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ARE OPERATION RESCUE'S CRITICS SELF-SERVING?

by Gary North

And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; even Issachar, and also Barak: he was sent on foot into the valley. For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart. Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode in his breaches. Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeopardized their lives unto the death in the high places of the field (Judges 5:15-18).

Deborah had issued a challenge to Israel: Come and fight the enemies of God! Some tribes came, but others did not. The tribe of Issachar came, but the tribe of Reuben stayed home, safe among the sheep. They were too busy searching their hearts. Dan went fishing. But Zebulun and Naphtali jeopardized their lives unto death. All this was immortalized by General Deborah in her song.

There are always those who choose to go fishing in the midst of a life-and-death crisis. Christians in Russia did in 1917. Christians in Germany did in 1932. The Dans of this world are legion, especially in the twentieth-century church. But my concern here is not with Dan; it is with Reuben. Dans choose not to get involved, but they are polite enough to remain quiet. They are not deep thinkers.

Not so the Reubenites. They preferred the company of sheep. They were deeply thoughtful – so thoughtful that they never could quite find the time to move away from their bleating sheep. They thought, and thought, and thought. But they did not act. They chose instead to be conformed to the image of their sheep.

These days, unfortunately, the Reubens of this world are not content to sit and think deep thoughts. They all seem to have computers, word processors, and laser printers. Or maybe they have only dot-matrix printers. The point is, they are not content to sit among their sheep, immobilized in thought. They want others to join them in the peaceful sheepfolds. If no one joins them, then they might develop self-doubts about their immobilized condition. They might even wind up in the lyrics of some future song by some contemporary Deborah. And so they issue computer-printed manifestos against the legitimacy of becoming involved in the hard realities of the war.

Sheepfold Manifestos

It is not sufficient for Christians to sit quietly. They see themselves as principled people in an unprincipled social environment. They see themselves as morally different from those around them. And so they feel morally compelled to defend their own inaction by means of selective biblical citations. Thus it has always been. Grand theological schemes justifying not-so-grand personal disengagement

can be built from selected Bible texts, once the battle has begun. After all, sheep need looking after. That is what shepherds are for. They need to look after the sheep (and occasionally shear them). I can almost imagine what one of the Reubenite manifestos would have said, had the Reubenites owned word processors and laser printers in the days of Deborah. (Actually, the manifesto would probably have been a sermon that the church secretary typed up for distribution.)

Who is this Deborah? Who does she think she is? Who put her in charge of the armies of Israel? The Bible says that women are not to become leaders and elders. When a society has sunk so low that a woman must lead it, why, it is already under God's curse! The thing we need today is prayer, not women generals. What we need is a great revival, my friends, not needless confrontation with the Amalekites. God has delivered this nation into the hands of the Amalekites for a reason: to show us His great displeasure. Until we get that great revival, we should stay right where we are. God is telling us that it is not yet time to confront Amalekites. This is a time for prayer and fasting – well, anyway, a time for prayer – not political mobilization. So we must do first things first. We must pray. We must hand out gospel tracts. Above all, we must tithe. Dig deep into your wallets, my friends. Jesus wants sacrifice, not vain words and utopian dreams. (Yes, Visa and MasterCard are acceptable in **this** house of God.) Then, when we get enough converts to Christ, certain of us may choose to run for political office. That would be true leadership, not a bunch of women generals. And as soon as enough of us win our elections, we will vote these Amalekites out of the land. "Smite the Amalekites, O Lord! Smite them with voter registration forms!"

The Other Version of Operation Rescue

There is a tradition of social inaction in American fundamentalism and evangelical Christianity that stretches back at least to fundamentalism's public relations defeat at the Scopes "monkey trial" in 1925, and really back to the end of the Civil War in 1865. Like battered tortoises, Christians went completely into their shells after 1925. They were shellshocked into silence for two generations.

Because liberal Christians and the proponents of baptized humanist socialism (the Social Gospel) have long been involved in all sorts of political activism, Bible-believing Christians have tended to equate social and political activism with theological liberalism. Such has not always been the case. Certainly, the American abolitionists of the mid-nineteenth century were mostly Christians, although the national leadership of the abolitionist movement was radical and Unitarian. Before them, the patriots who fought for the American cause in the American Revolution were overwhelm-

ingly Christian. So were the English Puritans of the 1640's, who launched a successful revolution against a tyrannical, lying king, Charles I. But from 1925, when the Scopes trial ended in disgrace for William Jennings Bryan and the creationists, until the mid-1970's, Bible-believing Christians in the United States fled from any visible corporate responsibility as Christians. They fled from the intellectual battlefields of life.

Like all those who flee from battle, they sought self-justification for their cowardice. They developed an entire theology of Christian cultural impotence in order to justify their visible absence from the battlefields of life. They told themselves and their followers that the church of Jesus Christ must and will suffer a series of inevitable defeats, in every area of life, until things get so bad that Jesus comes personally to "rapture" Christians out of this world. This will not be at the end of history at the final judgment, which Christians have always admitted, but before history is over. Until that great day - Jesus Christ's supposed version of Operation Rescue - we are told, it is futile to devise grand schemes of Bible-based social reform. All such hopes and plans must and will be dashed to bits against the hard rocks of Bible prophecy. This is the theology of the skid row rescue mission. The best hope it offers is the possibility of sobering up a handful of drunks before Jesus comes again.

This theology of cultural retreat still dominates most Bible-believing seminaries and pulpits. But it is now starting to crack. The abortion issue is shaking the foundations of "full-time Christian non-public service." The great evangelical disaster is starting to be recognized for the disaster that it is. But it will not be reversed without a struggle. This struggle can be seen in the war of the manifestos.

Legalized abortion has now made Christian social irresponsibility appear ridiculous. Thus, we find millions of Christians who give occasional lip service (and very little money) to the fight against abortion. We find a small minority willing to picket an abortion clinic occasionally. We find an even tinier minority ready to devote regular time and regular money to fighting abortion, including fighting it politically. And then, in the summer of 1988, a handful of non-violent activists began to "up the ante" by breaking local property laws in Atlanta, Georgia, and later in other cities by interposing their bodies between murderous mothers and their murderous accomplices, state-licensed physicians.

(Strange, isn't it? Liberals for 70 years insisted that "human rights are more important than property rights!" This phrase supposedly proved that high taxes and government regulation of the economy are morally legitimate. But these days, the liberals have spotted a problem with this slogan. A bunch of crazy Christians have started intruding onto the property of wealthy, state-licensed murderers - excuse me, physicians - to interfere with the daily slaughter of the innocents. Now, all of a sudden, the defense of private property is high on the liberals' list of priorities. Liberals certainly enjoy taxing the high incomes of physicians, but they want them to earn those juicy taxable incomes, especially if those incomes come from killing judicially innocent babies. Population control, and all that. And . . . liberals will never actually say this in print, of course . . . these slaughtered babies are mostly blacks and Hispanics. You know. **Those** kind of people! They have concluded that an abortion is less expensive to the welfare state than two decades of aid to a dependent child, but they never say this in public. They think that the cheapest way to "break the cycle of poverty" is to kill the next generation of the potentially poor. And never forget: indigent old people are also part of that cycle.)

Trespassing for Dear Life

This tactic of "trespassing for dear life" has now begun to divide the Christian community. It has already divided Christian leaders. This division appears to cut across denominational and even ideological lines. Christian leaders are being forced to take a position, pro or con, with regard to the legitimacy of this physical interposition. Like Congress, they prefer to avoid taking sides, but the pressures can no longer be avoided easily, at least for Reubenites.

There are two signs in front of abortion clinics:

"No Trespassing"
"Thou Shalt Not Kill"

The "No Trespassing" sign is symbolically stuck into the grass. The "Thou Shalt Not Kill" sign is literally being carried (or ought to be literally carried) by an anti-abortion picketer.

The picketers have now begun to realize that they face a major moral decision: either ignore the implicit "No Trespassing" sign or ignore the covenantal implications of the "Thou Shalt Not Kill" sign. The fact of the matter is that if Christians continue to obey the abortionists' "No Trespassing" signs, God may no longer honor this humanistic nation's "No Trespassing" sign to Him. He will eventually come in national judgment with a vengeance. This is a basic teaching of biblical covenant theology. (It is conveniently ignored in the pseudo-covenant theology of the critics.)

A small, hard core of dedicated Christians has now decided that they cannot obey both signs at the same time. One of these imperatives must be obeyed, and to obey it, the other imperative must be disobeyed. This has precipitated a crisis.

There is a much larger group of Christians that pretends that there is nothing inherently contradictory about these two signs. There is nothing going on behind closed clinic doors that Christians have a moral imperative and judicial authorization from God to get more directly involved in stopping. They prefer not to think about the two signs. They see the first one and assume that it has the highest authority.

There have been other "No Trespassing" signs in history. Outside of German concentration camps in 1943, for instance. But Christians in Germany honored those signs. They forgot the words of Proverbs:

If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small. If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works? (Proverbs 24:10-12).

The Christian critics of physical confrontation have offered many arguments to prove that non-violent interposition by Christians is always morally, legally, and even theologically wrong. Others have argued that it is not always wrong, but it is wrong today.

The critics freely admit, as one of them proclaimed, "After many years of opposing abortion in America, at the cost of millions of dollars and thousands of lives, nothing has changed." This is understated. It has been at the cost of millions of dollars and **tens of millions of lives**. What is his conclusion? That Christians now need to escalate their confrontations, to keep the pressure on? That a decade and a half of peaceful picketing and political mobilization has "tested the judicial waters," and it is now time for Christians to start swimming upstream in order to avoid going over the falls?

No, indeed; rather, he concludes that Christians should now abandon these direct physical confrontations, since peaceful confrontations have proven useless. He does not conclude that lawful confrontations – as the secular humanist state defines lawful – have been useless, but that all confrontations are either useless or counter-productive.

Prayer and preaching are the only things that can work, we are told. Nice, safe, quiet, invisible, publicly acceptable, legal, unindictable prayer and preaching. But not imprecatory psalms, of course. Not prayers from the pulpit that name local abortionists and call down God's visible wrath on their heads. No, just "Dear Jesus, please make everyone sweet and nice, like they were back in 1972, before *Roe v. Wade*. Amen." No otherwise unemployable pastor is going to get himself fired from his upper-middle-class suburban congregation for praying this sort of prayer!

As if the pro-life movement had not been praying and preaching for a decade.

As if the humanists were not preparing an assault on the church as surely as they did in Russia in 1918 and Germany in 1933.

Theology vs. Practice: Growing Schizophrenia

What is remarkable is that some pastors have the rhetorical ability to preach retreat in the face of personal danger as if it were a direct frontal assault against the enemy. They puff up themselves and their rhetoric, pound the pulpit, shout, and generally whoop themselves into a frenzy, as if they were calling their followers into a war, when in fact they are sounding the bugle for "stand pat for Jesus."

What is even more remarkable is that some of them adopt the language of socially victorious postmillennial covenant theology in order to defend the conclusions of traditional retreatist dispensational premillennialism. This takes considerable intellectual skill, I must admit. It is too bad that such skill could not have been put to a more productive use.

Meanwhile, those who have for years said that they believed in the theology of dispensational premillennialism have now adopted an anti-abortion strategy based on the conclusions of traditional postmillennialism: direct social involvement in terms of a victory-oriented strategy. These people are not kamikaze types; they really believe that Christians can and will win this fight.

The abortion issue is cutting across denominational lines and also across theological lines. Which counts for more: theological consistency or righteous action? Obviously, righteous action counts for more. It is not what people say but what they do that counts most in God's eyes.

But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him (Matthew 21:28-32).

In my view, this sort of schizophrenia cannot be sustained indefinitely. What people do is more fundamental than what people say. "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works" (James 2:18). As time goes on, people will reshape their theologi-

cal opinions in terms of their actions. Their theological schizophrenia will be healed by their adoption of a theology that is more consistent with their actions. A man may insist that he is a covenant theologian, but watch what he does. This will tell you where he is headed. Similarly, a man may claim to be a dispensational premillennialist, but watch what he does. This will tell you where he is headed.

The Quality of the Arguments

What about the content, as distinguished from the rhetoric and theology, of these anti-direct confrontation arguments? Not many of these anti-confrontation arguments need to be taken seriously. Most of them are reworked versions of the old 1938 arguments against any form of Christian social involvement. A few, however, are clothed in more modern terminology – "deep social concern" without one iota of personal risk to the "deeply concerned" pastor. Fewer still are serious objections that really do raise serious questions regarding non-violent anti-abortion activism. But they all say basically the same thing: Christians should never break the civil law as individuals who are acting on their own or in unauthorized small groups.

While no Christian would deny that Ehud lawfully killed Moabite King Eglon on his own, institutionally speaking, most Christians would deny that the office of judge still operates today. I would agree. So, some rationale other than serving as an Old Testament judge must be found to justify non-violent interposition. I have attempted to outline such a defense in *When Justice Is Aborted: Biblical Standards for Non-Violent Resistance* (Fort Worth: Dominion Press, 1989) – a defense based squarely on the biblical covenant model.

I now need to devote space to answering several of the non-covenantal (or imitation covenantal) arguments that have been offered by Christians. I cannot answer all of them. Indeed, it is now the responsibility of the Christian critics of interposition to answer me. I have not tossed out a series of random arguments in my book; I have presented an integrated case based on the biblical covenant model. I am waiting to see something equivalent from anti-confrontational, self-proclaimed covenant theologians – something more persuasive than dot-matrix-printed manifestos. If they remain silent now, then they are admitting that they have no case theologically. To admit this is also to admit that their arguments were designed from the beginning to defend their own personal inaction and the inaction of their churches rather than the product of careful theological investigation.

Too many naive Christians have been persuaded by these sheepfold manifestos with the hidden agendas. They have been bullied theologically into inaction and confusion. Meanwhile, unborn babies are being murdered. It is time for the authors of these manifestos either to answer my book or else reverse or drastically modify their stated position publicly. I think they will do their best to avoid taking any of these steps. To which I respond, in advance: "Theological silence from this point on is not golden; it is yellow."

What the reader must understand is that I am taking every example from published statements from pastors or church officers. I am not making up any of this. These are real arguments – real stupid arguments – offered by real men who expect us to take them real seriously.

How seriously should you take these arguments? Decide for yourself. How seriously should you take the people who offered them? Decide for yourself. As you read these objections to Operation Rescue, you need to ask yourself these two questions: 1) If the arguments are truly preposterous, does the manifesto writer have a hidden agenda? 2) What is this hidden agenda?

Abortion Is Not Compulsory

Roe v. Wade is unlike commands by civil rulers requiring citizens to perform evil acts. It does not require that anyone abort her baby.

This is the most imbecilic argument of them all. To see just how ridiculous this argument really is, substitute the word "murder" for "abort." We get the following piece of moral and judicial nonsense: "A law legalizing murder does not require a citizen to murder anyone." Does this make the legalization of murder legitimate? Is a law that legalizes murder anything but perverse? So, what should we call such an argument? Thoughtful?

A civil law does not have to command people to do something evil in order for the law to be evil. Neither the Sanhedrin nor Caesar's representatives commanded the apostles to preach anything evil. They just forbade them from preaching what is true and what is required by God that all Christians preach. So the apostles disobeyed the civil and religious authorities. They knew it was an evil law. They knew that God did not want them to obey it.

Civil laws are almost always framed negatively. They forbid evil acts. They establish punishments for people who commit evil acts. This is the biblical standard for civil law. A mark of the coming of satanic law is when the state starts passing laws that force people to do "good" things. The state has then become messianic, a savior state. Seldom in our day does an evil law bear this mark of Satan: that it commands people to do evil things. **Almost always an evil civil law legalizes something which is evil in itself.** Sometimes an evil law will forbid what is righteous. Rarely will it actually command people to do something immoral.

The abortion laws authorize something evil: murder. Local trespassing laws are now being used to prohibit something righteous: saving judicially innocent lives. The fact that there is no Federal law compelling mothers to abort their children is utterly irrelevant to anything except the hope of confrontation-avoiding Christians that some gullible Christian will take them seriously. Yet Christian authors and pastors offer such an argument as if it were serious. A Christian should suspect the motives of anyone who would deliberately distort reality this badly. I suggest that the critic has a hidden agenda. Nobody comes to conclusions this preposterous without a hidden agenda.

"Pro-Choice" Ethics in "Free Will" Language

*Does the civil disobedience advocated by Operation Rescue fit the biblical exception [to the general rule against disobeying civil magistrates]? We believe the answer to this question is NO, because: . . . (2) **Roe vs. Wade** (the law of the land) neither requires abortions nor prohibits them, but makes them permissible with certain restrictions. (3) The women who choose to have an abortion are free moral agents responsible before Almighty God for their actions, including the exercise of the rights of their innocent, unborn child.*

So say the deacons of one giant Southern Baptist church. I have already considered the argument that *Roe v. Wade* is not really morally evil because it does not actually compel abortions. Let us go to reason #3 in the critics' list. Change the word "abortion" to "murder," and allow the child to be out of the womb for five seconds. We get this bit of ethical wisdom: "The women who choose to murder their newborn children are free moral agents responsible before Almighty God for their actions, including the exercise of the rights of their innocent, newborn child." Are you in agreement?

No? Then why should you take seriously the moral perspective first version? Why should God take it seriously?

What is the difference between murdering an infant who

is five seconds out of the womb and murdering an infant five hours earlier? Or five days? Or five weeks? I will tell you what the difference is: **safe pulpits.** For now.

Let us consider the argument based on the woman's "free moral agent" thesis. This is a real sleight-of-hand (tongue?) argument. The deacons have imported the idea of "pro-choice" abortionists into the church by changing the phrase to "free moral agent." This is one more example of how Christians baptize the language and ideas of secular humanism.

Is a murderer an equally "free moral agent"? This church's deacons implicitly say so. Is "free moral agency" under God a license from God to escape the God-ordained civil sanction of public execution for murder (Gen. 9:5)? The U.S. Supreme court has eliminated this sanction, or any sanction, and this diaconate has now baptized the Court's decision. They are saying, in principle, that the U.S. Supreme Court is the highest court in America; God's Supreme Court gains jurisdiction only after we die.

Was Pharaoh's court the highest court in Egypt?

I would also ask this: Is it lawful for Christians in Communist China to resist their civil magistrates today, since abortion is compulsory there after the first child? Would these deacons say that it is immoral for Western Christians to smuggle Bibles into Red China, as well as tracts showing the Chinese ways to resist this evil compulsory abortion law?

Are Christians so downright blind today that they cannot see what will come next if *Roe v. Wade* isn't overturned? Will the civil magistrates have to drag our wives and daughters to the compulsory abortion mills before these shepherds figure out that *Roe v. Wade* is in fact only stage one in the humanists' program of legalized euthanasia? In Holland, mercy killings have now been legalized; first abortion was legalized, then the murder of the aged. But these shepherds still have not caught on.

In 1925, the humanists said that all they wanted to do was to get Darwinian evolution taught in the public schools alongside the creation story. "That's all we're asking. We promise. Trust us!" Christians did, too. Surprise!

Bait and Switch

Armed resistance by Christians is illegitimate except when a lesser magistrate authorizes it. By what authority do these anti-abortion interposers operate?

Two different issues are being raised. The first is armed interposition. The second is non-violent interposition. The two are not the same. It is biblically illegitimate to require members of the second group (non-violent resisters) to be bound by the biblical laws governing the first group (armed revolutionaries). To argue that they are so bound is deliberately to mix separate legal categories.

If the physical interposers who block the doorway of an abortion clinic remain peaceful, they are not required by God to seek authorization by any civil magistrate. Did the apostles seek the authorization of the "lesser magistrate" when they entered the Temple and synagogues and preached what the Jewish priests and Roman rulers had forbidden? Obviously not. They necessarily broke rebellious man's unrighteous laws when they obeyed God's law. They suffered the subsequent beatings, but they continued to disobey the unrighteous laws. They had been instructed by Jesus Christ to remain in Jerusalem (Acts 1:4). Jerusalem was to be given one more generation to repent, and the apostles were not dissuaded from this assignment. It overrode all questions of state-authorized preaching.

I am not talking about armed resistance with lethal weapons. The "armed resistance" I am talking about here is putting your arms over your head while an abortion-protecting

policeman is beating you with a club.

What I am arguing here is that critics who mix the two categories of interposition have a hidden agenda. They did not come to this conclusion on the basis of evidence in the biblical texts.

Biblical Morality Is Not for Pagan Societies

Proverbs 24:11 applies only to rulers, and only in Christian nations, not to individual Christians in non-Christian nations.

Consider the context of Proverbs 24:11. The setting is that of a moral coward who refuses to help the defenseless. "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small. If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?" (Proverbs 24:10-12).

I can well understand why any Christian who reads these verses and who knows what is going on behind the closed doors of an abortion clinic should feel a sense of shame. I know I do. But at least I am not offering this kind of intellectual defense of my own shameful inaction:

The proverbs are for life in the covenant community. The Bible is not a book of moralisms that can be applied everywhere and anytime in total disregard for their . . . covenantal and redemptive context in Christ. These proverbs do not work outside of Christ. Their primary concern is the covenant (Christian) community.

Well, then, what about the Proverbs' "secondary" concern? Don't they count for something? Dead silence. (Dead religion. Faith without works is dead.)

The Queen of Sheba came to visit Solomon and was impressed. "And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the Queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon" (I Kings 10:10). Why? Because of his wisdom.

What about the evangelism aspect of Deuteronomy 4:5-8?

Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?

The fact that biblical law applies to a biblical covenantal social context is precisely why biblical law is applicable to pagan societies. They, too, are required by God to covenant with Him and restructure their institutions and laws accordingly.

What the critic who wrote these words about the inapplicability of the Book of Proverbs to pagan societies is trying to do is to deflect our eyes from the judicial authority of the whole Bible over all Christians, all mankind, in all settings, throughout all of history. **This critic is an anti-nomian who has concealed his arguments in the language of covenant theology.**

To say that the Book of Proverbs is only applicable in a so-called "covenantal context" of a covenantally re-

deemed civilization is another way of saying that the Book of Proverbs has been judicially irrelevant throughout most of history and in almost all areas on earth. When has such a covenantal context existed in history? Not very often. Does this mean that the entire Book of Proverbs has no legal standing in God's eyes until a society becomes formally covenanted to God? That it **should** have no legal standing in Christians' eyes before their society becomes formally covenanted to God? This is exactly what the critic is saying.

Let us recognize this argument for what it is: **the standard liberal theological line**. Baptized, of course. It is the Bible-thumping fundamentalist's version of the old liberal pitch: "The laws of the primitive Hebrews were applicable only in the context of an agricultural community, etc, etc." Christians have been hit with this moral relativism for over a hundred years. This is what such an interpretation of the Bible is: **moral relativism**, pure and simple. **This is humanistic antinomianism wrapped in covenantal swaddling clothes**. This is the language of a person who has, in the words of Proverbs 24:10, fainted in the day of adversity, and whose strength is small.

Enforcing Righteous Law Is Irrelevant

Before abortion will stop, hearts must be changed from rebellion against God to love for God through faith in Christ. . . . Our ultimate goal is not a constitutional amendment, which will change nothing.

Really? Then why did no nation legalize abortion until after World War II? Were they all Christian nations before World War II?

If we have to wait until almost all people in the U.S. are converted to saving faith in Jesus Christ before we can stop abortion in America, then only the postmillennialist can have any confidence that legalized abortion will ever be stopped, and only then during the millennium. Everyone else should give up the fight, this sheepfold theologian is telling us. There is no earthly hope. Abortion will not be stopped this side of the millennium.

This is just one more excuse for sitting safely inside the walls of your local church, or handing out tracts on the Bill of Rights-protected sidewalk. It is an excuse supported by one of the flimsiest arguments imaginable, namely, that passing a law changes nothing.

Let us substitute the words "selling cocaine to minors" for the word "abortion." Here is what we get: "Before the sale of cocaine to minors will stop, hearts must be changed from rebellion against God to love for God through faith in Christ. . . . Our ultimate goal is not a constitutional amendment, which will change nothing."

Or how about child pornography? "Before the sale of child pornography will stop, hearts must be changed from rebellion against God to love for God through faith in Christ. . . . Our ultimate goal is not a constitutional amendment, which will change nothing."

A constitutional amendment changes nothing? The civil law changes nothing? Well, the enforcement of Federal laws surely changed segregation in the South, and changed it within a single decade, 1960-70. What kind of theology teaches that civil law changes nothing? Sheepfold theology.

I will tell you what righteous civil law changes: **evil public acts**. This is all that civil law is supposed to change. It does not save men's souls; it is intended to change men's public behavior.

Those who tell us that laws change nothing are taking up the old liberal line: "You can't pass laws against pornography. They won't change anything." How about this one? "Don't bother to pass a law against prostitution; it

won't change anything." Or how about this one: "It does no good to pass laws against selling cocaine to children in exchange for homosexual favors. That won't change anything."

Lawfully execute a dozen abortionist physicians, and it will change plenty. Make them legally liable to the point of personal bankruptcy if their operations permanently injure a woman, and you will see lots of change. Very rapid change.¹

Men do not need to be converted to Christ in order for them to change their outward ways. Nineveh was not converted to the God of the Bible by Jonah's preaching. Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria, later invaded Israel and carried the Israelites away into pagan captivity. Nineveh remained the capital of a covenant-breaking empire. But almost overnight, in response to Jonah's message, Nineveh changed its outward behavior, and in so doing, avoided the promised external judgment of God that Jonah had predicted. (And when the judgment did not come, Jonah was depressed.)

This is what the anti-abortionist protesters are trying to do: **avoid the external, national judgment of God.** But the pre-whale Jonahs of our day are telling them to go to Tarshish instead. Tarshish is so much less controversial. Tarshish is so much safer.

Until you move out to sea, and the storm starts.

"Living the Gospel" in Temporary Safety

Only the preaching and teaching and living of the gospel of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit is able to awaken an apostate church repentance and faith.

This is exactly what the anti-abortion activists say. **Living the gospel of Christ means doing what you can do effectively that may save judicially innocent lives.** But for our "deeply concerned" antinomian critic, living for the gospel apparently means sitting safely in the sanctuary and praying prayers in private. And running for political office, of course.

Where are the imprecatory psalms in all this? Where are preachers who are willing to stand before their congregations on Sunday morning, praying down the visible curses of God on named abortionists, named civil magistrates, and all U. S. Supreme Court justices who voted for *Roe v. Wade*? Where is Psalm 83 in their churches' liturgies? When I at last locate some "safety first" critic of non-violent confrontation who is at least involved in weekly picketing and praying public imprecatory psalms as part of his church's weekly worship service, I will be more inclined to take his arguments seriously. Until then, I prefer to reject these arguments as self-justifying pious gush.

The Invisible Gospel

Preaching the gospel is sufficient to change all things. It does no good to look for physical solutions, such things as demonstrations or planned civil rebellion. Preaching is sufficient.

To which I answer, with James: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwith-

standing ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works" (James 2:14-18).

So, "It does no good to look for physical solutions, such things as demonstrations or planned civil rebellion. Preaching is sufficient." This is what I call spiritualizing away the Scriptures. This is a form of fundamentalist mysticism (what philosophers used to call neo-Platonism). It is a withdrawal from the hard choices and dangerous commitments of life. But most of all, it is a denial of the Old Testament and the Epistle of James. It is a denial of God's real-world covenant, yet all in the name of faithful service to God.

Speak Softly and Carry No Stick

Then, when Moses entered Egypt again, forty years later, he was armed only with the powerful word of Jehovah. And that was all he needed to liberate his people from bondage.

I remember something about a rod that turned into a serpent and ate the serpents of Pharaoh's magicians. I also recall something about Moses touching the Nile River with this rod and turning the Nile to blood. There was something about dust into lice, too, and day into darkness, and several other unpleasant events.

Either the critic wants us to remain content by speaking words of visible impotence - no lice, no frogs, no fiery hail from heaven - or else he wants us to wait for God to turn us into "heap big medicine men." It does not matter which, just so long as we avoid trouble with the civil magistrate.

What the non-violent interposers want us to do is to pray, preach, hand out tracts, and block doorways. The critic forgets that we can pray with our eyes open. He forgets that we can pray while our heads are being clubbed, and while we are being hauled off to the local jail. We can also pray when we insist on a jury trial. We can pray while we are writing checks - yes, even non-tax-deductible checks - to the hard-pressed families of those men who have been put in jail or prison for their public testimony.

But not the critic. What he wants is prayer in the solitude of his prayer closet. There are no lawsuits in prayer closets. It is nice and safe there. For now.

Let the Other Congregations Repent First

The church must repent first, if America is to be saved from divine judgment, and if America is going to stop killing babies.

Of course "the church" must repent. (When a pastor says "the church," he really means the church across the street that just persuaded three families to leave his church and transfer their membership. A "dangerously radical church" is the church across town whose stand against abortion recently persuaded his church's only tithing millionaire to transfer.) Judgment surely begins at the house of the Lord. "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:17).

Question: What is a tactic of non-violent, anti-abortion, bodily interposition, if not the first stage of the church's repentance? Must repentance forever be confined strictly to the heart? Must it be forever trapped inside of the local church's four walls? Is it limited to favorable write-ups in the society column of the local newspaper rather than critical editorials and front page headlines? Isn't repentance supposed to be a **public** turning away from sin?

And isn't tactically unnecessary cowardice in the face

1. While it is true that from a strictly biblical standpoint, the mother is herself a murderer, the primary goal is to stop the abortions, not seek judicial vengeance. As Christian values progressively dominate a society, legislators can steadily escalate the civil sanctions against abortion. For now, however, a more appropriate tactic than civil prosecution of these mothers - which will not be sustained in court - is to use injured mothers to put the abortionists out of business. If we do not begin to save the lives of the physicians' targeted victims, God may not give this nation sufficient time for Christians to change its legal structure by political mobilization.

of legalized murder a sin to be repented of publicly?

God's national covenant works differently from the way this critic thinks. If America is going to gain enough time to repent, Christians had better persuade the Supreme Court to reverse *Roe v. Wade*, or Congress to remove the Court's jurisdiction over abortion (for which there is Constitutional precedent: *Ex parte McCardle*, 1868).

The Civil Magistrate Is Never To Be Resisted

It is my contention that when Jesus told His disciple to put up his sword (Matthew 26:47-56), that He was not simply forbidding the use of force or violence, but that He was telling him not to resist the civil magistrate at all!

So much for this entire book and every Bible passage cited. So much for the apostles' refusing to cease preaching. So much for the early church's resistance to the Roman Empire. So much for the Protestant Reformation. And most of all, so much for millions of murdered babies yet to come. And go.

The Sheriff Will Not Be Our Friend

Operation Rescue will make the sheriff the enemy of our pro-life efforts. He is not our enemy, unless he refuses to enforce the law of God.

Here is double-speak for Christians. Orwell named it well. "Truth is Falsehood." "Freedom is Tyranny." "The Sheriff is Our Friend When He Is Our Enemy."

Follow the logic of this endless-loop cassette: "The sheriffs of this land without exception are refusing to enforce the law of God regarding murder. They are therefore our enemies. But Operation Rescue is the real culprit. It is making the sheriffs our enemies. They are not our enemies, except when they refuse to enforce the law of God. The sheriffs of this land. . . . Round and round it goes. It is designed to make Christians dizzy. Christians who are dizzy will sit tight, right where they are, culturally impotent."

Think back to Birmingham, Alabama. The year is 1963. Blacks are marching in the streets to get their Constitutionally guaranteed rights enforced by law. They want to be allowed to vote.

Do you remember the photograph that encapsulated that historic confrontation? I do. It was photo of the police dogs of Birmingham being turned loose on black protesters. That one photograph torpedoed the South's Bad Old Cause. **Click.**

But any use of the media to promote the pro-life cause is bad, we are told. It is unbiblical. "We must look for no short-cuts, no new strategies or tactics. We must not allow our resources and energies to be drained away by exciting and dramatic methods to stop abortion. . . ."

And again: "Beware of being pressured by the emphasis that civil rebellion generates 'media coverage' and increases social tension and upheaval so as to bring the abortion question into the public awareness." Furthermore, "that is Marxist and Hegelian tactics."

To which I answer: **Click.**

The name of the sheriff who ran the Birmingham operation will live in infamy, for his name was "media perfector": **Bull Connor.**

Now, let us restructure our critic's assertion. It is 1963 in Alabama. We are assured by the pastor of Laodicea Covenant Church that "Public protests will make Sheriff Connor the enemy of our civil rights efforts. He is not our enemy, unless he refuses to enforce the law of God."

I get tired of hearing such nonsense, offered in the name of covenant theology. So, let us turn to a decidedly non-covenant theologian, from the very same city as our supposed experts on the covenant: Atlanta.

Murder Is Wrong, Except When Convenient

We believe that abortion is wrong in cases other than where the physical life or mental well-being of the mother is at stake.

Wow! What a moral wall of resistance against evil!

As always, we need to alter this pastor's words only slightly. The child is now five seconds out of the womb. Change "abortion" to "infanticide." We discover this "break-through principle" of biblical ethics: "We believe that infanticide is wrong in cases other than where the physical life or mental well-being of the mother is at stake."

Now the child is five years old. "We believe that murdering young children is wrong in cases other than where the physical life or mental well-being of the mother is at stake."

Now the former child is 80 years old and infirm. You know what is coming: "We believe that euthanasia for the terminally ill is wrong in cases other than where the financial solvency of the Medicare program is at stake." But Pastor X cannot see that this is surely coming. Maybe because he is not yet 70.

This man prides himself on having been a white pastor in the civil rights marches of the early 1960's. He did the right thing back then. His adopted cause was just. But was the legal right of blacks to vote in 1963 of greater moral and eternal importance than the legal right of babies to be born today?

I can almost hear Bull Connor now: "We believe that racial discrimination is wrong in cases other than where Southern white supremacy is at stake."

A quarter century ago, Pastor X marched illegally in the streets in Alabama, braving billy clubs, all for the sake of black voter registration. But now what? Now that he has a huge church, white hair, and a national television ministry, what is his moral stand? "I answer that we are providing action rather than marching in reaction. . . . We provide programs for unwed mothers. . . . And we do it on our grounds, not illegally in the streets. For this we do not apologize."

I am not asking him to apologize. I am simply asking him to stop writing his self-justifying letters to the *Atlanta Constitution* - letters critical of Operation Rescue.

May God protect each of us from the morally fatal lure of hoped-for respectability in the eyes of murderers and their moral accomplices in the pews. May God also protect us from the false dilemma of "either/or," where we are asked to choose between providing homes for unwed mothers and refusing to challenge legalized murder in the doorways and streets of our local towns and cities.

Where Will It All End?

Where does civil disobedience stop?

Where does moral cowardice stop? Where does full-time Christian blindness to humanism's long-term program of legalized murder stop? In the Gulag Archipelago? In the gas chambers? Or in Atlanta? I prefer to see Christian moral cowardice and judicial blindness stopped in Atlanta. I can see where we are headed if they persist.

We Must Honor God's Word

We must let God's word speak the truth to us about this matter of civil disobedience.

Amen! What do you honestly think God's Word teaches? And having made up your mind, "be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22).

A Letter to a "Concerned" Critic

Perhaps some of these critics are sincere people. They want to lead other Christians in the paths of righteousness. They have gone into print against non-violent protesters, so they obviously think they have the right to lead others in this matter.

On the other hand, maybe they are merely opposed to illegal public confrontation and not just providing self-justification for their own lack of commitment.

Here is a good test. If you are being asked to believe a line of argumentation anything like the arguments that I have covered in this appendix, you need to get some idea of the pastor's own commitment to the anti-abortion cause apart from the question of civil disobedience. You need to write him a letter. It should go something like this:

Pastor Reuben Lamb
Safety First Christian Church
Meroz, Georgia

Dear Pastor Lamb:

I have read with interest your criticisms of the Operation Rescue movement. Because you "went public" on this issue, I believe I have the right to ask you about several related details. I would like to get a few questions answered before I make up my mind about the nature and motivation of your criticisms.

First, on average over the past year, how many hours per week did you personally spend in anti-abortion picket lines or in counselling pregnant unwed mothers?

Second, what percentage of your local church's income was designated to the support of various anti-abortion protests or programs?

Third, How many times during the last twelve months have you publicly prayed an imprecatory psalm or its equivalent during your church's morning worship service? What are the names of the local abortionists and civil magistrates whom you named publicly in these prayers?

Fourth, have any members of your local congregation had abortions during your pastorate? If any, then of those who did not publicly repent in front of the congregation, how many were excommunicated?

Fifth, does your church have a policy of officially encouraging the adoption of children born to unmarried mothers? Could you send me details of your program?

I realize that not many pastors and churches do many of these things, but not many pastors "go public" with criticisms of Operation Rescue, either.

Very truly yours,

If you do not get a frank, non-hostile response, you know that you are dealing with a wolf in sheep's clothing. Or a sheep in battle fatigues.

Conclusion

I am reminded of General Patton's speech at the beginning of the movie, "Patton." He announced to his troops that someday, "your grandchildren will ask you what you did in the great World War II, and you won't have to have to say, 'I shoveled [] in Louisiana.'"

We have a lot of "concerned" pastors these days who are content to cling to their shovels. They call this biblical trench warfare. And when they start shoveling, it really flies.

As a person committed to covenant theology, I am ap-

palled at the intellectually lightweight and Scripturally bankrupt sheepfold manifestos that I have seen so far. The ones offered in the name of God's covenant are the greatest embarrassment to me. Their arguments do not differ significantly from the manifestos that have poured out of "Fundamentalists for Pro-Life, Sort Of" pastors.

The intellectual bankruptcy of some of the published criticisms of Operation Rescue does not automatically legitimize Operation Rescue. We should not be lured into the mistake of getting on a controversial bandwagon just because those who say we should stay home are not intellectually or theologically capable of defending their negative position.

I have discussed Operation Rescue as a real-world example of non-violent Christian resistance. I see nothing wrong with what they have done, as of late 1988. I have serious reservations about where the group may be in a few years, or where its radical spin-offs may be. But in a time of social, moral, political, and medical turmoil, as the 1990's will almost certainly be, it is impossible to be sure where any group will be.

What we need from Operation Rescue is an official statement of tactical and strategic faith. We need a statement that under no circumstances will Operation Rescue or any of its official representatives call for armed resistance to civil authority without public support from a lesser magistrate. We need a statement that violence will not be initiated by Operation Rescue groups against the bodies of private citizens, except for unarmed physical interposition: separating murderous physicians from their clients and targeted unborn victims. We need also a statement that the deliberate destruction of the actual tools used by licensed murderers in their crimes will endanger only the property and not any person.

Getting arrested is a minimal commitment. Paying a fine is a minimal commitment. Insisting on a jury trial and then going through with it is a major commitment. Doing it again in another city the next year is even more of a commitment. We need people who will make this commitment. Tens of thousands of them. When Operation Rescue recruits them, legalized abortion will stop in the United States. With or without a postmillennial revival.

It is not necessarily immoral or inherently cowardly to refuse to get involved in protests like these. People are told by God to count the costs. There may be more cost-effective ways of dealing with abortion. For example, Charles Stanley's First Baptist Church in Atlanta is supporting a legal effort by the Atlanta organization, Family Concerns, Inc., to bring malpractice suits against abortion clinics. The churches and physicians working with Dr. Stanley and Family Concerns, Inc. are actively seeking the names of abortion clinic victims. This strategy is excellent. If successful, it will raise malpractice insurance premiums to such a level that the state-licensed murderers will have to go into full-time healing in order to make a decent living. I have donated money to help support this worthy effort.

Nevertheless, if it is not abortion, it will be the licensing of Christian schools, or home schools, or some other intolerable evil. Christianity is under attack. There is a war on. It is time for the Reubenites to turn off their word processors, go fishing with Dan, and leave those of us in God's army to fight the Amalekites without having to pull Israelite arrows out of our backs.

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