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Francis Schaeffer: a Christian Manifesto Study Guide

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FRANCIS SCHAEFFER: A CHRISTIAN MANIFESTO

Chapter Seven: The Limits of Civil Obedience

Thinking to the bottom line:

1. *What is the final relationship to the state on the part of anyone whose base is the existence of God?* Those in our present material-energy, chance oriented generation have no reason to obey the state except that the state has the guns and has the patronage.
2. *Has God set up an authority in the state that is autonomous from Himself?* God has ordained the state as a delegated authority; it is not autonomous. Romans 13:1-4; 1 Peter 2:13-17

[Comment: Sovereignty (ultimate authority) is an inescapable concept. Autonomy is the view that man is either above the law or lives apart from it.]

Historical examples of civil disobedience by Christians:

1. **William Tyndale**, the English translator of the Bible, was condemned as a heretic, tried and executed in 1536.
2. **John Bunyan**, a Nonconformist clergyman who was arrested for preaching without a license and failing to attend the Church of England, wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* in his jail cell.

In almost every place where the Reformation had success there was some form of civil disobedience or armed rebellion:

1. *Spanish Netherlands*: Battle of Leyden, 1574 [The Dutch led by **William the Silent** won their independence as the United States of the Netherlands].
2. *Sweden*: **Gustavus Vasa** broke Sweden off from Denmark and established the Lutheran church in 1527.
3. *Denmark*: The Protestant party of the nobility overthrew the Catholic dynasty in 1536.
4. *Germany*: **Martin Luther** was protected by the Duke of Saxony against the political and military power of Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor. The Peace of Augsburg of 1555 established the ruler's religion in the German states. The Counter-Reformation led to the Thirty Years War. The Peace of Westphalia (1648) ratified the Peace of Augsburg.
5. *Switzerland*: Cantons established Protestantism by vote of the community.
6. *Scotland*: **John Knox** openly defied the authorities by holding services on weekdays to refute what the priests preached on Sundays. His *Admonition to England* (1554) developed a theology of resistance to tyranny. He upheld the right and duty of the common people to resist if state officials ruled contrary to the Bible. ["Resistance to tyrants is obedience to God"]

Elsewhere, Protestantism was stamped out by force: Hungary, Bohemia (the site of **Jan Hus**'s pre-Reformation revolt), France (the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572), and Spain.

Samuel Rutherford's *Lex Rex*: The civil magistrate is a fiduciary figure. The office is distinguished from the man. [Medieval counterpart: The King's Two Bodies]

Chapter Eight: The Use of Civil Disobedience

Rutherford: three appropriate levels of resistance: 1) protest [or petition: see the First Amendment], 2) flight [note the Pilgrim church which settled in Leyden], and 3) force.

1. For a corporate body, resistance should be under the protection of duly constituted authorities [rule of the lesser magistrates].
2. John Locke drew from the Presbyterian tradition when he maintained: 1) inalienable rights, 2) government by consent, 3) separation of powers, and 4) right of resistance.

A distinction must be made between force and violence. Os Guinness: responsibility implies discipline.

1. [Speaker of the House Robert Winthrop (1849): "The less they have of stringent State Government, the more they must have of individual self-government. . . . Men, in a word, must necessarily be controlled, either by a power within them, or by a power without them; either by the word of God, or by the strong arm of man; either by the Bible, or by the bayonet."]

Illustration of the need for protest: tax money being used for abortion. The Hyde Amendment removed the use of national tax funds for abortions.

The materialistic, humanistic world view is being taught exclusively in most state schools. Those holding it also seek to control Christian and other private schools.

1. Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn: "The state will not tolerate any gods besides itself."

Chapter Nine: The Use of Force

Bottom line: "If there is no final place for civil disobedience, then the government has been made autonomous, and as such, it has been put in the place of the Living God."

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