

Can one protest corporations while wearing J. Crew and using an iPhone?

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October 13, 2011



One of my more conservative friends posted this picture on his Facebook page recently, shared under the headline, "It's funny, because it's true."

I get it. Ironic, right? Maybe so. Yes, the captions make a point, but it's not one I find compelling. In fact, it illustrates just how important the protests are, and how challenging it is to live in corporate America.

Some folks might argue, I suppose, that if you use buy something from a certain corporation (a MacBook, say), then by that purchase you declare your support for the company. In a market economy, you speak

with money. The reasoning goes: if you don't want to support Apple, don't buy a MacBook. Simple enough.

I can appreciate the directness of this approach. I wish life were as simple as that. But, it's not.

If it were, I couldn't ever complain to a company after I bought their product...but I do.

If it were, I couldn't lobby my representatives after I voted them into office....but I do.

If it were, I couldn't both go to church, financially support its ministry, and at the same time work for change within the church...but I do.

In an [NPR report](#) by Margot Adler, Occupy Wall Street protester Jason Ahmadi acknowledged this tension. He said, "McDonalds that's where we use the bathroom. Verizon, that's how we, you know, give you our live stream that we're broadcasting."

And that, my friends, is the lovely, beautiful, challenging, tension of our times. It's the gray. That's how I can proudly pay taxes, and advocate the government spend them differently. That's how I can buy Patagonia long pants, and email them suggesting they make an "extra long" variety as well. That's how I can say, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief."

In short, that's how I live: simultaneously sinner and saint.

So the image above, rather than demonstrating the silliness of the protests, actually illustrates, for me, their great importance. Long live the tension, those who shed light on it, and all who struggle with the questions of our day.

Originally posted at [A Wee Blether](#)