

RELIGION

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Conviction, Civility, and Compromise

by

James L. Muyskens

I am deeply troubled by the abortion "debate." If there ever was a public policy issue that appears to be immune to rational discourse and accommodation to the sensitivities of others, this is it. On both sides of the issue we have "true believers" whose metaphysical outlooks drive them to the barricades. The true believers of the right who see the fetus as a person from the moment of conception appear to be locked in Sisyphean struggle with the true believers of the left who see the fetus as an entity that lacks the necessary qualities for personhood. The combatants on each side are crusaders who are convinced their moral integrity would be compromised were they to settle for a public policy that did not affirm their metaphysical (as well as their moral and legal) views.

I have always had great respect—perhaps envy—for true believers. I have deep admiration for people who are so firm in their convictions that they are willing to stake all on them. Yet I am highly critical of people who adamantly insist upon their metaphysical or religious worldviews being imposed as public policy onto others. For this reason, for many years my hero in the public arena has been Henry Clay, known as the "great compromiser." In the 1850's he witnessed a nation being torn apart by the slavery debate. Confronted with the divisive and morally repugnant practice of slavery, he advanced a compromise policy designed to



James L. Muyskens completed his B.A. degree from Central College in Iowa in 1964, Master of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1967, M.A. in philosophy (1967) and Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Michigan in 1971. He then joined the faculty of Hunter College in New York City and served as chair of the Department of Philosophy from 1974 to 1980. He served as Acting Provost of Hunter College before coming to the University of Kansas as Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in 1988. He has a vigorous interest in the teaching of religion in higher education.

preserve both moral integrity and the bonds that made community (preservation of the union) possible.

Conflict and Community

The acrimony over abortion threatens to tear us apart the way slavery did in an earlier time. While it is not the intent of the combatants in the abortion controversy to destroy the bonds of community, they are contributing to it by undermining the moral consensus that holds us together as a people. As a counter-balance to the shrill voices on our left and on our right we must reaffirm our societal moral consensus and craft a "great compromise" on the basis of it.

One of the fundamental challenges of the American democratic experiment has been to fashion a "community," a nation, a people out of a diverse, multi-cultured collection of individuals, ethnic groups, and societal classes. Opinions would vary concerning how successful the project has been. But few would judge it a failure or claim that it is unworthy of vigorous support. Many would say that it has created a mighty nation, a people united.

Today, however, we seem to have lost our capacity to act as a people united in common purpose. Instead we think of ourselves as interest groups, as competitors for governmental largess, as individuals determined to get what we see as our due. Far too often we see ourselves as lobbyists determined to use the machinery of government to shape soci-

ety into our image and according to our values.

Being products of our age, these (less than admirable) traits of our 1980's society have been assumed by the moral crusaders. In the din of battle, the public-spirited have not been heard. The question of the well-being of the *polis*, the *raison d'être* of public policy, has been shunted aside. This question must be restored to its rightful place in our public policy debate.

Because our founding fathers wished to establish a nation out of an unruly and diverse collection of immigrants, they were prepared to make compromises and accommodations. These compromises and accommodations made it possible to create a community out of diversity. When, for example, they affirmed the separation of church and state much was given up by those with utopian dreams. Yet what was gained collectively was community—the ability to live together and prosper as *one* people.

Common Moral Ground

The common moral ground that lies at the heart of our democracy (and other modern Western democracies) is found in the well-known passage in the Gospel according to Luke (10:25-37): the duty to love our neighbor as ourselves as illustrated by the story of the good Samaritan. The ethical duty outlined there is a duty of respect for other persons as persons. The scope of the ethical command is broad, including all fellow human beings. The love commanded is not mere sentiment but a disposition to act in ways that express this respect. We respect others as persons when we respond to them as rational creatures as we are. Paraphrasing Immanuel Kant, one must always act in ways that respect each human being (including oneself) as a creature with thoughts, plans, goals, aspirations, and hopes of one's own, that is, as a rational creature. Stating the principle in its negative form: it is impermissible to fail to treat all human beings as rational creatures.

Since the principle is found in Christian scripture it may appear to be exclusionary. After all, many members of our community are not Christian or, for that matter, even theists. The ethical principle, however, is detachable from its theological context. It can stand by itself. It is possible to accept as my obligation toward others that they be treated

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as rational creatures, as ends-in-themselves and not merely as means to my own ends without consideration of the question of my obligations toward God.

Ethical Theory of Immanuel Kant

Immanuel Kant's ethical theory is an attempt to demonstrate this. He argues that ethics is autonomous—meaning, in part, that it does not depend on something else, such as theological principles, for its validity. The principle can be held as an action guide independently of our acceptance or rejection of traditional Jewish or Christian religious views. One does not have to believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for example, to adopt as one's action guide the command to treat all persons as rational creatures.

The detachability thesis is not motivated by any antagonism to religion nor in defending it is one suggesting that religious belief is unimportant or secondary. What is at stake is the possibility of creating and sustaining a pluralistic society in which conflicts can be resolved without recourse to force. Typically the question of the morality of a particular action arises when people's interests come into conflict. Moral principles are brought in to try to settle the conflict without resorting to such things as force, one's position of authority over the other, or personal privilege. The basic strategy in moral discussion is to find common ground upon which all parties to the discussion can agree. If one's moral position depends upon the truth of one's religious beliefs or worldview, moral persuasion is a difficult matter. The other must first be converted. But if that must be the case, a pluralist society is impossible.

Having argued that the role of theology *per se* ought to be minimal in public policy debates does not entail it has only a minimal role in the lives of citizens. As a matter of fact, in our society religious traditions have served to enrich and support the fundamental moral principles that define us as a people. (This is hardly surprising since, as we saw, they have their origin in Scripture.)

Religious Perspective and the Moral Life

In important ways, a religious perspective can strengthen an individual's dedication to living the moral life. For example, a religious interpretation of one's life as a vocation can renew one's sense of moral purpose and commitment. A religious outlook can provide one with the rationale to go on living the moral life despite the appearance that beauty, justice, and goodness will not prevail or that the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. One's religious beliefs may provide the hope that the appearance is not the reality. A religious perspective can heighten one's moral sensitivity by seeing strangers as brothers and sisters. The question of motivation and the way in which religion can contribute to living the moral life and being a good citizen is quite a different question, however, from that of finding common moral ground upon which to base public policy in a pluralistic society. For the latter task, appeals to religious beliefs are not likely to be effective; and any attempts to impose one's own religious belief on others would demonstrate a lack of respect for them as rational decision makers.

Compromise and Respect for Others

Setting aside one's religious belief and one's theological or metaphysical worldviews when formulating public policy exhibits respect for the beliefs of others and makes it possible for diverse peoples to live in community. Failure to honor this division of labor or to recognize its applicability in the abortion controversy is the key reason the current abortion debate has gone so badly. The question of the ontological status of the fetus is a question of commitments, values, and worldviews—the highly individual and personal convictions upon which we cannot expect to build consensus and should not construct public policy.

When an individual decides whether to have an abortion or advises another, she or he cannot avoid the issue of the ontological status of the fetus. How the question is answered will profoundly effect an individual's moral attitude. Yet the courts and legislatures (those making public policy) must resist deciding the metaphysical question of the status of the fetus. Such judgments cannot provide the foundation upon which consensus and public policy can be built.

Accommodation and Compromise

The difficult task for policy makers is to find a way to be sensitive to the spectrum of attitudes on the matter. What that calls for is compromise—a compromise that is shaped out of several common understandings. It will begin with our fundamental commitment to respect the views of others as individuals and as decision-makers. It will recognize that we must have a policy and that it must be one that feels right to the vast majority. To

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achieve that, accommodation and compromise will be required. It will recognize that people of good will differ on the metaphysical question and thus it will allow for variable responses within an acceptable range.

The result would likely be a moderate position, the features of which would be rather similar to policies adopted in several Western European nations where they have followed a process more in line with the principles I have advanced. If this is correct, the compromise would likely include the following

four features: (1) abortion would be identified as a criminal offense even in the first trimester, but would be exempt from punishment under certain conditions (the precise conditions would be subject to debate and to change); (2) after the early weeks of pregnancy, these exemptions would be strictly limited and closely supervised; (3) criminal sanctions would be directed only or mainly toward the abortionist rather than the pregnant woman; (4) the places where abortions may be performed would be regulated so that abortion could not become a specialized profit-making industry. [See Mary Ann Glendon, "A World Without Roe: How Different Would it Be?" *Hastings Center Report*, Vol. 19, No. 4, July/August 1989.]

The purpose of this essay has not been to hammer out new public policy on abortion—a notoriously difficult task that will require many hands. What I have tried to do, however, is to offer some suggestions about the way such discussions should be conducted and to present a theoretical framework for those discussions.

Kansas School of Religion in the 1970's and 1980's

by

W. Stitt Robinson

The 1970's for the Kansas School of Religion began with a transition of leadership as Dean William J. Moore retired and was succeeded by Dean Lynn F. Taylor. For several years KSR continued as an educational institution providing credit courses in religion for students of the University of Kansas as an independent agency supported by private funds and governed by a Board of Trustees. The trustees were appointed by the following religious bodies which comprised the corporation of the school: American Baptist, Christian (Disciples of Christ), Episcopal, Evangelical United Brethren, Jewish, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Roman Catholic, and United Church of Christ. Records available at KSR confirm that these religious bodies continued to provide annual support for the faculty teaching courses in religion until 1977.

As one writer observed, "a Protestant-Catholic-Jewish faculty in a scholarly university situation is engaged in an academic program based on an ecumenical philosophy of education concerned with the total field of religion in all its variety and vitality."

The year 1977 brought a major transition as the University integrated the faculty of KSR into the Department of Religious Studies of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and assumed the financial responsibility for faculty salaries. This then created the opportunities for KSR to continue as a program enrichment agency for the teaching of religion at the University and for extending its activities throughout the state of Kansas and beyond.

The major goal of KSR continued to be assistance to the Department of Religious Studies in the teaching of religion and in providing support facilities. Annual grants to the religion *Library* named for Dean Moore in Irma I. Smith Hall

have continued to expand the collection of books and periodicals available for the study of religion. Annual *scholarships* for the study of religion have been awarded to either undergraduates or graduate students in the master's program with the current emphasis on awards to graduate students to expand this growing program. Annual grants have also been made for the religion faculty for two major purposes: one is for the *faculty development fund* which assists individual members in research trips or in attendance at professional meetings in the general field of religious studies or in the area of the faculty member's special expertise; the other is for the *traveling faculty program* as a part of outreach in which faculty members go throughout the state to provide leadership for religion study groups. Funds have also supported the *Mini-Conference Series* or *Religious Studies Conferences* organized by the Department of Religious Studies.

These meetings bring outstanding scholars to campus as keynote speakers. The *Religious Studies Conference* on October 14 this fall will not only bring nationally recognized speakers for the meetings but will also include presentation of scholarly papers by faculty members from colleges and universities within the state.

The *Religion Journal* of KSR has continued during both decades with three or four annual issues which include scholarly articles on subjects of significant historical topics or contemporary issues in religion. The *Journal* also includes information about the full range of activities of KSR and of special programs of the Department of Religious Studies. Over 8,000 copies are now being distributed.

Beginning in 1972, Dean Taylor initiated a program to assist teachers in dealing with religion in public schools. The *Kansas Center for Public Education Religion Studies* was founded in 1975, and KSR developed an extensive reference and resource center in the Library in Smith Hall to support this emphasis. Summer institutes and workshops for teachers were offered, some with financial support from the Dane Hansen Foundation. They were held in different locations in the state, attracting over 100 teachers to a number of these programs and featuring national speakers with expertise on this subject. Lynn Taylor became the Executive Director of the National Council on Religion and Public Education in 1979, and KSR served as its national office until his death in 1988.

For five years from 1985 to 1989, KSR sponsored annual *essay contests* for Kansas high school students on selected topics with three prizes awarded for state winners and smaller stipends for individual county winners. The ministerial associations in participating counties as-

sisted in judging at the local level on the following subjects selected by the KSR Essay Committee: Religion and Government, 1985; Religion and the Nuclear Age, 1986; Religion and the Constitution, 1987; Religion and Technology, 1988; and Religion and the Economy, 1989. At present these contests have been suspended because of less participation throughout the state than desired.

KSR initiated an *annual lecture series* in 1982 scheduled to coincide with the annual meeting during the spring. This successful project has brought the following outstanding leaders in the field of religion to the University campus: William Sloane Coffin, then pastor of Riverside Church in New York City, 1982; Martin E. Marty, Professor of Modern Christianity at the University of Chicago, 1983; John Macquarrie, Professor of Divinity at Oxford University in England, 1984; Eugene B. Borowitz, Rabbi from the New York School of Hebrew Union College, 1985; Robert F. Drinan, Professor of Law at Georgetown University, 1986; James Wood, Professor of Church and State in Religion at Baylor University, 1987; James A. Sanders, Professor of Theology in the Claremont University Graduate School, 1988; and Lyle Schaller, Parish Consultant with the Yokefellow Institute in Indiana, 1989. Jane I. Smith, Vice President and Dean of Academic Affairs at Iliff School of Theology, is scheduled for the annual lecture in April, 1990.

One other significant sponsorship of KSR has been a series of conferences for clergy and other interested persons. Beginning in 1984, an expanded effort provided *annual conferences* in three or four cities in the state designed to fill the professional needs of nurses, social workers, and clergy. These conferences with enrollments from over 100 to near 400 had the following themes: "Spir-

ituality and Health" in 1984, "Spiritual and Legal Dimensions of Emergency Health Care" in 1985, "Spirituality in Care Giving" in 1986, "A Theology of Caring" in 1987, "The Role of Faith in Crisis" in 1988, and "Focus on Personhood: Ethical Dimensions of the 90's" in 1989.

Through the continued generosity of Mrs. Irma I. Smith of Macksville, Kansas, KSR received an additional quarter section (160 acres) of land in Grant County in 1984. The K.U. Endowment Association continues to assist in the administration of the land donations of Mrs. Smith in Grant and Scott counties with the income from these properties applied to the maintenance of Irma I. Smith Hall and support for KSR programs. The University of Kansas also shares the responsibility for upkeep of the interior of the building, the title of which is held by the Kansas Bible Chair of the Christian Church.

A Memorial for Dr. Lynn F. Taylor has been established in the K.U. Endowment Association in recognition of his outstanding leadership from 1970 to 1988. Following the desires of the Taylor family, the *Scholarship Fund* will provide an annual award to a student who has demonstrated high academic ability in the Department of Religious Studies, a strong interest in the field of education, a capacity for leadership, and the quality of caring for others as reflected in activities both within and beyond the University community.

As the decade of the 1980's comes to a close, KSR has appointed Professor Phil McKnight of the K.U. School of Education as "Transition Consultant" for the current year to assist in the formulation of goals and objectives for the 1990's and to help supervise some of the activities of KSR. We solicit your continued interest and support for the coming years.

Excellent Response to KSR Fall Conferences

KSR has completed another series of successful conferences on the theme of "Focus on Personhood: Ethical Dimensions of the 90's." They were held at the following locations:

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| Hutchinson Hospital Auditorium | September 8 |
| First Presbyterian Church in Salina | September 22 |
| Washburn University in Topeka | September 23 |
| Wesley United Methodist Church in Parsons | October 6 |

Dr. Robert Lyman Potter of Kansas City, Kansas, was the major presenter. The conferences were organized

by the State KSR Committee in conjunction with the local chairs of each location. Members of the State KSR Committee are the Reverend Stephen E. Fletcher (Chair) of Yates Center United Methodist Church, Alice Young—Dean of the Washburn University School of Nursing, Faith Spencer—Area Director of the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Center, Dollie Bittenbender from the Executive Committee of KSR. Chairs of the Local KSR Conference Committees were Richard W. Clark and Greta Snell of Hutchinson, Kerry Ninemire of Salina, Lloyd Munger of Topeka, and Beverly Settle of Parsons.

Faculty Members in the Department of Religious Studies at KU

S. Daniel Breslauer, Ph.D. (Brandeis), Professor. Dan's field is Judaic and Islamic studies; he teaches in such areas as biblical studies, Judaica, and ethics. Among his many interests are Zionism and Islam in the Middle East, Christian-Jewish dialogue, the history of Jewish-Arab contacts, and contemporary Jewish ethics.

John S. Macauley, Ph.D. (Cambridge), Associate Professor. John teaches religious history in our department and also in the Department of History at KU, specializing in British ecclesiastical history. He also teaches a popular course in the Supreme Court and religious issues. His major research involves the state and religion in England, the British Reformation, and the Supreme Court and religious issues in the United States.

Timothy Miller, Ph.D. (Kansas), Assistant Professor. Tim is the department's specialist in American religion; his courses cover both historical and contemporary religion in America. His special interests are new religious movements (sects and cults), religious communitarianism, and cooperation and conflict among religious bodies.

Robert N. Minor, Ph.D. (Iowa), Professor and Chair. Bob studies the religions of Asia, specializing in India. He also teaches integrating courses, including the survey of methods used in religious studies. Among the topics he works with are modern developments in Asian religions,

the scriptures of Asia, religions of the world, and Eastern cults in America.

Paul A Mirecki, Th.D. (Harvard), Assistant Professor. Paul is the newest member of the department, having joined it this fall. His teaching field is New Testament and, more generally, biblical studies. His principal research speciality is the study of Coptic manuscripts. He is also interested in Christian origins, religion in the ancient world, and Jesus and Paul.

Robert L. Shelton, Ph.D. (Boston), Associate Professor. Bob's field is religious ethics and interpersonal relationships; he teaches a popular upper-level course, *The Loving Relationship*, among others. He is also University Ombudsman. Topics of interest to him include ethical issues in health care, the loving relationship and the helping professions, and energy, lifestyle, and religious values.

Sandra Zimdars-Swartz, Ph.D. (Claremont), Associate Professor. Sandi teaches in the fields of the history of Christian thought and women and religion. She also has interests in methodological and theoretical issues in religious studies. Her current work focuses on such topics as visionary experiences (especially apparitions of the Virgin Mary), feminist spirituality, and religion and sexuality.

Burning Bush Society 1988-1989

Betty Alderson, Lawrence
 Portia Allbert, Hoyt
 Andersen, Arthur & Co., Chicago, IL
 C. R. & Dollie Bittenbender, Lawrence
 L. K. Bishop, Colorado Springs, CO
 S. Daniel Breslauer, Lawrence
 Mr. & Mrs. A. D. Cauthon, Syracuse
 Margaret F. Chaney, Horton
 Christian Women's Fellowship, Salina
 Dr. R. L. Cobb, Olathe
 Harold E. Coplen, Hutchinson
 Col. A. Leroy Covey, La Jolla, CA
 Dr. & Mrs. O. R. Cram, Larned
 De Etta Clark Cunningham, Hilo, Hawaii
 Revs. Max & Lillie DaMetz, Haven
 Mrs. D. H. Davis, Larned
 Mark Deeter, Topeka
 Joseph B. Detrixhe, Ames
 Mrs. R. Dale Dickson, Topeka
 Paul Endacott, Bartlesville, OK
 Edna M. Ewert, Peabody
 Mr. & Mrs. H. Bernerd Fink, Topeka
 First State Bank, Healy
 George W. Ford, Reading
 Garvey Foundation, Wichita
 Mr. & Mrs. Dwight Geiger, Mission
 Dr. & Mrs. Richard M. Haun, Lawrence
 Mr. & Mrs. Martin Henry, Lawrence
 Clifford R. Hope, Garden City
 Mrs. Gordon Hurlbut, Tonganoxie
 Marian Isern, Ellinwood
 Mabel Jensen, Burns
 Rev. Roy E. Jones, Wichita
 Kansas Kiwanis Foundation, Topeka
 Nancy Landon Kassebaum, Washington, D.C.
 Joyce Kochersperger, Shawnee Mission
 Father Vincent Krische, Lawrence

Philip O. & Bess W. Lautz, Topeka
 John Macauley, Lawrence
 Peter M. MacDonald, Hutchinson
 E. Kathleen Meyer, Palatine, IL
 Timothy Miller, Lawrence
 Robert N. Minor, Lawrence
 Edith L. Monroe, Emporia
 G. P. Neighbor, M.D., Shawnee Mission
 William & Marjory Nelsen, Marion
 Mrs. L.M. Pacey, Washington
 Dorothy Reusch, Lawrence
 Ethel & Raymond Rice Foundation, Lawrence
 Virginia Rice, Kansas City, KS
 Delmar & Claudine Riney, Pratt
 W. Stitt & Constance Robinson, Lawrence
 Montie Rosencrantz, Lawrence
 Mr. & Mrs. Robert Roth, Larned
 Richard C. Sapp, Lawrence
 Schehrer, Harrod & Bennett, Lawrence
 Mr. & Mrs. Todd Seymour, Lawrence
 Arthur Alan Shaw, Lawrence
 Robert L. Shelton, Lawrence
 Harriet Shirley, Springfield, MO
 Ed and Dorothy Slentz, Shawnee Mission
 Glee S. Smith Jr., Larned
 Irma I. Smith, Macksville
 Clifford Stone, El Dorado
 Verner E. Strand, Prairie Village
 Sandra Zimdars-Swartz, Lawrence
 Mrs. Lynn Taylor, Lawrence
 Charles H. Taylor Memorial Trust, St. Joseph, MO
 L. Franklin and Kathy Taylor, Olathe
 Jeanne C. Tucker, Topeka
 Walnut Valley State Bank, El Dorado
 Mrs. Frank L. Wells, Lyons
 Gordon & Mavis Wiseman, Lawrence
 James W. Woelfel, Lawrence
 Arthur Young Foundation, New York, NY

Dr. Jane I. Smith to present Annual KSR Lecture in 1990

Dr. Jane I. Smith, Vice President and Dean of Academic Affairs at Iliff School of Theology in Denver, will present the annual KSR lecture for 1990 at the annual meeting on Tuesday, April 3. The subject of her address will be "Islamic Revival and the Implications for Interfaith Dialogue."

Dr. Smith completed her Bachelor of Arts degree at Michigan State University, Bachelor of Divinity at Hartford Seminary Foundation, and her Ph.D. in the History of Religions at Harvard University in 1970. She then taught for two years in Religious Studies at Pennsylvania State University before joining the faculty at Harvard University where she continued her teaching in the History of Religions and served in administrative positions in the Center for the Study of World Religions and Harvard Divinity School to 1986. She then moved to her present position in Iliff School of Theology.

Her extensive research and impressive publications center on Islamic studies and the role of women in world religions. Among her publications are *The Concept 'Islam' in the History of Qur'anic Exegesis* (1975), co-author of *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection* (1981), co-editor of *Introduction to Religions of the East: Reader* (1974), and co-editor of *Women in Contemporary Muslim Society* (1980).

"Transition Consultant"

KSR has appointed Professor Phil McKnight of the School of Education of the University of Kansas as "Transition Consultant" for the coming year. He will engage in research to help formulate both immediate and long range goals for KSR, review current programs and internal structure, confer with leaders of religious bodies throughout the state about projects of mutual interest, and assist in the supervision of some of the current KSR activities.

KSR Scholars 1989-90

Kent Deeds is enrolled as an undergraduate student in Religious Studies. His broad interests within the field include comparative religion, ethics, new religious movements, and the American religious experience. Special attention will focus on the place of alternative religions and sects within the broader American experience, including fundamentalism and contemporary uses of the mass medias in spreading the religious message. Kent will complete the bachelor's degree this year and simultaneously begin study at the graduate level in Religious Studies.

Matthew R. Fellows entered the graduate program in Religious Studies in August, 1989 with an interest in the Philosophy of Religion and Biblical Studies. He received his B.A. degree from the University of Utah in Philosophy and Political Science. He hopes to continue his studies in a Ph.D. program or attend Law School upon completion of his master's program.

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