

Straightening the Line with Wyoming

As I am cynical, jaded and world weary, I was having a difficult time working with this week's topic: the beating death of a young man in Wyoming.

Along with the conviction of a

have been so?

Yet there it is.

Millions murdered in an efficient, systematic process, murdered just as the young man in Wyoming was murdered, as the seven year old girl in Nevada was murdered and just as the man dragged behind the truck was taken to his death.

How could such a thing as the Holocaust have happened; how could they have gotten away with it for so long that millions died? All the men women and children who were gassed or shot and burned to ashes—how was it allowed?

From time to time I have to go the library to see the faces. The Holocaust is well documented with photographic images, with movies and with diaries from the victims and the killers. I look at the photographs again, of the clusters of people, segregated by sex or age, standing in the winter woods of Germany, queuing up beside the trains that have brought them to these places, gathering outside the barracks of Buchenwald or milling about behind the barbed wire enclosure of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Just look at their eyes, it's right there in those eyes so clear.

No photos are necessary now. I have no need to see the seven year old girl's eyes as she cowers in fear, or hear the man behind the truck screaming, choking on the dust. I can see their eyes: the eyes looking out over a Wyoming landscape for the last time, a cold, windswept Wyoming night at the darkest moment before dawn, tied to a fencepost as he is brutally beaten with the side of a revolver.

It all seems so clear now. We need to relocate that inner compassion, to work at eliminating the violence from our lives by looking into the eyes of past victims of man's inhumanity to man, to combat our cynicism toward just one more murder after another—to put a stop to the senseless killing of each other.

THE SACRED & THE PROFANE

ROBERT SCHOENBERG
Editor-in-Chief



man in Nevada for raping and then killing a seven year old girl, and the death of a man dragged behind a truck a few weeks ago, the news out of Wyoming forced a flurry of activity that will, unfortunately, fade from memory except for the few people close to the victim, including the young man's killers.

The circle of interest will close in tighter as the world goes on with its business.

I wondered, just another tragedy in a world full of tragedy?

To keen my interest, then, I returned to what always will straighten the line for me. As I meander about in the world as I know it, from time to time the line I travel needs to be pulled taut, so I may see my way clear.

There are some worldly events, usually involving the numerous wars that mankind seems to be compelled to repeat, that can be set with emotional depth charges in a single word or two. Such place names as the Spanish Civil war's bombing of Guernica or the second World War's Stalingrad come to mind. The list can go on back into history for generations, possibly eons.

The one name that straightens the line for me is Holocaust.

It has always sent my rational imagination reeling to think that the Holocaust occurred. How can it

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Which is the true tragedy?

Last week, on a chill October night in Wyoming, a young man was tragically beaten and killed.

But which is the tragedy? That a person lost his life at the hands of his fellow man—or that the man who lost his life was gay?

formulate, an intelligent, balanced, and above all, loving position.

Part of the problem is that it is assumed by many, on issues of sexual orientation in particular, that to disagree with behavior on moral grounds is to fail to “accept” and “love” the individual.

On the other hand, the motives of some “Christians” are far from loving. There are many in Christendom, and secular conservatism, who apparently think that a homosexual's lifestyle makes them fair game for all manner of abuse and ostracization, whether it be as silly as a boycott of Disney or as chilling as Shepard's fate.

I say to those on both sides of this fence that it is as possible for me to believe homosexuality to be wrong and still love gay people as it is for me to love those who lie, lose their tempers, or are conceited—all attributes, by the way, I could easily ascribe to myself.

Christian doctrine may hold that homosexuality is sin, but also teaches that all sins are the same—“Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft,” and “every one who is angry

with his brother” is guilty of murder—so who are we to claim the gay lifestyle as the ultimate evil?

I admit that until recently, this principle was strictly abstract. I simply didn't know any gay people. Now, however, I know too many—unique, passionate, insightful, and eccentric—to believe them to be any less than loveable human beings.

Gay people are just that—people. There are things rational people do not do to other people, and torture and murder are among those things.

That is the tragedy. That is the sad fact—that two young Americans believed such hate was an acceptable response to perceived provocation. It is not a political tragedy, or a religious tragedy, but a human tragedy. It is a direct affront to the precepts of a Messiah of whose followers it was decreed, “you shall know them by their love.”

I say, then, let us be known by our love. Jesus never said, “You shall be known by your political activism,” or “You shall be known by your stand for family values.” His command was simple: “Love.” Love reaches all human needs. Love conquers all. Love is the greatest commandment. I show you a more excellent way.

THE ALTAR OF AN UNKNOWN GOD

JOEL P. SHEMPERT
Copy Editor



I believe it is remiss of our society to use the death of Matthew Shepard as fuel for controversy, no matter the position, and that such shows an appalling disrespect to the memory of a young man who never asked for an agonizing death.

So often I find myself painted into a corner with issues such as these. Hemmed in by homosexual activists on one side and fundamentalist banner-wavers on the other, I as a Christian, a writer, and human being am left with no philosophical room to breathe when attempting to

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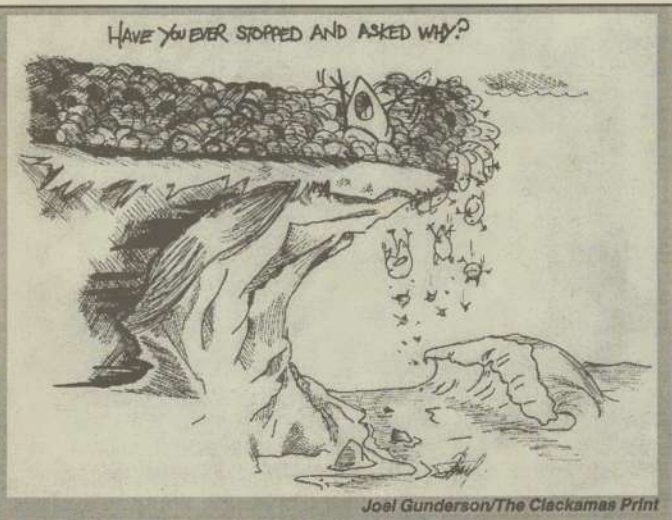
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