This investigation illustrates the tension between religion and public higher education, the secularization of academia and society, the impact of the emergence of science, and the change in the relationship between religion and higher education from one of practice to research. This history, although anecdotally noted, has not been thoroughly explored.

Religious practices have been a large part of the history of American people, although the traditions vary as society's needs change. These transformations often begin with the youth, particularly within the collegiate student body. The history between religious practice and university administration can give insights into today's changing religious landscape. The history of this relationship on campus developed and transformed as the quantity, quality, and diversity of the student body changed. Analyzing the history of chapel services at one institution serves as a case study for the factors that impact religion and higher education, and creates a foundation for future decisions and directions.

Indiana University (IU) is a public institution, located in a country with a historical tradition of the division of church and state. Yet for the first 50 years of its existence, the university had a policy of compulsory chapel services. Although chapel was common at public universities during the early- to mid-nineteenth century, chapel lasted much longer at IU than at its peer institutions in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois (Chapel Committee Report, 1897).

The story of chapel has five phases. First was the early compulsory period, followed by a time of transition and debate in the 1880s and 1890s that mirrored societal secularization and the rise of science. The third period covers the growth of the Young Men's and Women's Christian Associations and the development of student life. The fourth phase was the institutionalization of religion on campus through the formation of the IU School of Religion. Chapel services were moved under the auspices of the School of Religion during its founding in 1910. The final, fading phase of chapel is defined by the closing of the School of Religion in 1970 and the establishment of a Department of Religious Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Phase I: 1838-1888 Compulsory Chapel: Religion Dominates the Public Sphere

Religion has been an important theme at IU even prior to its founding. In 1820, a state seminary was established adjacent to Bloomington in Monroe County. It opened in 1824, became Indiana College in 1828, and finally Indiana University in 1838 (Harding, 1904). Beginning with Reverend Andrew Wylie as president in 1829, the Board of Trustees started a tradition of appointing ministers as presidents that continued through the next five leaders (Clark, 1970). President Wylie had a dramatic effect on shaping the fledgling university. "One of Wylie's most pronounced intellectual fixations was his belief that college discipline should be that of a strict Presbyterian home" (Clark, p. 149). In this vein, President Wylie established a policy of mandatory morning chapel six days a week, in addition to a lengthy Sunday sermon. The 1831-32 Student Catalogue stated: "Students are required to assemble every morning shortly after day-break for prayers, and to receive such intimations concerning their duty as the presidents may from time to time, deem necessary" (Indiana Student Catalogue, 1831-32).

During these daily services, the president read scripture passages and offered prayers, singing and music followed. The exercise concluded with announcements, further homilies, and public censure of misbehaving students. Attendance at chapel was checked by a roll call each morning (Clark, 1970). A chapel was built in 1836 in the academic building. This edifice was uninspiring for worship, as it particularly "was not noted for architectural beauty" (Wylie, 1890, p. 48). It was used until 1854, when it burned down (Clark, 1970).

Although IU is a public institution and has no official denominational affiliation, religion historically was a significant part of daily student life. Chapel was an accepted cultural practice, one repeated in the early years at other regional state higher education institutions (Chapel Committee Report, 1897).

[Chapel services] were fundamental to the American collegiate experience, and of all the early characteristics of American higher education they have in many places been the most enduring. They were, however, more of a symbol of collegiate respectability, more a certificate of religious purpose... (Rudolph, 1990, p. 75)

The requirements of chapel were detailed each year in the Indiana University Student Catalogue. In 1845-46, under the section entitled Public Worship: "A portion of Sacred Scripture is read and prayers are offered every morning in the Chapel at the calling of the roll; and all the students are required to attend" (Indiana University Student Catalogue, 1845-46, p. 18,

emphasis in the original). Chapel services continued after President Wylie's death from pneumonia in 1851 (Harding, 1904). The chapel was moved to the first new university building, where it was housed from 1856-1896. Although the same location was used for 40 years, dramatic changes in higher education, religion, and society would alter the purposes, intentions, and requirements of chapel services.

Phase II: Secularization and the Rise of Science: The University in 1880s and 1890s

Long viewed with suspicion by denominational educators who resented their competition [public universities], denounced by religious evangelicals as "godless," and neglected by state legislatures unpersuaded of their need or relevance to the public's immediate concerns, most of the early western universities remained little more than small colleges. (Lucas, 1994, p. 147)

As colleges and universities began to expand and become part of the Industrial Age, they had difficulty moving beyond their religious girding. Debates about religion swirled around both public and private campuses. The practicality of science was seducing Americans, from business leaders to the average farmer. This pragmatic mode of thought questioned the usefulness of religious practices. Public institutions became more formalized, and the use of tax dollars was thoroughly scrutinized. Amidst this chaos, a new power arose that would dramatically revolutionize and dominate the higher education landscape: the science-based research university. Indeed, the American university of 1900 was all but unrecognizable in comparison with the college of 1860 (Veysey, 1965).

However, religion was not going to cede its power easily. At IU, one response to this was to strengthen the language in the Catalogue (1884-85) regarding mandatory chapel:

1. The duties of each day, during term-time, begin with religious services, which are required to attend, unless specially excused.
2. At all morning Chapel exercises, the doors are locked when the bell ceases to ring.
3. Every Sabbath afternoon, a lecture on some moral or religious subject is delivered by some member of the Faculty in the University chapel. This lecture all the students are required to attend, unless specially excused (Religious Services Section).

This reinforcement of religious control was not enough to withstand the changing landscape of American life. The rise of science, the founding of

true universities, and the renewed desire for practicality and reason dominated the end of the nineteenth century.

The establishment of the American university emerged suddenly from the ashes of the Civil War. Cornell University was founded in 1865; Johns Hopkins University in 1876; and the University of Chicago in 1892 (Bishop, 1965; Shepard, 1991). These institutions were grounded in research and academic life, not religious piety. Science was the dogma, thwarting the dominance of Protestantism through Darwinism, biblical criticism, and the study of world religions (Shepard). The university sought new intellectual frontiers to address changing and troubling complexities in nature and society (Hart, 1999).

This time of transition was not seamless. Liberal theology and modernism developed as modes of thought inclusive of the past and present (Shepard, 1991). The Protestant tradition of moral idealism also offered a bridge between Christian doctrine and scientific reasoning (Hart, 1999). Although some compromise was made on moral and intellectual fronts, there was a challenge from the economic sector. Taxing the public for the purpose of teaching the ways of religious sects was seen by some as stating that the "church is supreme over the State" (Bollman, 1882, p. 15).

During this time of turmoil, IU appointed its first president who was not a minister. Dr. David Starr Jordan, professor of biology, began his influential tenure in 1885. He entered the post with a clear vision of bringing IU into the modern age:

The highest function of the real university is that of instruction by investigation. The essential quality of the university is the presence in its Faculty of men qualified to do university work. It matters not how many or how few the subjects taught, or what may be the material equipment of the teacher, the school in which study and investigation go hand in hand is in its degree a university." (Harding, 1904, pp. 21, 23)

President Jordan brought in young faculty members to teach his modern curriculum. However, fresh minds and a scientific leader were not enough to completely overthrow the religious presence on campus.

These issues raged elsewhere as well. In 1886, Harvard President Charles W. Eliot, and James McCosh, President of the College of New Jersey (Princeton), held a public debate in New York City's American Art Gallery about religion and higher education (Hart, 1999). This was a continuation of a forum the two leaders held the previous year (Rudolph, 1990). Eliot argued for free electives and the end of mandatory chapel services. McCosh took an opposing view, promoting the curriculum and college life as outlined in the 1828 Yale Report. McCosh "insisted that an education stripped of its evangelical Protestant moorings was unworthy of the name" (Hart,

1999, p. 24).

In the Midwest, the University of Michigan was hailed as a model in these matters by a vocal alumnus:

The position arrived at in the experience of Michigan University, is that students and professors do not give up any right to enjoy or adhere to any religious opinions they may have formed. Their relationship to the University is embraced in good moral conduct and faithful discharge of their duties in the class room [*sic*]. Outside of their college duties, they may enjoy all religious privileges, as if they were unconnected with it (Bollman, 1882, p. 23).

Some of the policy differences were based on the size of the institutions. IU had 155 students in 1881-82, whereas Michigan enrolled 1,534 students (Bollman, 1882).

In response to these internal and external pressures, changes were made to the section regarding chapel in the 1887-88 IU Catalogue:

The University, established by a government which recognizes no distinction of religious beliefs, seeks neither to promote any creed nor to exclude any. Persons of any religious denomination or of no religious denomination are equally eligible to all offices and appointments. It is proper to state, however, that nearly all the members of the faculty at present, as in the past, are members of Christian Churches. Religious services are held in the chapel in Maxwell Hall at the beginning of the work of each day. These all students are expected to attend, unless specially excused. (Religious Services Section)

This new language bridged the thought between the domination of religion and the emerging power of diversity, inclusion, and justice. Much of the religious push was based on sectarian power plays. Alumnus Lewis Bollman (1882), raised a diatribe against the control of religion over the university stating:

Stanley Matthews, now a Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, in his argument in the Cincinnati Bible controversy, thus speaks of the motives of the contestants in these sectarian strifes [*sic*]: 'In my judgment the contrast is not about religious education at all. It is about denominational supremacy, the right to be higher, to be better, to be more powerful than your neighbor.' (p.19)

President Jordan focused on the curriculum and faculty, but he faced a problem with chapel services. The usefulness of the exercise was brought into question nationally. Around the country chapel services "were a routine—for most students, a routine nuisance, and everywhere they made their views clear" (Rudolph, 1990, p. 75). Chapel protests were common; they managed to unite women and men, Blacks and Whites, and students at public

and private institutions alike (Solomon, 1985). Reports of student misbehavior in chapel increased, likely due to the fact that "the most vivid memories many Indiana University graduates took away from Bloomington was of the boring chapel exercises" (Clark, 1970, p. 158). Bollman (1882) remembered:

I was six years pursuing my collegiate studies, and in all that time I never felt, as a student, the slightest effect from these morning religious services, nor did I ever perceive the least good derived from them by other students. (p. 22)

In regards to this situation, President Jordan decided to make chapel exercises voluntary. This act occurred 20 years after the University of Wisconsin and two years after Harvard, a private, denominational college, rid themselves of compulsory chapel (Rudolph, 1990). No visible fanfare marked this change on- or off-campus. In the IU Catalogue, the 1888-89 remarks regarding chapel are the same as the previous year, except for the omission of the last line about expected attendance.

President Jordan made his mark on the University by raising its academic standards and by granting students religious freedom. President Joseph Swain was appointed in 1893 and had a large impact on the changing relationship of religion and the University. As chapel services were made voluntary, the content seemed to change as well:

The faculty committee on chapel exercises has endeavored as much as possible to separate devotional exercises held in chapel from exercises of a general nature. The devotional exercises are held five times each week. Occasionally the period is used as an occasion to arouse general University interest in some line of work or other college interest as for example one morning was given to short speeches on foot-ball [sic] in the University. (Swain, 1895)

The tide had turned at the university. Religious practice became voluntary, while requirements in scientific thought and reasoning grew. The presidential leadership that brought IU to true university status also pulled the university away from its tethering to denominational and religious control. IU held onto its compulsory services longer than its peers because of local religious ties, its small size, and homogeneous faculty. As the university matured, it created two worlds; in one academics reigned, and in the other student life and student affairs carved out its own niche. Religion maintained a presence at IU, but it was cast off the academic branch of the university. Chapel services were no longer required, but they were not lost.

Phase III: The Development of Student Life and the New Role of Religion

[At the turn of the century there was] an educational revolution in trend-setting universities that radically transformed the character and purposes of higher education. This education revolution redefined religious concerns and perspectives as irrelevant if not detrimental to the mission of higher education. Thereafter, in what were considered leading universities, religion often lingered on the margins of campus in voluntary chapel services and campus ministries. But religion had no little or nothing to do with the real work of university scholarship and teaching. (Smith, 2003, p. 97)

Higher education expanded and bifurcated at the close of the nineteenth century. Academics reigned and grew with the developments in science. Student life became separated from the classroom; new structures formed to educate, entertain, supervise, and care for students. Growing enrollment and expanding student needs led this development. IU's student population rose from 638 in 1894 to 1,285 students by 1902 (Harding, 1904). This doubling of the student body was not simply a numerical increase; a different kind of student was enrolling. Students wanted more than what the post Civil War era had to offer, when "there was little more a student could do in Bloomington except go to church, sneak into a saloon, and play pranks on the townspeople" (Clark, 1970, p. 176). Student clubs and interest groups began to form at the end of the nineteenth century.

These student-focused activities led the university into the next century. Religion had lost its place in the old school; it was forced to find a new niche in a revolutionized system. Chapel services had to find a renewed purpose and a home. These issues were not unique to IU; around the country higher education institutions were confronting the changes of religion and society. The largest differences were between public and private institutions, especially as public schools began receiving increased amounts of public funds (Rudolph, 1990). There also was a loss of power by Christian-based higher education institutions to secular, public colleges and universities (Burt, 1900). Responses to this change varied, but one example illustrates this trend:

By 1900 religion in education was generally restricted to church-related colleges, seminaries, and voluntary student activities on public campuses. State institutions largely adopted a posture of neglect though always quick to respond to charges of godlessness by pointing to the statistics of faculty and student church membership and the works of volunteer student religious organizations. (Hofmann, 1973, p. 2)

The Young Men's and Women's Christian Associations (YMCA/YWCA) were the largest and most influential volunteer religious organizations. The first YMCA was started during the 1877-88 school year at both the University of Michigan and University of Virginia. By 1892 there were

27 YMCAs; 15 were at colleges and universities. The national movement soon caught on in Bloomington, where both a YMCA and a YWCA were founded on November 4, 1891. They had 50 registered members by 1892 (YMCA Student Handbook, 1892-93).

The YMCA and YWCA of IU printed student handbooks each year. These contained useful information for students, particularly for incoming freshmen. The YMCA Handbook of 1892-93 defined the organization's role on campus as focusing on "growth of character, wholesome campus life, and spiritual development of students" (Introduction). The handbooks also listed football scores, the school song, a directory of local churches, literary societies, fraternities and student organizations, as well as railroad timetables (YMCA Student Handbook). The YMCA and YWCA helped students find housing for the school year, and would also offer students temporary boarding rooms when they first arrived on campus. This information illuminates the student life focus of the organization. As colleges and universities became larger and harder to navigate, these religious service groups helped students through their orientation and adjustment into college life, and maintained a campus presence throughout a student's tenure.

Both of these campus organizations enjoyed strong campus support. Presidents Coulter and Swain aided in the groups' establishment and development. President Coulter also offered support on the state level. President Swain "was largely instrumental in making the organizations here [at IU] the leading branches of the college associations in Indiana" (Harding, 1904). He also oversaw the erection of the Students Building, which would become the home of the YMCA and YWCA and the home of student life on campus. Initially, student life was organized through the mission of campus volunteers. These Christian service ideals extended to religious life. The printed handbooks included instructions to attend chapel services (YMCA Student Handbook, 1892-93). Not to be taken too seriously, the handbooks also included maxims such as, "Good companions and good habits are worth more than university credits" (YMCA Student Handbook, 1897-98).

In 1892, the university offered daily voluntary chapel services. The faculty led the services at 10:00 AM until 10:20 AM in Maxwell Hall (Indiana University Student Catalogue, 1892-93, p. 88). This pattern continued until 1897 when a Chapel Committee was formed to review the present state of affairs. Their findings stated:

Attendance, unless compulsory, is small. Compulsory attendance is not advisable. [Universities of] Michigan, Wisconsin and Illinois have abandoned it... we recommend one exercise once per week... to continue in this manner is more harmful than beneficial. (Chapel Committee Report, 1897)

The recommendations were put into effect and the 1898-99 Catalogue listed, "An hour each Tuesday (9:45- 10:45) is set apart for religious services and addresses by clergymen of various denominations from Bloomington and elsewhere" (Indiana University Student Catalogue, 1898-99, Religious Services Section).

However, changes to chapel times were not enough. Religion was losing its prominence in American life, particularly for college students. Whether as a ploy for enticement, or merely a reward for the dedicated, the 1905-06 Catalogue stated, "Attendance at these exercises is not compulsory, but a credit of one-half hour a term is given students attending all the exercises for a given term" (Indiana University Student Catalogue, 1905-06, Religious Services Section). By the 1904-05 school year, the YMCA/YWCA handbooks did not even mention chapel services (YMCA/YWCA Student Handbook, 1904-05). Instead, they had more of a focus on athletic events and recommendations of physical health. This followed the desires of the students in this era who "[set] up in the athletic hero a more appealing symbol than the pious Christian" (Rudolph, 1990, p. 157).

The student organization movement gained prominence through religious service clubs. As these activities became further institutionalized and professionalized, students focused more on athletics and social events. From a report in a neighboring state:

The entire amount expended in the work of the Student Young Men's Christian Associations of Illinois for the college year of 1898-99 among the 17,000 young men in both secular and Christian colleges of the state was less than the amount expended by a single Christian University in its department of athletics in the same period. (Burt, 1900, p. 23)

The funding and structural placement of religion was a problem for colleges and universities. The Religious Education Association issued a report in 1907 that "registered concern about the 'present state of public opinion' that hampered state universities from providing religious instruction or worship" (Hart, 1999, p. 71). IU's next phase regarding the placement of chapel was a response to this situation. However, as the countries of the world began to interact colleges and universities, as well as all of society, would be impacted by global events, impacting local initiatives and everyday life.

Phase IV: Institutionalization and the School of Religion

Regarding your question on 'How can dollars be invested in religious objectives so as to yield the highest return in character improvement in the general population: 'None escape' what colleges and universities do to

their students. [It] eventually affects everyone of us.' (Joseph C. Todd to J.K. Lilly, Correspondence, 1949-51)

Although the YMCAs and YWCAs were promoting Christian religion throughout colleges and universities with their service and support, various denominations still sought a presence in higher education. Many were concerned with the "godlessness" of public institutions. Several northern Presbyterian sects tried to introduce ministers into schools to provide counsel, preaching, and religious instruction. Protestants formed an agency, The Department of University Work, to support university pastors (Hart, 1999). IU's religious revolution was a combination of national efforts and local initiatives.

In 1905, local pastor T. J. Clark of the Kirkwood Avenue Christian Church tried to bring the success of the national Bible Chair movement home (Todd, 1927). The Disciples of Christ of Bloomington petitioned for a Bible Chair at the university. President William Lowe Bryan took up Reverend Clark's proposition five years later, and the Bloomington Bible Chair was established in 1910; meetings were held in the Kirkwood Avenue Church (Minutes, Board of Directors, Indiana School of Religion, 1910-1925). Seven years later the name was changed to the Indiana University School of Religion (Minutes, Board of Directors, Indiana School of Religion).

The school operated out of a building on the corner of Third Street and Indiana Avenue, adjacent to the campus (Articles of Association, Board of Directors, Indiana School of Religion, 1917-1952). Soon after opening, the school encountered financial troubles. In 1912, the School consisted of "24 classroom chairs, a 2 drawer card file case, an empty treasury, and four months of unpaid bills" (Todd, 1927). Reverend Clark took up a fundraising drive, and for the next 43 years the school offered non-credit courses to students and community members. IU was successful in offering religious education, but failed to accomplish the Disciples of Christ's goal to "offer the same kind of instruction in religion that students received in science, literature, and art" (Hart, 1999, p. 76).

Shortly after the establishment of the School of Religion there was a push to pursue for-credit course instruction. As the groundwork was being laid, World War I broke out and development efforts were put on hold. After the war, the School was unable to secure enough funds, partially due to changes in tax laws that generously aided agricultural development (Bowden, 1954). The School of Religion continued to secure barely enough funds to remain in operation. The School came closer to the Disciples' ideal of equal instruction in 1952 when faculty from the School of Religion began to teach under the new "Area of Comparative Religion" in the College of Arts and Sciences. However, the faculty had to be paid through the donations to the

School of Religion because, at the time, it was unconstitutional to use tax money for religious education (Bowden, 1954).

In addition to offering courses, the School of Religion hosted chapel services. By the 1925-26 school year the Catalogue stated that chapel services were held under the School of Religion in their buildings near campus (Indiana University Student Catalogue, 1925-26). The School also offered space for student groups to meet, study areas, and locations for prayer. It became an oasis, a home for religious study and practice. However, that blending was about to change.

Phase V: From Practice to Research: the End of Chapel and Creation of the Department of Religious Studies

Chapel services were somewhat forgotten as intellectual battles raged about religious education. The situation became so heated that the U.S. Supreme Court became involved, and in 1963 ruled that tax money could be used to teach non-sectarian religion courses. There was a push to define religious studies as an academic field. Researcher Robert Michaelson investigated numerous colleges and universities. In this study, his main goal was to establish legitimacy in the field by maintaining that "the primary purpose of both the university and the study of religion is learning, understanding, discovery—is intellectual rather than moral or religious... a clear distinction must be made between the study and the practice of religion" (Michaelson, 1965, p. 6).

Chapel, an act of religious practice, was not an asset in the political dealings between the School of Religion and the Department of Religious Studies. At IU, the court's ruling did not end the local power plays. The School of Religion maintained its position on wanting to continue both education and worship, and so the College of Arts and Sciences formed an independent Department of Religious Studies in 1965. Because the department hired all new faculty, the School of Religion faced dire financial trouble.

The School of Religion lasted another five years, but eventually its buildings were sold and all the School's assets were placed into an endowment. The Board of Directors of the School of Religion conceded to transfer the funds to the Department of Religious Studies, and the School officially closed at the end of the school year in 1970. Ironically, this fulfilled the goals of the Disciples of Christ, in regards to placing religious study on par with instruction in traditional fields. However, the price was that religious practice once again was moved under the auspices of local churches.

Conclusion

Following almost 150 years of the history of chapel, a unique story

unfolds. There is the tale of structural transition, where chapel moved from a university requirement, to a student activity, to an academic study, and eventually out of higher education altogether. Politically, chapel often was the cause for debate, or used as a pawn in another dispute. Chapel moved from presidential control, to a vehicle for student activism, to part of a national discussion on religious education. However, chapel most distinctly highlights the societal changes in regards to religion, worship, secularization, and education.

Tracing one institution's relationship with chapel brings out the local impact as well as the effect of national policies and practices. At IU, analyzing the chapel story illuminates the institution's conservatism, shared decision-making, and strong presidential leadership. The connectedness of the community with the university is another constant theme, with students and town residents often working together and sharing resources. Chapel services also show the changing relationship Americans have with religion. It was once a part of every action in all aspects of life and gradually became more individualized. Eventually religion turned into a voluntary activity, not to be part of the functioning of the government, except in an intellectual sense.

Chapel services are an example of higher education's tension between being everything for some and offering something for everyone. The altering of chapel practices were affected by the size, quality, and especially the diversity of the student body, the faculty, and the administration. As the people changed, so did the environment they occupied.

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