Teacher's Corner: Civil Disobedience In Church History

Part I: The Protestant Reformers

by Randy Alcorn

The tendency of today's church is to evaluate issues from a contemporary American point-of-view rather than a historical Christian point-of-view. The truth is that godly civil disobedience is not only clearly endorsed by the Scriptures, but has formed a vital part of our Christian heritage.

Though the early church is full of examples of civil disobedience, in this three part series we'll limit our scope to three eras of modern church history. In this article we'll examine civil disobedience among the Protestant Reformers. In part two we'll focus on the illegal underground railroad that helped slaves to freedom during America's civil war. Finally, in part three we'll look at examples of life-saving civil disobedience in Nazi Germany and Occupied Europe. (These and many other examples are developed more fully in my book, *Is Rescuing Right?*)

When a German priest named Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the Wittenberg door, he publicly affirmed that he would no longer submit to human authority that was misrepresenting God. At the Diet of Worms in 1521, he stood before not only the leaders of the church, but the highest civil authority, the Emperor himself. When asked if he would repudiate his books and their "errors" he replied, "Since then Your Majesty and your lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns and without teeth. Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason—I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other—*my conscience is captive to the Word of God.* I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise."

Luther knew Romans 13 well, and like all good Christians normally practiced civil obedience. But Luther believed in the ultimate lordship of Christ, not Caesar. He made clear that he drew the line in his obedience to civil authority. In a letter to a government official he stated,

"Dear Sir, I am in duty bound to obey you with my body and property. You may command according to your authority on earth. I will follow you. But if you force me to deny my faith and to destroy my books, I will not obey. For then you are a tyrant and are overstepping your authority. You are commanding something that you have neither the right nor might to do."

After he was condemned as a heretic and his teachings outlawed, Luther's friends kept him in hiding for ten months. Violating the Worms Edict, which carried both religious and civil authority, Luther busily wrote pamphlets and disseminated information and instruction. His illegal literature filled the countryside, and became the inspiration that fueled the Protestant Reformation.

Reformer John Calvin illegally sent ministers into France. They had false names and carried false papers, and if discovered were killed. Calvin's writings were outlawed in France, but were smuggled in with his knowledge and blessing. In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin made an eloquent and powerful statement of the proper relationship of human and divine authorities:

"But in the obedience which we have shown to be due to the authority of governors, it is always necessary to make one exception, and that is entitled to our first attention—that it does not seduce us from obedience to Him to whose will the desires of all kings ought to be subject, to whose decrees all their commands ought to yield, to whose majesty all their scepters ought to submit. And, indeed, how preposterous it would be for us, with a view to satisfy men, to incur the displeasure of him on whose account we yield obedience to men!

The Lord, therefore, is the King of kings; who, when He has opened his sacred mouth, is to be heard alone, above all, for all, and before all; in the next place, we are subject to those men who preside over us, but no otherwise than in Him. If they command anything against Him, it ought not to have the least attention, nor, in this case, ought we to pay any regard to all that dignity attached to magistrates, to which no injury is done when it is subjected to the unrivaled and supreme power of God .... As if God had resigned his right to mortal men when he made them rulers of mankind, or as if earthly power were diminished by being subordinated to its author before whom even the principalities of heaven tremble with awe."

Scottish Reformer John Knox stated that a civil ruler must view himself as "Lieutenant to One whose eyes watch upon him." He maintained, "Kings then have not an absolute power in their regiment to do what pleases them; but their power is limited by God's Word." On this basis he stated that people had a moral duty to disobey human laws that contradicted the laws of God. ■

Commentary: Mother of three dies at abortionist's hands

by Paul deParrie

Toledo, OH—On April 27, Sandra Milton, mother of three children, went to the Toledo Medical Services abortuary expecting nothing more than the well-advertised and highly touted "safe-legal" abortion that the abortion industry—with the help of the media—proclaim. It was not to be.

No one knows what reasons Sandra had for her abortion. Perhaps, she felt she could not handle another child as a single person or maybe she simply would have been embarrassed by her family and friends for being pregnant "again"—no one knows.

Nor does anyone know what plans that the 28-year-old had for the remainder of that day. But she certainly did not expect to die—least of all not by a "safe-legal" abortion.

One might imagine that Sandra's three children might have already been working on special projects to give her on Mother's Day just two weeks away. None of them expected to have no mother.

The certificate that records Sandra's death is characteristically clinical. Under "Immediate Cause" is listed, "Internal hemorrhage with major blood loss." She could have been in an automobile accident by that report, save that itemized in "Underlying Cause" is "Laceration of uterus" followed by "Uterine abortion."

Surprisingly, the box labeled, "Place of Injury" says, "Abortion clinic." But the whole report is still antiseptic. There is no passion to smudge the abortionist and his trade—no "Died at Abortionist So-and-so's hands" or "Dead because she believed pro-abortion propaganda."

And the mainstream press, who have promoted the myth of "safe-legal" abortion, and who were given copies of the death certificate and other substantiating documents—this press said that they didn't have enough information to go on. The mainstream press was silent.

(Those wishing to help the children of Sandra Milton are advised to send contributions to Memorial Fund, c/o Women Helping Women, P.O. Box 1621, Toledo, OH 43623. For further information call, Toni Moriarty (419) 882-1491.) ■

L E T T E R S

Mary is a 7th grader at Emmett middle School. This little "warrior" is distributing graphic pro-life facts, witnessing and saving babies' lives. Some of her friends have given their lives to Jesus as a result of her testimony and she encourages me to no end!!

Her mom & dad have been encouraging her efforts and are a real blessing to her and their community.

There are many children like Mary all over this country. Please lift these 20th century Davids up in prayer. If abortion continues, the next generation will be rescuing us!

God bless!
Regina S.

I recently read your publication and liked it very much. Please add me to your mailing list. You put the spotlight on abortion. They can no longer kill in silence.

We want America to know that there are tens of thousands of men and women in uniform that want the killing stopped. We deplore our legal system that allows a baby to be killed every 20 seconds. We want to vote out of office all the wishy-washy, two-faced, hypocritical politicians. They should not be in a position of leadership. America hear us. Our numbers are large and our convictions strong. The killing must be stopped now. We are in this battle to the end.

Keep up the outstanding work. Keep the spotlight on. Save the babies and their mothers. God Bless You,

Randy K. Turner, Captain, USAF
President
Armed Forces For Life

Dear Co-Workers in Christ,

Greetings in Jesus! We wanted to express our heartfelt thanks and gratitude for your recent shipment of 25 magazines free of charge. We plan to put them to good use!

A few days after writing we received your June issue. Like the May issue, the cover caught the eye—because it caught and pierced the heart. With covers like those the magazine really gives itself away—in both senses! Praise God for the people which these photos portray.

We pray for God's richest blessings for your ministry and His tender watch-care over each of you.

Your brother and sister in Christ,
Steve and Vivian McNeire, Somers, MT

I am a member of Dallas Rescue and your magazine has been a real encouragement to me as we persevere in this Battle for Life.

Sometimes the enemy tries to convince us there is no one who is willing to stand and then to look through *The Advocate* and read about all the rescues and the many who are standing it lets the truth ring clear.

Enclosed is a contribution. May God bless you as you continue His work. Thank you for sharing such encouragement.

In Christ,
Joan Glenn, Dallas, TX

Visiting the Imprisoned: Everyone's Ministry

Atlanta, GA
Fulton County Jail
901 Rice St.
Atlanta, GA 30318
Phone: (404) 853-2000

Rick Grayson, Trustee
Ron Brock 7N/100
Jerry Jones 7N/108
Ron Maxson 7N/204
Richard Coaili 2N/306
Rev. Joseph Foreman 2N/512
Dale Dixon 2N/509
Jay Huddle 2N/615
Joe Wright 5S/500

Solicitor General James Webb
State Court of Fulton County
160 Pryor St. SW, Room 53
Atlanta, GA 30303
Phone: (404) 730-4800

Mayor Maynard Jackson
Office of the Mayor
City Hall
Atlanta, GA 30335
Phone: (404) 330-6021

Knoxville TN: Contact Mark Bodine
(615) 995-9210

Baby John Doe II
Knox County Penal Farm Annex
4800 Maloneyville Rd.
Knoxville, TN 37928

Baby Jane Doe I
City-County Jail
City County Bldg.
Knoxville, TN 37902

Judge Randall Nichols
Division 1, Criminal Court
City-County Bldg.
Knoxville, TN 37902
Phone: (615) 521-2508

Sheriff Joe Fowler
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Richmond, VA 23219

Burlington, VT: Contact (802) 879-1955
Dennis Watkins
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7 Farrell Dr.
S. Burlington, VT 05401

State's Attny. Wm. Sorrell
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39 Pearl St.
Burlington, VT 05401
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11916 Blacktail Mt.
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Courtroom 150F
Denver, CO 80202
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Mayor Pena
1437 Barnock St.
City & County Bldg., Room 350
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Los Angeles, CA:
Jeff White, #2019368
5130 N. Clark
Lakewood, CA 90712

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Los Angeles, CA 90086-0164:

R. Everett Butler, #2054552
Stephen Kipp, #2054533
Barbara Bolte-Smith, #2049738
Deborah Grumbine, #2049736
Allison Miller, #2049734
Shiela Riely, #2049735
Elmiranda (Connie) Waelder, #2049733

Think About It

by Mary Dain, 1989

A woman has an abortion because:
1. She is afraid.
2. A baby doesn't fit in with her plans.
3. The baby is inconvenient.
4. A baby would interrupt her job or schooling.
5. She's worried about her reputation.
6. She cannot afford a baby.
7. She is worried about judgment from her family or church.
8. She is unwilling to lay down her life for another person.
9. Besides, abortion is legal.
10. And she doesn't know the truth about abortion.

A Christian won't rescue because:
1. He is afraid.
2. A rescue doesn't fit in with his plans.
3. A rescue is inconvenient.
4. A rescue would interrupt his job or schooling.
5. He's worried about his reputation.
6. He cannot afford to rescue.
7. He is worried about judgment from his family or church.
8. He is unwilling to lay down his life for another person.
9. Besides, abortion is legal.
10. ?

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