

A Theology of Civil Disobedience in the Community of Christ

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Since the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's, civil disobedience has held a common place in the North American psyche – led by the iconic figures of Mohandas Gandhi and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and taken up by resistance and liberation movements after them. While clergy and religious leaders have been at the forefront of social justice movements and actions then and since, the Community of Christ has historically articulated few positions regarding the church stance on political or social issues, and thereby also avoided the discussion of theological or ecclesial grounding for support of or participation in justice movements in general and civil disobedience in particular. The Community of Christ tradition has upheld justice in abstract – with zionic languaging – but has rarely, as an institution or through representative individuals, engaged in civil disobedience. Given recent scriptural and cultural developments, however, that may be changing.

Particularly for members of the Community of Christ, whose cultural history has been dominated by an eagerness to be broadly accepted as good neighbors and citizens, the notion of “acting up” seems counter-Biblical rather than faithful to it. In the last thirty years, however, a growing political awareness among the laity and professional ministers fueled by increased levels of academic theological education and the articulated vision of acting to bring about peace has raised the question of citizen complicity with unjust political structures and a faithful response to the gospel calling for resistance. The church has always advanced the principle of individual members acting on their own conscience, and has held church employees to the same principle, but such ambivalence lifts up the question: why *would* a minister or member want to participate in acts of resistance? Underlying this question is another: do members (and professional ministers) have an ethical *imperative* to participate in civil disobedience? To begin

an answer to these questions requires an exploration of the theological underpinnings of our Christian and denominational understanding of principled resistance and civil disobedience.

Definition and History of Civil Disobedience

To clarify the project, it is necessary to define civil disobedience. Civil disobedience is the ethically-motivated, intentional violation of a law as an act of protest or demonstration of injustice.¹ Often the unjust law itself is broken, but sometimes other laws (not in themselves unjust, like trespassing or assembly without a permit, for examples) are broken to demonstrate the injustice of another law, policy or action. Civil disobedience takes an ethical stand against a law or policy, and willingly accepts the consequences of such violation.² This is in contrast to criminal disobedience, in which a law is broken for reasons of personal gain and an attempt to evade the consequences.³ Civil disobedience is also non-violent, since the practitioner wants to protest the unjust law or policy and violence serves to distract from the existence of injustice by substituting another injustice (violence against another person). While I outline above only three requisites for a *technical* definition,⁴ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. expands on these, writing that the philosophy and practice of *nonviolence* has six basic principles.

First, nonviolence is resistance to evil and oppression. It is a human way to fight. Second, it does not seek to defeat or humiliate the opponent, but to win his/ her friendship and understanding. Third, the nonviolent method is an attack on the forces of evil rather than against persons doing the evil. It seeks to defeat the evil and not the persons doing the evil and injustice. Fourth, it is the willingness to accept suffering without retaliation. Fifth, a nonviolent resister avoids both external physical and internal spiritual violence- not only refuses to shoot, but also to hate, an opponent. The ethic of real love is at the center of nonviolence. Sixth, the believer in nonviolence has a deep faith in the future and the forces in the universe are seen to be on the side of justice.⁵

I quote King at length because he represents a committed faith perspective: King was a professional minister and religious leader organizing and participating in civil disobedience.

Civil disobedience can also be distinguished from other forms of nonviolent resistance. Harriet Tubman's "Underground Railroad," for instance, sought to work in secret and evade the consequences of resistance and law-breaking; as praiseworthy as it was, this is not an example of

civil disobedience. Work slowdowns and sabotage would similarly not qualify as civil disobedience, because in these examples the practitioners seek to avoid consequences. There are strategic reasons why one would participate in subterfuge rather than in the open, and those are among the issues to be addressed by individuals and organizations considering resistance action. In summary, there are many forms of nonviolent resistance, but civil disobedience must be open, intentional, non-violent, and willing to accept the legal/political consequences of the act.

With a noteworthy historical example, another qualification is highlighted. Aristophanes' anti-war comedy, written in 411 BCE, has female characters, led by the eponymous Lysistrata, withholding sexual activity from their husbands in protest in the hope of securing peace and ending the Peloponnesian War. Whether this was an act of civil disobedience hinges on the necessity of violating *a law*; while there were certainly cultural expectations of women, it can hardly be said that they were breaking a law. So, while Lysistrata represents both a *creative* and *nonviolent* form of resistance (both important to civil disobedience), and was certainly public, a key element of civil disobedience is challenging existing structures by violating a law.

In order to gain a more textured picture of principled resistance in the Community of Christ, it is helpful to survey scriptural examples and edicts. The Community of Christ is unusual among Christians in having an expansive canon that includes the Bible, Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants, the last of which is peculiar in remaining an open collection periodically added to. Scripture both forms our theology and is informed by it, and so what follows is not just a survey of scripture, but the beginnings of a theology of disobedience.

Biblical Tension: Holy Obedience, Nonviolent Resistance, and Civil Disobedience

Shiphrah and Puah: One of the first instances of principled disobedience in the Bible is found in Exodus 1:15-22, an act so bold and significant that we still know their names today.

Shiphrah and Puah, two Hebrew midwives, defy the Egyptian Pharaoh's command to kill all male Hebrew children as they are born. When questioned by Pharaoh why infant boys are being spared, the midwives lie and claim the babies are born without their help before they arrive. The narrative is clear that part of the motivation of Shiphrah and Puah is loyalty to God above Pharaoh.

While the inspiring and praiseworthy tale of Shiphrah and Puah is a profound example of disobedience of an unjust law, it is not an example of civil disobedience, because the midwives sought to avoid the consequences of their resistance. Their acts were nonviolent resistance *par excellence*, their defiance of Pharaoh courageous and heroic to be sure, and it serves as a powerful precedent for allegiance to God necessitating nonviolent resistance to unjust powers, but this story falls short of a compelling example of civil disobedience.

Moses: The first act of *civil disobedience* in Exodus follows shortly after Shiphrah and Puah – the campaign to free the Hebrews from Egyptian slavery. Moses time and again challenges the law (his exile from Egypt, the slavery of the Hebrews, the supremacy of Pharaoh and the Egyptian religion) nonviolently, publicly, deliberately, accepting the possibility of consequences. The usefulness of such an example, however, for the purposes of clarifying any moral imperative on the part of professional ministers today, is problematic. Rarely do we find ourselves as supported by providence as Moses – we do not have plagues at our command, or the angel of God as a final resort. And the role of suffering, threats and even death in freeing the Hebrews complicates the question: regardless of the fact Moses did not take up arms against the Pharaoh, God *did* utilize violence to bring about Pharaoh's decision. While our tools today are just as spiritually powerful as Moses' were, they are materially somewhat more limited. What is

helpful is God's clear injunction against systems that oppress people, and certainty that the faithful response is necessarily to actively resist them.

For Christian ministers, most of the tension between holy obedience and civil disobedience arises out of the New Testament – the Gospels, Acts and the Pauline letters. Addressing the question of ethical imperative for Christians requires particular attention on our peculiar canon and specific heritage.

Birth of Jesus as nonviolent resistance: “Jesus was stubborn, insistent and determined: he would do everything he could, even if that meant going outside imperial and ‘religious’ law, to reveal the reign of God.”⁶ From this perspective, the very Incarnation of God can be seen as an act of civil disobedience. God was supposed to stay God, clearly distinguished from humanity and creation. That the incarnation violated Jewish law is clear from the Jewish reaction to early Christian teaching in the synagogues: disagreement about the coming of the Messiah was one thing, claiming God had become a man was anathema. Then there are cultural expectations to overcome as well. If God *were* to descend into human life, it would be as a ruler, a wealthy and powerful king. By becoming incarnate, God was violating the division between human and divine; and by being born into poverty and obscurity, into a refugee family in an oppressed region of a vicious empire, God was breaking the rules – nonviolently, intentionally, and fully accepting of the consequences. The “laws” governing such an act, however, would be set by God, not by people, so while the Incarnation certainly defies expectations it does not qualify as explicit civil disobedience. It does, however, inform our perception of nonviolent resistance as a primary strategy of God. The backdrop of the entire Christian story is one enormous, overarching act of nonviolent disobedience.

Resurrection as nonviolent resistance: “God disobeyed the imperial code of law which says that the empire has the last say: when someone is executed, according to imperial logic, that person is supposed to stay dead. According to the logic of God – the logic of nonviolence – suffering love and truth-telling always lead to resurrection and life.”⁷ When disciples go to the tomb to find Jesus’ body, a young man dressed in white tells them to find Jesus in Galilee – Jesus got up and went right back to Galilee, where his revolutionary work had begun. Jesus was starting all over again! In the Resurrection we can see an echo of the Incarnation. The two events of primary Christological interest to theologians – the incarnation and the resurrection – serve to frame Jesus’ life as, among other things, a series of acts of creative, nonviolent resistance.

Proclamation as nonviolent resistance: Jesus’ first act of ministry in the Synoptics is reading from the scroll of Isaiah in the local synagogue. One of the initial requirements of civil disobedience is truth-telling. “Prophetic truth-telling in an imperial, violent society which oppresses the poor and marginalized is always civilly disobedient and risky.”⁸ That Jesus was breaking laws is evidenced by the reaction of those in the synagogue. Similarly, when Gandhi, for example, announced the beginning of large-scale disobedience against British domination in India, he was immediately arrested – before he took any action. Merely speaking the threatening truth to power is subversive and illegal. If, in the United States, Christians are allowed the political freedom to speak truth to power without fear of reprisal, it might be because the Church has too little influence or credibility in American culture to pose a real threat. When truth-telling poses a genuine threat to power, power will respond, and prophetic truth-tellers will know they’re on to something.

However, prophetic truth-telling in a culture or under a legal system that allows such expression – if even on a contingent or limited basis, would not be outright civil disobedience. Civil disobedience does require prophetic truth-telling to clearly articulate the reasons, reasoning and specific aims of the act of disobedience. Also, in a culture where words (and media) play so important a role as in the United States, the challenge and risk of prophetic truth-telling should not be undervalued.

Breaking the Sabbath: The literary and narrative contexts of Jesus' life resound as a career of various forms of nonviolent resistance – several as clear examples of civil disobedience. To discern a New Testament call that explicitly describes and recommends civil disobedience – the intentional breaking of an unjust law in order to bring it into question – we turn our attention to several pericopes in the Gospel narratives. In Mark (2:23-28), the earliest Gospel, Jesus and his disciples break the Sabbath proscription against work on the day of rest, by gathering corn to eat. This is pointed out with disdain by the “Pharisees.” Jesus was allowed to “glean” the fields, as according to the Law the poor were allowed to scavenge after the harvest – so it wasn't an issue that they were “stealing” – the issue was that the disciples were breaking a religious law against work on the Sabbath. It should be noted that the law that prohibited the righteous from gathering food on the Sabbath also served to further oppress the poor, who likely didn't have the luxury of choosing which day to look for food, and were by their actions made ritually unclean as well as materially poor. The religious laws in this case thus served to impose a divine consequence to their poverty, forcing into their poverty an additional separation from God and another layer of distinction between them and their social/religious superiors, those who had the luxury to keep the law.

Jesus' response is not to flee or deny the charge, and it is likely that he authorized the collection of food knowing they were watched by the Pharisees. Jesus therefore acted deliberately, intentionally breaking a law and not seeking to avoid the consequences. Moreover, Jesus' response to the Pharisees expresses an awareness of the injustice represented by the law, and therefore its violation was likely a matter of principle as well as expediency. In reply to the Pharisees' charge of disobedience, Jesus answered with precedent: David similarly broke the law surrounding ritual food when he and his companions were in need. Typical of pharisaic dialogue, Jesus offers a scriptural precedent and then interprets its meaning: "The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath." (2:27) This is a cutting critique that places humanity above the law, not the other way round. An important insight here is that this argument would not have had as much force if it were made merely conjecturally, that is, without the context of violating the law. Jesus had to actually violate the law in order to push his argument that the law ought not bind people so. For obvious reasons, conversations about the legitimacy of a law that nevertheless respect the law (if even in disagreement with it) do not elicit the kind of attention or compelling force of an act that violates the law in order to bring it into question. Jesus defended their act of civil disobedience by citing the primacy of mercy in light of human need.⁹

Jesus' argument also lays out a key qualification of the righteousness of a law: it must serve humankind, not enslave them to mere obedience. The law's existence is not evidence of its righteousness, and criticism and resistance are warranted if the law inhibits the ability of humanity to grow in relationship to God; human need and dignity come first. This also serves to articulate the particularly *Christian* motive behind civil disobedience.

Immediately following this exchange over gathering corn on the Sabbath, Jesus enters the synagogue (itself a bold statement, since Jesus is coming straight from making himself ritually “unclean” by breaking the Sabbath prohibition on working) and heals a man with a “withered hand.” (Mark 3:1-6) Again, Jesus breaks the law against work on the Sabbath in order to call the just supremacy of the law into question.¹⁰ To the charge of breaking the law, Jesus does not claim *not* to have broken the law, but replies that the law deserved to be broken: “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?” As well as pointing to this specific act of mercy, Jesus is pointing to human duty to the truly supreme law of mercy commanded by God, loyalty to which *required* the violation of this law in unjust application. Also, implied in Jesus’ defense is the admonition that *not* acting is sometimes itself an act, electing to *not* do something in some circumstances is in fact *doing* something. Jesus is challenging the status quo here, declaring by his example that perpetuating an unjust status quo by inaction (even under the banner of lawfulness) is just an act of injustice as performing an injustice directly.

Acts: The early followers of Jesus clearly understood holy disobedience to be a component of discipleship. In Acts 5 (27-33), Peter and the apostles are brought before a council for violating a direct command to cease teaching in Jesus’ name. They answer plainly: “We must obey God rather than any human authority.” (29) That “human authority” here can be interpreted as *both* religious (ecclesial) and political authority. Discipleship requires obedience to God first and only. Certainly, obedience to cultural, civic and criminal laws of particular societies is valuable for living in community, but *never at the expense of obeying God*.¹¹

Epistles: The epistolary tradition, as one might imagine, is more mixed. Resistance to earthly authority is expected in one instance, and advised against in others. Hebrews, for instance, reads: “Obey your leaders and submit to them....” (13:17) 1 Peter expands the

sentiment: “For the Lord’s sake, accept the authority of every human institution, whether of the emperor as supreme, or of governors, as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right.” (2:13) In his letter to the Romans, Paul declares: “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.” (13:1-2) Just a few verses earlier, however, Paul seems to prioritize the will of God over governing authorities: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (12:2)

The advantage of civil disobedience is, as articulated by Paul, one remains “subject to” governing authorities, even while breaking (unjust) laws. One discerns the will of God – determines what is good and acceptable – and if civic laws run contrary to that, the practitioner violates a law but remains civilly subject to the governing authorities by submitting to arrest, detention, trial and punishment. Civil disobedience is an act that assumes a shared sense of injustice will rise when the issue is brought into the proper light – that a sense of shame will develop connected with the injustice as a result of the injustice being shown for what it is. Civil disobedience assumes that mass resistance will result from awareness brought about by the disobedient acts. Civil disobedience does not believe people should not be subject to community standards. Rather, civil disobedience believes that those community standards (i.e., laws) should (and can) reflect our best sense of fairness and justice. Christians, in light of the epistolary scriptures, ought to work within systems of law (thus granting them authority) but not replace their own judgment or the will and word of God with the judgment or word of those systems.

The complexity in application is felt throughout Christian history, and no less in our own tradition. How we react to that tension – what values or strategies we articulate – may speak to us. With that in mind, let us turn to our own peculiar reflections.

Indigenous Revelation & History

In addition to our inheritance from the larger Christian tradition, our community also upholds its own unique heritage of thought and history. Our denomination has historically valued autonomy of individual conscience on most political and personal issues. The prevalence of violence in our early history and the birth of the Reorganization against the backdrop of the American Civil War as well as the militarism of American culture in the twentieth century have all guaranteed a rich diversity of positions on the potential roles of violence and non-violent (often counter-cultural) resistance. In addition to the ongoing discussion among members and leaders, there are scriptural precedents laid out in our indigenous scriptures, the Doctrine and Covenants (D&C).

Several sections of the D&C deal implicitly and explicitly with the role and right of laws and conscience (that is, laws of the land versus obedience to God). Section 58:5b reads: “Let no man break the laws of the land, for he that keepeth the laws of God hath no need to break the laws of the land; wherefore be subject to the powers that be, until He reigns whose right it is to reign....” Clearly, this echoes the thought of Romans 13:1-2. This may also reflect the typically American nationalist sentiment of the post-Revolutionary period, wherein democracy and its attendant structures are assumed to be of divine providence and sanction.¹² *The Edwards Commentary* notes in reference to 58:5b: “It would not be supposed that they would enact or utilize laws enabling them to deal unjustly with their bretheren. ... [B]eyond the areas of Zionite endeavor there was much legalized injustice, even as there is today. The general import of this

instruction would therefore seem to be that the redress of wrongs should be sought within the law rather than by revolt.”¹³ It should be noted that F. Henry Edwards was himself a conscientious objector during World War II, and civilly disobeyed orders to mobilize. Edwards’ commentary, however, does not serve to soften the scriptural command to obey the laws of the land – a perennial citation for Latter Day Saints discussing civil disobedience.

Section 112 also deals with the duties of Saints as *citizens*. While not a “revelation,” the text was prepared by the First Presidency, and it was adopted unanimously by the presiding quorums and general assembly of August 1835. During the Civil War, the text was provided as the political statement of the church.¹⁴ In it we read: “We believe that all men [sic] are bound to sustain and uphold the respective governments in which they reside, while protected in their inherent and inalienable rights by the laws of such governments.... and that to the laws all men [sic] owe respect and deference, as without them peace and harmony would be supplanted by anarchy and terror....” (5a, 6b) And: “We believe that men [sic] should appeal to the civil law for redress of all wrongs and grievances, where personal abuse is inflicted, or the right of property or character infringed, where such laws exist as will protect the same; but we believe that all men are justified in defending themselves, their friends and property, and the government, from the unlawful assaults and encroachments of all persons, in times of exigencies, where immediate appeal cannot be made to the laws, and relief afforded.” (11a-b) The section concludes with a startling clarification on the church’s position on slavery – as members and representatives of the church, it is not appropriate to encourage dissension or resistance or otherwise interfere with the institution of slavery.¹⁵ We see in Section 112 a desire to be a peaceful neighbor, to live in just and pleasant co-existence in a pluralist society. But we also see

that desire leading into the perpetuation of unjust relations among our neighbors – adopting their unjust sensibilities as our own.

Earlier, in section 95, the support of earthly governments is more tempered: “It is my will that my people should observe to do all things whatsoever I command them, and that law of the land, which is constitutional, supporting that principle in freedom, in maintaining rights and privileges belongs to all mankind [sic] and is justifiable before me....” (2a) Here is clarified the qualifications for support of government: that it support freedom. “Constitutional” might be roughly translated as “consent of the governed.” Would, then, those under slavery be considered constitutionally bound? It seems that when God speaks through the prophet, there is less wiggle-room than the church’s policy on slavery would imply. In fact, tacit approval for disobeying unjust laws is given in following verses: “I, the Lord God, make you free; therefore, ye are free indeed: and the law also maketh you free; nevertheless when the wicked rule the people mourn; wherefore honest men and wise men should be sought for, diligently, and good men and wise men, ye should observe to uphold; otherwise whatsoever is less than these, cometh of evil.” (2c-d)

We see this dialog playing out during the Civil War, when Joseph Smith III is writing in the *Herald* in 1866. Smith is discussing the disciple’s response to compulsory service in the war. After quoting section 95:2a, he asks: “Such laws of the land God justifieth the saints in befriending, and if such laws of the land could require us to go to war and fight, why did the Lord say in the next paragraph ‘Therefore renounce war and proclaim peace?’ Can the saints obey this commandment and yet fight?”¹⁶ It seems Smith is recognizing the difficulties of maintaining fidelity to the life and teachings of Christ in the face of cultural, political and legal pressures of citizenship in an earthly nation. However, Smith offered strong caution to those

who would too easily wed the interests of the state and those of God: “The attempt to reconcile the kingdom of God and the requirements of the gospel, with the kingdoms of the world and the requirements of men may be patriotic, but it is ‘enmity to God.’”¹⁷

Conclusions

The Community of Christ values the right of individual conscience, and seeks to healthfully facilitate the nurturing of discipleship from and within diverse perspectives. A strong peace emphasis has been a consistent feature of our tradition, and our history reveals the struggle of people to respond to the life and teachings of Jesus among the competing voices of culture, politics, and commerce. A renewal of commitment to Christ foremost in our theology (as opposed to a commitment to Joseph Smith, or our history, or our unique authority as a church, for examples) focuses our interpretation of discipleship and the Christ-like response to competing voices.

Implicit in the lordship of Jesus Christ is that our commitment is to Jesus Christ first, foremost and ultimately. All other leaders, voices, considerations, identifications and commitments are secondary (at best) to our commitment to the living Christ. This does not guarantee unanimity on what the Christ-like response might be, but it is important for members of the Community of Christ to recognize our ultimate allegiance. The freedom that comes with allegiance to Christ is that we no longer have grounds to accept or defend injustices as allowable sacrifices of living in a pluralistic society. Lordship and primacy of Christ necessitates critiquing the world as through Christ’s eyes. The life and teachings of Jesus clearly reveal a career of resistance to and subversion of oppressive structures and instances and mechanisms of injustice. However, Jesus just as clearly did not advocate a political revolution that would supplant the existing earthly power with another. Jesus resisted nonviolently, but he resisted.

The Biblical world out of which Jesus arose is one in which worship of God is bound up with working for enduring social and economic justice. From Shiprah and Puah, to Moses, to the prophetic tradition through the Exile, resistance to injustice and God's intense interest in helping human relations right themselves is strongly pronounced. As a faith tradition that embraces the Hebrew Scriptures, our discipleship is inseparable from our work to bring about zionic conditions in the real world we find ourselves in.

This same spirit spoke to our peculiar community, encouraging us to be good neighbors – respectful and fair, seeking the most peaceful resolution to conflicts in ways that respected the worth of persons – speaking to us of following the laws of our resident communities. This praiseworthy impulse has been lifted up, however, at times replacing our commitment to Christ and the inbreaking reign of God. Careful study of context and character tends to enforce an ethic of loyalty to God first – to discern God's will, and follow the laws of the land if they do not conflict with that.

Our faith and tradition compel us to see in our journey a theology of holy disobedience consistently revealed. As saints and disciples of Christ, we are committed to following God's will – as revealed in the life of Christ and applied in the Spirit – first and ultimately. Our allegiance is not to states or parties, ideologies or interests, to any one person or even the church. Our loyalty is to Christ, and that inevitably sets us against many of the priorities and values of the world. Our model is clear: resist injustice, work to change the world to more closely resemble the vision of God's zionic intention.

However, the exact nature or means of resistance is not specific or mandated. Civil disobedience is one valuable method among many legitimate options for faithful resistance. One can also surreptitiously provide legal assistance to illegal immigrants, for example. The

participant in this act of resistance and justice-making would not necessarily be seeking to be caught or make a public statement with the act. One can also raise a child that is healthy emotionally, physically and spiritually, and that is prepared to resist materialism, nationalism, bullying, and violence. Caring for children can be an incredible act of resistance in a world that operates on selfishness and individualism. Working for nonviolent conflict resolution, lobbying for permanent funding for housing relief, participating in vigils for victims of violent or systemic crime, refusing to patronize specific companies or use certain products because of labor disputes or environmental issues – these are all acts of resistance, and we are called as Christians to engage in them.

While civil disobedience is not the *only* means of faithful support of justice, it is a necessary element in a larger strategy. Justice-work oftentimes requires individuals who are willing to testify with their own bodies to the injustices taking place. Awareness is made acute, issues brought to the fore, and inhumanity exposed by acts of civil disobedience. Just as Jesus' life and career necessitated at some point an act of civil disobedience to force the issue (Jesus in the temple), disciples of Jesus must understand that at some point their discipleship may (must?) call on them to put their own selves on the line in the interest of others. The commitment required for such an act is itself a spiritual discipline, and the fruits of such work are sure to be manifold.

The Community of Christ, institutionally and culturally – as a church and as a community – must advocate, encourage, and foster holy disobedience in the face of injustice. Our faith demands it. Moreover, civil disobedience must be considered as an appropriate, faithful response to injustice, and employed wisely and bravely. Christ asks no less.

Endnotes

¹ I am drawing from several sources here. Most pertinently, I am paraphrasing the description offered in *Taking Stands for Restoring Justice*, the official Community of Christ guidelines for volunteers and employees considering an act of civil disobedience, page four, principle six. This definition itself references examples of civil disobedience, including Henry David Thoreau, Mohandas K. Gandhi, and Rosa Parks. Note the necessary emphasis on praxis in attempting definitions of civil disobedience.

² The importance of this qualification cannot be overstated. Civil disobedience does not attempt to evade the consequences of the violation, but rather embraces the consequences as a means to highlight the very injustice the law seeks to protect.

³ Interview of Andrew Bolton by the author, Independence, Missouri, 9 January 2007.

⁴ The three requisites are that (1) the act break a law, (2) the consequences of the violation are not avoided, and (3) the act be entirely non-violent in nature and execution.

⁵ Act Up. "Civil Disobedience Training." Available from http://www.actupny.org/documents/CDdocuments/ACTUP_CivilDisobedience.pdf. Internet: accessed 23 January 2007, 8-9.

⁶ Dear, John. "Jesus and Civil Disobedience." Available from http://www.johndear.org/pdfs/jesus_and_civil_disobedience.pdf. Internet: accessed 23 January 2007, 6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁰ This is precisely the issue addressed by Paul in his letter to the Galatians, 3:19-4:7 – the law served to rule the righteous until Christ revealed the higher law (of love); it is easy to make the laws gods unto themselves and forget God to which they were intended to serve.

¹¹ The primacy of obedience to God necessitates a close and faithful examination of *God*. The theology that undergirds or grows out of a worldview will inform what laws require breaking, in what ways, and to what ends. As disciples of Jesus, our understanding of God is grounded in the revelation of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. It seems clear, therefore, that Christ be the rubric for evaluating human authorities that demand our obedience.

¹² If post-Revolutionary patriotism is in part at the root of this seeming wholesale endorsement of governing authorities of state, there is no shortage of irony considering monarchs were also assumed to rule by divine right and will. If this is the case, it is another example of humanity's habit of selectively applying criteria and co-opting motivational rhetoric.

¹³ Edwards, F. Henry, *The Edwards Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1986), 231.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 399.

¹⁵ "...but we do not believe it right to interfere with bond servants, neither preach the gospel to, nor baptize them, contrary to the will and wish of their masters, nor to meddle with, or influence them in the least to cause them to be dissatisfied with their situations in this life, thereby jeopardizing the lives of men: such interference we believe to be unlawful and unjust, and dangerous to the peace of every government allowing human beings to be held in servitude." (D&C 112:12a-d)

¹⁶ Smith, Joseph, III, "War and the Relation of Saints Thereto," *The True Latter-day Saints' Herald*, (Vol. 9, No. 4, Feb. 15, 1866), 53.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 55. Also: "Patriotism is no mean sentiment or emotion, but it is a political virtue not a moral one. It is the amplification, or estimation of self-love, or to borrow a phrase, it is 'our best selfishness.'" (54)

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