

Voices: Who stands for life? A call to repentance

April 5, 2017

The hum of an aircraft begins to become audible in the skies above your section of the town you live in. You quickly run back into your apartment for cover and duck under a doorway before the first ear-shattering explosion, like lightning striking near you, takes out the neighborhood school. You thank God that it's a Saturday as the second and third explosions level the grocery store near your apartment. You cry out in fear, terrified for your life, as bombs explode all around you, not knowing if you're going to survive the afternoon. Any one of these explosions could level your building; all you can do is wait in panic to see if you and your family will survive.



Jake Raabe This was the situation in Mosul, Iraq, recently, when a U.S. airstrike razed an apartment building and killed *more than 100 civilians*. The number of civilian casualties resulting from American air raids has increased dramatically in the last few months since President Trump declared the U.S. policy on airstrikes [“too gentle”](#) and apparently eased rules of engagement for bombings in ISIS-occupied territories.

Airwars, a U.K.-based organization that monitors civilian casualties from airstrikes, estimates the United States was responsible for at least 337

confirmed civilian deaths in March, with as many 1,257 possible.

Absolutely unacceptable



The fight against ISIS is complicated and difficult, and their practice of taking shelter among Mosul civilians does not make things easier. Expecting to free the city of Mosul without any civilian deaths is likely a loftier goal than is possible.

However, bombing an apartment building full of civilians is absolutely unacceptable. Three hundred thirty-seven civilian deaths in one month only results from gross disregard for those trapped in the crossfire of a war they aren't involved in.

The lack of concern for human life and suffering is astounding, especially from the leader of a party that claims to be "pro-life." We are fighting ISIS ultimately because we fear they could be a threat to our safety.

When we sacrifice Iraqi lives to protect our own, we're claiming their lives are less important than our own. Then again, perhaps this shouldn't be a surprise in a country that aborts more than half of a million unborn children every year. The logic behind the vast majority of abortions is the same as the logic behind bombing civilian areas in Mosul: This life is less important than mine, so I won't protect it. It's you or me, and I choose me.

America's national sin

Relativizing of life so that ours is the only important life is America's national sin in this present era. This selfishness-unto-death motivates us to

bomb an apartment building in Syria, end the life of a baby we didn't plan for, buy cheap clothing made by slave workers in other countries and shut our doors to refugees fleeing a country torn apart by a war we helped start.

Further still, this lack of regard for life is revealing an ugly truth about American Christianity: Party affiliation affects our theology more deeply and fundamentally than anything else.

The conservative side of the American church rightly denounces our country's lax abortion policies, but so far has done little to challenge the bombing of Iraqi civilian centers. The progressive side of American Christianity cries out against this violence against non-combatants in the Middle East, but so far has shown little interest in addressing the death of more than half a million children each year through abortion and too often has adopted and baptized our culture's obsession with complete and unrestricted personal autonomy and liberty in every scenario.

Party, not principle

In short, both the conservative church and the progressive church in America have shown themselves to care more about political party lines than consistency with God's revelation.

Somewhere outside of this culture of death and power is the God who created life and prizes it above all else. Above our society and its willingness to kill others to preserve ourselves is the God who died so that others might live.

A concern for life in *every* place—in Iraq, under a highway overpass, in a womb, fleeing from drug cartels—is the most basic component of true Christian ethics. We can't expect the government to act in the interest of others, but we certainly don't have to approve of it when it razes an apartment building.

Where are the Christians who stand for life in every form? Where are those followers of Christ who care more for his commandments than for the platforms of Republicans or Democrats?

Church in America, it's time for soul-searching and repentance from this idolatry. The time is urgent. The ax is at the root of the tree.

Jake Raabe is a student at Baylor University's George W. Truett Theological Seminary in Waco, Texas.