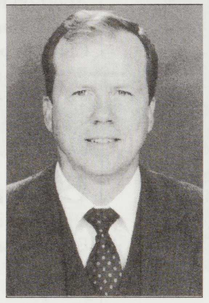
History repeating itself

The wisdom and talent of my staff here at *Life Advocate* magazine never ceases to amaze me, and this month is no exception. It is truly an honor to work side by side with such gifted people. I just finished reading *Theologies in Conflict*, Cathy Ramey's concise look at the struggle that took place in the German "church" before and during W.W.II.



Last month Paul deParrie took a closer look at John Brown. This month, the fiftieth anniversary of his execution, Cathy Ramey examines more closely the life and times of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Even though *Theologies in Conflict* does not draw any direct parallels to the condition of the Church in America today, the similarities are obvious. Take a moment and consider just a few examples:

The German society was becoming more hostile to the idea of God in His role as lawgiver, disciplinarian, and protector. Instead they moved toward love of nature and mother earth. Like America today, German society and the "church" fell in love with environmentalism. It included the idea that man was nothing more than matter, no better than any other form of life.

A recent quote in the March 4, 1995 *World* magazine rings out on this point. When asked why he couldn't make a big issue out of abortion and other moral evils that are destroying our country, Rev. Billy Graham responded by saying that he believes the most important social issue of our day is *"ecology."*

I still remember walking through the Auschwitz concentration camp museum three years ago. Man was so insignificant that they used his skin to make lampshades, his hair to make cloth, and his incinerated bones to gravel their icy roads during the winter. We recycle babies in much the same way through "fetal tissue research." The "church" in Germany didn't cry out effectively for the victims of the Nazis, and the "church" in America hasn't spoken up for the unborn victims of our day either.

In Germany there seems to have been a great deal of confusion about how the Gospel message was to affect the lives of believers and how they were then to affect the society in which they lived. Just like today, the "church" became more remote. Church leaders were told that they couldn't speak about political issues, that personal salvation was all that mattered in the end.

In America we often hear about the believer's need for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and while it is true that believers should cultivate that relationship, there is little mention of doing so through obedience to God's commands. We accept a "statement of faith" and neglect to look for the fruit which is proof of genuine salvation.

The trend to put man's law before God's Law (or at least letting man's law give us an excuse for not obeying God's law) is ever present in our culture as it was in the days of W.W.II Europe. Who can forget Corrie ten Boom's book, *The Hiding Place*, where a pastor refused to give shelter to a Jewish baby because it was *"against the law."*

Just yesterday, I had a lengthy conversation with the vice president of a world renowned Christian organization that deals with family issues. During our talk, he said that using more forceful means to save unborn children from the murder of abortion was wrong because it is illegal and might lead to anarchy. I can only wonder what God thinks of our present state of "order" where in some cities two out of every three babies are *legally* ripped apart in their mother's womb?

I won't point out all of the parallels for you, but my last point is that the "church" in Germany tried too hard to appease. She made too many compromises with a political movement that rejected God. She wanted to be seen as "relevant" during some of the hardest days in German history, but instead the Gospel message lost its power in its watered-down preaching. Pastors no longer took a hard view of sin, specifically the sins being perpetrated against the Jews, and preached sermons that reinforced patriotism instead of obedience and justice.

In America, we too rarely hear hard sermons on sin. In fact, I can't even remember when I last heard the Ten Commandments thoroughly preached and taught from the pulpit. Such hard sermons might offend, so pastors focus more and more on private devotions, inner healing, and a type of "love" that doesn't challenge sinners away from the road to Hell they are on.

There is no question that there are similarities in the "church" culture of W.W.II Europe and present day America. The only question is, "Will we learn from the mistakes that were made by others?" Or will we, like the self-seeking "church" in Germany, only be looking out for number one?

The Scriptures give us some potent advise on this point when we are commanded to seek the Kingdom of God first, to love our neighbor (even our unborn neighbor) as our self, and put the needs of others before our own.

Serving Him for Life,

Andrew Burnett, Publisher &
Executive Director of
Advocates For Life Ministries

COVER

Dietrich Bonhoeffer is seen here, placed behind a photo of Nazi death camp barbed wire.

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Never give up

Never, never, never give up. I read your magazine from cover to cover the moment it arrives. I have a Christian friend in Portland who said she was "considering terminating our friendship" (interesting "choice" of words) because I was willing to *examine* the *possible* validity of use of force. Have Christians grown so afraid of thinking, checking Scripture, and the public discourse of an idea? How sad. She is a pro-life nurse and will not discuss abortion issues with me anymore. That's OK, there are others who will.

Colleen Schauble
Canyon City, OR

No money in "grizzly trade"

Greetings to all—& our prayers. Interested in stuff from over here, i.e. one state hospital in big city can't do abortions because no doctors will do it. Socialized medicine keeps them from earning any more than a regular doctor for their grizzly trade—So they *quit*!

Steve Baughman
Nurlu, France

Encouraged

I have read your magazine several times now and I really appreciate your efforts. We are fighting the fight here in Wichita and appreciate the encouraging articles of others doing same across the country.

Debra Engelbrecht
Wichita, KS

Picketing works

Good news from Texas! At the end of a cold, dreary February picket, a passerby stopped to talk to us. The lady told us five or six years ago she had been on her way into the clinic. She saw us out there and it made her angry. But instead of staying and having the abortion she left and has a five year old child now. God bless all the picketers that day and on so many other days. Hang in there y'all.

Tobra Potter
Fort Worth, TX

Hang the rhetoric

In response to Rollin Stearns letter *More Questions for Hill*, March issue, the following comes to mind: we think longer, we think wider, we think deeper and engage in 'higher criticism' but as the Apostle Paul resolved in dealing with the intelligentsia of his time, playing mental hard-ball at Corinth, he purposed to know nothing among them save Jesus Christ and Him crucified and hang the rhetoric. In my opinion, so did Paul Hill as evidenced by his own statement:

" I pity the poor in bondage, who have none to help them. That is why I am here, not to gratify any personal animosity, revenge or vindictive spirit. It is my sympathy with the wronged and the oppressed, who are as good as you, and as precious in the sight of God."

Reverend Hill's motives will be dissected until doomsday and heavy thinkers will always come up with new questions, but I think he simply saw a killer about to pounce on 30 innocent, defenseless children and just did naturally what should be instinctive in all good men—and hang the rhetoric.

Dick Colbeth
Portland, OR

"Pompous and despicable"

I confess! I have a bad attitude toward those who criticize Paul Hill, et al. Forgive me, but I find their attitudes pompous and despicable and their arguments stupid and disingenuous. Ask any young child what should be done with men who wanna kill babies, and the obvious answer will bear no equivocation. "...For the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

Why do we adults get so stuffy about it all? Could it be pride, cowardice, love of money, etc? Truth is often hard to swallow. But I ask, is not confession of truth step-one in the salvation process, and was it not an instance of truth being denied that preceded our Lord's mention of the consequences of blaspheming the Holy Spirit?

Fred Raatz
Milwaukee, WI

Obscene and disgusting!

I am writing to demand that you remove my name from your mailing list immediately. I find your literature to be obscene and disgusting. It is particularly frustrating to witness the small-minded myopic view your organization takes on abortion. Long before abortion was made legal in the United States, millions of abortions were being performed every year. Few of you seem to realize the difficulty and anguish that most women go through when making a decision not to bring an unwanted child into this world. It is far from your starry-eyed view that, if a woman is forced to bring an unwanted child into this world, it is not treated as a blessed event, but rather as a lifetime curse. The poor child is then subjected to a childhood of hate and abuse. It is no wonder that many of these children grow up to be violent and hateful adults.

When Advocates For Life Ministries are prepared to quit wasting their time by mailing obscene literature and picketing abortionists and, instead, spend their valuable time and money caring for the unwanted children that we already have in this country, then, at that time, I would be happy to be placed back on your mailing list.

Gregory Blair, M.D.
Portland, OR

P.S. How many of these unwanted children have you adopted and are currently caring for?

Editor's note: We welcome readers to send a response to Dr. Blair's "P.S." c/o our office. We will forward them to him.

What matters, faith or faithfulness?

I would like to respond to Joseph Foreman in the Feb. '95 issue on the use of force debate.

Three who failed.

You don't ever think of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abedneggo in these terms do you? But it's true. They failed to make their point. Their articulation failed to impress Nebuchanezzar. Though unreasonably condemned, their faith did not save them. They were thrown into the furnace to die. And Daniel could have saved them. With two or three cross-bows and ten or so people to generate noise, he could have done it. Of course, we would never have heard about it if he had.

Everything significant enough to warrant 2500 years of re-telling happened after what for all the world appeared to be the end of the story. What God did for three men who remained faithful to His law, even when all was lost, is what keeps this testimony forever precious to our people. God did, inside that furnace, what Daniel could not have done. He glorified His name forever, in the earth, before all people, and changed the government policy.

It was not the faith of these three men, it was their faith-ful-ness that God responded to.

Daniel knew that the answer of judgment, and of course vengeance, take their most useful forms in the hands of God.

Johnny Mercier
Duluth, GA

On dating

The article "An Alternative to Dating" was wonderful, because it lays the foundation for lasting happiness. And that is "Thy will be done" not "my will be done."

Thank-you so much for putting it in Advocate For Life.

Dan Phillips
Phoenix, OR