

Minister says there are no absolutes

In his letter of Oct. 31, Tom Visoky challenged me to debate with him on the issue of abortion from the perspective of the Bible. His assumption is that the Bible can be used to "prove" that there is a "right" answer on the matter. The Bible was not written to give absolute answers to human questions. There are a great many issues for human beings to decide on that the Bible says nothing about. That is intentional on God's part. God endowed human beings

The basic teaching of the Bible is to love God and love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:37-39). Sometimes love for your neighbor means giving birth to a child you will love and nurture to adulthood. Sometimes love for your neighbor means you don't bring into this world a being you will not love and care about. The creating of a human life has far more to do with how a child is nurtured for its own growth in the fullness of what God intended for its life than in just giving birth to a baby, which is relatively an easy thing to do. Raising a child to be a responsible and caring adult (I have raised four of my own, hopefully to that level) is a much more difficult and complex task. I would not have chosen to have any of my four children aborted. Their mother and I looked eagerly forward to their arrival.

If, however, by reason of rape, serious potential deformity, possible death or disabling injury or illness to the mother, economic misery for the family, or the clear "no" of the human will to a birth that is not wanted — the loving choice may well be abortion. Giving birth and then surrendering the baby for adoption is another optional choice.

But the preference remains that of the pregnant woman. It is she who primarily must live with the consequences of whatever choice she makes.

After giving the matter a lot of thought, I don't think a debate that tries to "proof-text" the Bible on this issue would serve a useful purpose. There are those who regard the Bible as an absolute authority affecting every human choice. I do not choose to read it that way. To me the Bible is a valuable source of divine and human wisdom that came together out of years of dialogue among human beings, and between human beings and God. It reports God's response to the human condition and God's hopes for our living in peace and justice, love and harmony with all our neighbors (whoever and wherever they are). I regard it as my most significant guide for living. But God didn't intend the Bible to take away my will, or Visoky's will, or anybody's will in choosing for good or ill the way our lives will go.

Stuart Shaw is campus minister with the Wesley Foundation, the United Methodist Church at the University.

comments stuart shaw

with spirits, hearts, and minds. God intended these dimensions of our being to be used to make the choices that affect our own lives and our relationships with others. The only judge of our behavior is God — not Visoky, or me, or anyone else.

letters

No reward?

The other day I went through an identity crisis; I had lost my Gucci wallet with all my identification. Being a resident of Connecticut, I was going through the "who are you syndrome." Fear was increased when I realized that someone could use my credit cards with malicious intent. However, much to my surprise, a good Samaritan by the name George Pfister returned my wallet fully intact. I wish to thank him for going out of his way to do this for me. As Paul Harvey would say, "thank you, good day."

Drew O'Rourke
Senior, sociology

Yet, am glad

Of course it is horrible that a few U.S. Marines died in Grenada. Of course it is horrible that 300 other guys were killed in Lebanon. Who could say that war is not horrible?

Yet, I am glad the U.S. invaded Grenada. Yet, I am glad that the Marines are in Beirut. And I would be glad if they were in a few other places of the world as well.

We have come along way since we were cave people. However,

there is still one law of nature that hasn't changed: "to eat or to be eaten." This is precisely the situation that the U.S. faces right now.

Throughout history empires have risen, empires have fallen. Most of the time their falls were preceded by decadence. Decadence is an attitude and defeatism is part of it.

You folks will end up building your country — or killing it. Being humanitarian, defeatist and pacifist, the U.S. will not have long before it falls

But that is up to you folks. If you want to be "eaten," sad, but fine with me; as for me, no way. The death of people is the necessary price that an empire has to pay in order to survive. And this price will be paid whether you lose or win. So even if I deplore the deaths of the Marines because these lives were human ones, I am glad that the U.S. is in Lebanon. Upon such moves depends the survival of the U.S.

Stephane Godin

Dispel illusion

This is in response to David Nott's letter of Oct. 31, in which he said he felt protest marches "don't accomplish much."

I agree with you, Nott — policy makers don't pay much attention to protests. Demonstrations are perceived to be sponsored by a small, but vocal, minority — usually students, who are immature in their political experience, don't contribute money to campaigns, don't vote consistently, and in most cases can't even persuade their parents to change their views.

I would, however, like to do my part toward dispelling the illusion that writing your Congressman is a more powerful tool. Most Congressmen don't read their mail. They pay someone else to do it. That was my job before I came to the University.

Also, unless the issue is of particular interest to them, Congressmen don't even read most of the answers we staff people write back to you. One of my functions, in fact, was to operate a machine that signed my Congressman's name for him.

As a general rule, student views as a whole are not given much weight in decision-making. Please remember that one of a Congressman's primary interests is in getting himself re-elected. Since we are inconsistent, apathetic, poor and unorganized, we simply don't have much clout.

Congressmen do, however, read the newspapers. Coverage of events like protest marches serve as an indication of the attitude of the local press, which is important to re-election. If a march is featured on page one with a photo, it more likely reflects the public's interest in the issue than would less sympathetic coverage.

Protests also serve more significant long-term purposes. They provide group support for shared feelings, a ventilation for pent-up anger, and, hopefully, the beginnings of a fundamental change in our value structure.

The real impact of protests, though, is on people like you and me, the contributors and voters (and maybe even Congresspersons) of the next half century. We will be the policy-makers during what may turn out to be the most crucial time period thus far in the planet's history — a responsibility for which we seem poorly equipped. Learning to listen to each other, it seems to me, is an unavoidable prerequisite for survival.

The next time you see a protest, Nott, could you talk to the participants, ask one or two why they feel the way they do, or share your views where you disagree. If you do, you will be accomplishing far

more than you would by writing a letter to your Congressman's machine.

Sherwood Reese
law

Send 'em in

When someone makes a move of which we don't approve who is it that always intervenes? The UN and OAS, they have their place, I guess, but first, send the U.S. Marines.

We'll send 'em all we got, John Wayne and Randolph Scott, remember those exciting fighting scenes? To the shores of Tripoli, but not to Mississippi, what do we do? We send the Marines.

For might makes right, until they see the light. They've got to be protected, all their rights respected 'til somebody we like can be elected.

Members of the Corps all hate the thought of war. They'd rather kill them off by peaceful means. Stop calling it aggression, we hate that expression, we only want the world to know that we support the status quo, they love us everywhere we go. So when in doubt, send the Marines!

Tom Lehrer
mathematics

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