

# **TRESPASSING FOR DEAR LIFE**

What About Operation Rescue?

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But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, Saying, What shall we do to these men? For that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard (Acts 4:15-20).

Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow. Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people. Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned. And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:24-29).

## A MORAL DILEMMA FACING CHRISTIANS

Let me offer you a series of scenarios. All of them are drawn from church history. Christians in the real world had to make decisions in the light of their faith. What decisions would you have made? What decisions *should* you have made?

The year is 150 A.D. You live in the city of Rome. Roman civil law says that the father is the supreme ruler in his family. He has the legal right to abandon unwanted infants that are born in his household. The common practice is for these infants to be abandoned outside the gates of the city. It has become the practice of Christians to pick up these abandoned babies and take them home to rear as their own children. The Roman civil authorities have declared this practice illegal. You are walking home and find one of these babies. Should you obey the civil law and ignore the child? Or should you break the law by taking it home?

The year is 298. Emperor Diocletian's persecution of the church is in full force. The civil authorities are rounding up all copies of the Bible from Christian churches. You are the pastor of a local church. The authorities learn of this and come to your home, demanding that you turn over any copy of the New Testament which you in fact do possess. You have copies of several epistles and two of the gospels hidden in your home. They ask you if you own such books. Should you tell them the truth?

Christians for centuries disobeyed these laws. In the year 313, Emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Milan, declaring religious toleration for Christianity.

2      *Trespassing for Dear Life: What About Operation Rescue?*

The year is 1941. You are a Christian living in German-occupied Holland. You have been approached by a Jewish family seeking refuge from the Nazis. It is illegal to hide Jews, but they ask you to hide them. Should you tell them to look for refuge elsewhere, since you do not want to break the law?

The year is 1944. The Nazis have been informed that all Christians are required by God to tell the truth no matter what the circumstances. They have believed this story. So, they are going from door to door, asking every known church member if he knows where any Jews are being hid by others. You, a faithful Christian, know that your non-Christian neighbor is illegally hiding a Jew in the attic. German soldiers come to your door and ask you point blank: "Do you know if anyone in this neighborhood is hiding Jews?" If you answer no, the soldiers will probably leave, knowing that you are unlikely to lie. If you tell them yes, you will be asked where the Jews are. If you say nothing, they will know you know. They will arrest you for withholding evidence, and they will also conduct a detailed search of the neighborhood. Should you lie, tell them the truth, or remain silent?

Christians in Holland disobeyed the Nazis throughout World War II. On April 30, 1945, Adolph Hitler committed suicide in Berlin.

It is Thursday, December 1, 1955. You live in the city of Montgomery, Alabama. You are a black woman coming home from a hard day's work. You are sitting on a bus in the front section, which is legal as long as no white person is required by crowding to sit next to you. By city law and local bus line rules, blacks are not allowed to sit parallel to a white. The bus fills up. A white man is standing at the front of the bus because there are no more seats available. The bus driver tells you to get up and move to the back of the bus; a white person needs the seat. You are required to get up and let him sit there. You will have to stand at the back of the bus. But you have paid your fare, and your local taxes support the municipal bus line. Should you stand up and move to the back of the bus?

It is Saturday, December 4. You are a black person living in Montgomery. You learn that a lady named Rosa Parks was arrested

the day before yesterday for refusing to give up her seat and stand in the back of the bus. You hear that blacks are organizing a boycott of the local bus company until the seating rule is abolished. They are saying, "If we can't sit wherever we want to, on a first-come, first-seat basis, we won't spend our money to ride the bus. We should be treated just like any other passengers." The boycott will begin on Monday morning. Should you join the boycott and refuse to ride the bus?

It is Monday, December 12. The leaders of the boycott are mainly ministers. The boycott is working. The buses are 75% empty. But the local authorities have discovered an obscure state law that makes it illegal to run a boycott against any state or municipal service. You are a black person who owns an automobile. Many blacks have joined the boycott and are seeking alternative ways to get to work in the morning and back home at the end of the day. You are asked by a representative of the boycotting group to drive people to work and back home in the evening. The city has said this is illegal, since there is a city ordinance requiring a minimum fee for all "taxi" service, and you will be regarded as a taxi service. Should you agree to drive people anyway?

Rosa Parks and the blacks of Montgomery defied the law. On December 17, 1956, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear a protest by the City of Montgomery against a Federal appellate court's ruling that the segregated seating was illegal. Bus segregation ended in Montgomery on December 21, 1956, a little over a year after Mrs. Parks sat tight and broke the law.

### **Operation Rescue**

The year is this year. You know that a local abortion clinic is killing unborn babies. You know that the civil government has authorized such murder if it is performed by a monopolistic, state-licensed physician. Picketing has been tried; it has not stopped the murdering from going on. Christians have decided that if a large number of them block the doorway to the clinic, it will make it more difficult for mothers to murder their infants. It will lead to financial losses for the clinic. It also could become a tremendous

media event in which the absolute brutality of abortion is reflected in the brutality of the local police against protesters. But to block the doorway is an invasion of the clinic's private property. The protests have begun, and the police have started arresting those who block the doorway. Should you approve of the protest or not? If you approve, should you join the protest or not? If you suspect that the police will escalate their physical violence against protesters, should you join the protest? If you get arrested, should you later insist on a jury trial or meekly forfeit the bail you posted in order to be released?

If Christians refuse to escalate their protests against state-legalized (but not God-legalized) abortion, will this nation's abortion laws ever be changed?

Operation Rescue is non-violent. There is a question in many Christians' minds: Is Operation Rescue's program officially and in principle non-violent? This is a legitimate question, one which Operation Rescue's leaders will have to deal with publicly. But on the assumption that the non-violent protests that we have seen so far are representative of the organization's philosophy—and they should be considered innocent until proven guilty in this regard—is there anything biblically wrong with what their followers have done so far (as of the fall of 1988)?

Some Christians may be tempted to answer: "Yes, there is something biblically wrong with Operation Rescue. It has broken the civil law. It has broken trespass laws. Therefore, its tactics are immoral and should be condemned by all right-thinking people, Christians and non-Christians alike."

It is this assumption—that it is always immoral for Christians to break a civil law—that this book is designed to challenge.

### **What If a Civil Law Is Biblically Immoral?**

The civil government could declare a particular act illegal which in God's eyes is legal or moral. The civil government could also declare something legal which in God's eyes is illegal or immoral. How can those under the authority of the specific civil government in question persuade the civil authorities to bring the law into harmony with God's law?



The first step is for Christians to accept the fact that *there really is such a thing as God's law*. If Christians deny this, then their protests are in vain. They must first seek explicitly biblical answers to the question: "By what judicial and moral standard?"<sup>1</sup>

Second, Christians must decide which doctrines and practices are most important in God's hierarchy of values and requirements. The color of the drapes is less important than the purity of doctrine. Most Christians say that they believe this. But what about *applied doctrine*? What about a question like abortion? What if a church preaches sound doctrine but attempts to stay neutral about abortion? There is no neutrality in God's world, of course, but there is lots of attempted neutrality. (There surely also is a great deal of indifference.) Christians must decide which unjust laws to obey and which to disobey, since no one can fight every aspect of civil injustice at one time. We are creatures. No one has sufficient time or resources to fight every possible battle. There must be a division of labor and specialized protests by various Christian groups.

The third step in deciding what must be done to persuade the civil magistrates is a *question of tactics*: either cease obeying the law as a means of establishing a judicial test case or else seek to change the law by political means, and obey a bad law as a matter of public relations until all legal political efforts to abolish it have failed. Both approaches have been used in history. The latter approach is by far the most common, obviously so in non-democratic societies, but even in democratic societies. The English Revolution of 1688 and the American Revolution of 1776 were both fought to establish the right of the people to escape bad rulers and bad laws.

Someone usually must disobey a law if it is ever to be changed. The legitimacy of laws is established or rejected in the courts. If the law has been issued in the name of the sovereignty of the people, then the best way to persuade the legal spokesmen of the people that they have misrepresented the people is for the people to disobey the law.

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1. Greg L. Bahnsen, *By This Standard: The Authority of God's Law Today* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985).

Someone has to begin this process of disobedience. When he does, it will not be clear to everyone that "the people" are about to "speak." Only time will tell.

### Conclusion

If God says that a law is wrong, then Christians know that eventually—if only at the day of judgment—the law will be changed. But God usually persuades civil magistrates of the immoral nature of their laws long before the day of final judgment. He first destroys their power in history, sometimes by destroying their nation. The Old Testament is filled with examples of this. A Christian who publicly disobeys a law that is condemned by the Bible is taking a major step in delaying the wrath of God on his society. Disobedience to bad laws is therefore an act of patriotism. But it will be criticized as an act of anarchism.

How can Christians distinguish between legislation-defying acts of anarchism and legislation-defying acts of patriotism? Only by going to the Bible to test the spirits of disobedience. Above all, we must understand that *the Bible is a covenantal document*. (For a more detailed discussion of the biblical covenant model and how it relates to non-violent resistance by Christians, see my longer book, *When Justice Is Aborted: Biblical Standards for Non-Violent Resistance*, published by Dominion Press of Ft. Worth, Texas.)

## GOD'S COVENANT LAWSUIT

The prophets of the Old Testament were authorized agents of God. They were His prosecuting attorneys. They brought a covenant lawsuit against the nation. They reminded the people, the nobles, and the king of the covenant that God had made with their forefathers at Sinai. Then they reminded the listeners of the stipulations (laws) of that original covenant. They pointed to the obvious violations of these stipulations in their day. Then they warned everyone of the fact that God, the true king of Israel, would bring His negative sanctions against the nation: war, pestilence and famine. All of these negative sanctions had been spelled out in the original covenant document (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). Finally, the prophets called the nation to repentance, promising the blessings of God—positive sanctions (Deuteronomy 28:1-14)—if the nation did repent. Understand, these sanctions—positive and negative, blessings and cursings—were applied corporately to the whole nation. They were not simply sanctions against personal sins. When the two parts of the nation were sent into captivity, righteous people as well as evil people were taken out of the land.

This office of prophet culminated in the person of Jesus Christ. His cousin John had brought a preliminary covenant lawsuit against Israel. He then baptized Jesus. From that point on, Jesus brought the main covenant lawsuit against Israel. (John was executed when he brought God's personal covenant lawsuit against Herod and his wife.) When Israel refused to repent, God raised up His church. Not only was the church required to bring covenant lawsuit against Israel, it was required to bring the same law-

suit against the whole world. This was why Paul was raised up to go to the Gentiles (Acts 13), and why Peter was sent to the Roman centurion (Acts 10).

What this means is that *the covenant that God made with Israel has now been extended by God to the whole world*. God today calls all men to repentance. All people are now clearly under the ethical terms of the covenant (God's Bible-revealed laws). Thus, it is the task of Christians to warn people of the nature of this covenant—a sovereign God, a hierarchical system of governments, biblical laws, God's sanctions in history and eternity, and God's system of inheritance and disinheritance.<sup>1</sup> In short, Christians are to preach the gospel.

But we are not just to preach it verbally. We are to preach it by our deeds. God requires *word-and-deed evangelism*. One of these visible deeds is our resistance to publicly sanctioned evil. This is as true today as it was during the Old Testament.

### Stages of Biblical Resistance

The Bible reveals numerous cases of lawful, righteous protests against civil authority. They are not all of the same intensity. I present here a series of steps that seem to me to be progressive, depending on time and place. It may be that under different circumstances, several of them might be interchangeable. But this guide at least serves as an introduction to the question of the stages of lawful resistance.

First, there is the case of an individual who knows that a law is wrong, and who protests verbally. He obeys it, but he warns the civil magistrate that it is an immoral law and recommends that it be repealed. Joab did this when David insisted that the people be numbered in a military census, even though there was no battle scheduled (II Samuel 24:3-4). For this sin, God sent a plague on Israel that killed 70,000 people (II Samuel 24:25). (This story

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1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987).

affirms the biblical doctrine of representative hierarchical government. The king sinned, and the people suffered the terrible consequences: physical sanctions. But Joab, who had protested, was spared.)

Second, the protester protests verbally and refuses to obey the order. The protester then voluntarily suffers the punishment. This is what the three young men did when Nebuchadnezzar told them to worship the image or suffer death in the fiery furnace (Daniel 3).

Third, the protester rebels against civil authority, warning the civil ruler of the evil that he is doing, but then leaves the geographical jurisdiction of the civil government. This is what Elijah did when he warned the king about God's coming judgment of drought, and then hid in the city of Zarephath in the nation of Sidon (I Kings 17).

Fourth, the protester refuses to comply with the law. He recognizes that there is no institutional way to protest, and because of his unique position in being able to deflect the evil consequences of the law, he or she adopts the strategy of deception rather than personal emigration. The best examples in the Bible of this approach are the deception of Pharaoh by the Hebrew midwives (Exodus 1) and the deception of Jericho's authorities by Rahab (Joshua 2).

Fifth, the people as a corporate assembly intervene and tell the ruler (executive) that he will not be allowed to bring sanctions in order to enforce a bad law. The people of Israel did this when they refused to allow Saul to execute Jonathan for having eaten some honey during a battle, which Saul had previously prohibited (I Samuel 14:43-46).

Sixth, a God-anointed protester warns the representatives of the people and challenges them to rebel against lawfully constituted authority. This is what Elijah did when he directed the assembled representatives of Israel to kill the 850 priests of Baal and Asherah after God had publicly intervened in history to prove that these priests were false priests (I Kings 18:40).

Seventh, the God-ordained lower official joins with other officials and revolts against unlawful central government after a series

of official protests. This is what Jeroboam did when Rehoboam, Solomon's son, imposed harsh new taxes (or possibly a system of forced labor). Jeroboam created a new nation, the northern kingdom of Israel. "So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day" (I Kings 12:19).

We should also consider the question of lawful resistance against a military invader. Ehud the judge slew King Eglon of Moab through the use of deception (Judges 3:15-26). He then called the nation to a military revolt (Judges 3:27-30). Similarly, Jael deceived the fleeing Canaanitic general Sisera, even though her husband (a higher covenantal authority) had made some sort of peace treaty with Sisera (Judges 4:17). She rammed a peg through his temple until it nailed him to the ground (Judges 4:21)—a graphic symbolic fulfillment of God's promise to crush the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). For this act of successful military aggression and household covenantal rebellion, Deborah praised Jael in her song of victory (Judges 5:24-27).

There is no indication in the Bible that any of these acts was morally or judicially improper, and in most cases, God granted visible positive sanctions as rewards for such action. Anyone who says that resistance and even revolution (rebellion) are not morally and judicially justified in the Bible has to ignore or deny a great deal of Scripture, and also renounce the legitimacy of the English Revolution of 1688 and American Revolution of 1776, as well as renounce the various anti-Nazi national underground resistance efforts during World War II.

Reader, are you ready to do this?

Back in 1971, R. J. Rushdoony wrote a little pamphlet called *Abortion is Murder*, two years before the U.S. Supreme Court handed down the infamous *Roe v. Wade* decision. Few Christians noticed the pamphlet. Two years later, in 1973, Rushdoony's *Institutes of Biblical Law* was published. This book identified the historical background of modern abortion. Abortion is a revival of a moral issue that brought Christians into conflict with ancient pagan Rome. There was no reconciliation possible between Rome and the Church, between the pagan Caesar and Christ. It was only settled when Christians took over the Roman Empire.

In Biblical law, all life is under God and His law. Under Roman law, the parent was the source and lord of life. The father could abort the child, or kill it after birth. The power to abort, and the power to kill, go hand in hand, whether in parental or in state hands. When one is claimed, the other is soon claimed also. To restore abortion as a legal right is to restore judicial or parental murder (p. 186).

### **Conclusion**

Christians must now make up their minds: Are they going to assent to legalized murder or oppose it publicly? Are they going to break the civil law as a means of challenging it as a test case, or are they going to allow humanists to continue to authorize the murder of babies? The U.S. Supreme Court has overturned its own prior rulings at least 150 times. Are Christians ready to give the Court an opportunity to do it again?

## OBEDIENCE TO GOD AND NOT TO MEN

Each person is responsible before God for everything he says and does in his lifetime. Jesus warned us: "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36). Thus, a person's conscience is a lawful authority. The fundamental rule of government is *self-government under God's law*. The primary enforcing agent is the conscience. No other human government possesses the God-given authority or the God-given resources to police every aspect of each person's daily walk before God. Any government that attempts this is inherently tyrannical.

When a person faces God on judgment day, there will be no committee beside him to "take the rap." Only Jesus Christ can do this for a person, as God's lawful authorized authority who died in place of a God-redeemed individual. There will be no one else except Jesus Christ at the throne of judgment who can lawfully intervene and tell God the Judge, "This person was following my orders, and therefore should not be prosecuted."

Therefore, the fundamental *representative* voice of God's authority in each person's life is his own conscience. Because the individual will face God on judgment day, the fundamental form of human government is self-government. This is basic to Christian ethical, social, and legal theory. Any society that attempts to deny this principle of justice is in revolt against God.

This is not to say that a person's conscience is absolutely sovereign. There has been no single, God-authorized human voice of



absolute authority on earth since the ascension of Jesus Christ to the right hand of God. The conscience is a person's primary voice of authority, but a wise person will defer to other God-ordained human authorities. The Bible is clear about this. *There is a division of labor in every area of life, including the proper interpreting of God's law.* The church of Jesus Christ is a body with many members (Romans 12; I Corinthians 12). Paul in Ephesians writes:

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love (Ephesians 4:11-16).

We are told that "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14). Thus, *no person's conscience is autonomous.* (Auto = self; nomos = law.) The conscience is the primary authority under God because any act of rebellion against God by a person's conscience will be held against that person in God's perfect court of justice. It is not the sole authority under God.

Are consciences reliable? We are told by Paul: "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves. Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness . . ." (Romans 2:14-15a). Understand, the law of God is not said to be written on their hearts; only the *work* of the law is written there. It is only regenerate people

who have the law of God itself written on their hearts (Hebrews 8:9-10; 10:16). Nevertheless, the work of the law testifies against all men when they rebel against God's law. They know better. The redeemed person in principle knows best, but the unregenerate at least knows better when he sins.

The human conscience is not perfect in its transmission of God's warnings. Its signals can be ignored by a person for so long that he or she no longer responds. Paul calls this a *seared conscience*: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (I Timothy 4:1-2).

Christians do not take these words literally, of course. We do not believe that a literal hot iron can sear a person's conscience. Paul was using a metaphor. A bleeding wound can be sealed up by applying a hot iron to it, but the nerve endings beneath the skin may be permanently destroyed. The person later may lose all feeling on the seared portion of his flesh. So it is with sin. If false doctrines or evil acts are indulged in, they can sear the conscience. No longer will the individual hear the warning voice of God. Again, this is not a literal voice. The conscience is *representatively* the voice of God, but it is nonetheless conscience, not literally a voice.

### **Self-Government Under Civil Authority**

The ultimate lawful authority to inflict physical and all other sanctions belongs to God. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19b). He delegates this authority to families over young children and to civil governments. Romans 13 makes it clear that an individual is always under some form of civil authority. The civil magistrate is actually called "the minister of God" (verse 4). The minister of civil justice possesses lawful authority to impose physical punishments on those under the state's jurisdiction. Individuals are not to inflict corporal punishment on others, except in the case of parents punishing their minor children, and schoolteachers or other parent-designated authorities who do the same as lawful representatives of the parents.

*Renouncing State Jurisdiction*

The Bible therefore teaches that men are under the lawful authority of one or more civil governments. As in church government, this judicial authority is supposed to be enforced hierarchically, on an appeals-court basis. The civil law is given to men by God through the state in order to establish boundaries of lawful individual and corporate behavior. The biblical legal principle is this: "Whatever is not forbidden is allowed." Like Adam in the garden, who could lawfully eat from any of the trees in the garden except one, so is man allowed by civil law to do anything he wants that is not explicitly prohibited in the Bible or implicitly prohibited by the application of a biblical principle. Civil government, like church government, imposes restraints on evil behavior; its role is to keep men from doing evil acts, not to make men good. It is supposed to impose negative sanctions against evil behavior. *The state is not an agency of personal salvation.* It is not supposed to save men; it is to protect them from the evil acts of other men.

The individual is supposed to possess the God-given legal right to remove himself from the jurisdiction of any civil government that he believes to be immoral. Because civil governments rule over geographical areas, the act of renouncing jurisdiction is normally accomplished through personal emigration. Until World War I, the right of legal emigration out of a nation and almost universal immigration into a nation were honored in Europe and North America. Very few nations required passports.

Because of the difficulty of moving, especially prior to the invention of the steam engine (ships and trains), God has established other means of renouncing jurisdiction. One of these is the right of revolution. This right is lawful only when conducted by lesser magistrates who have been raised up by God to challenge immoral rulers. The Book of Judges deals with this right of revolution by lesser magistrates and national leaders who revolt against foreign invaders who have established long-term rule.

### **Legitimate Deception of Unjust Rulers**

Another of these God-given alternatives to departing physically is the right of civil disobedience. Men refuse to obey unjust laws. The obvious biblical example of this is the revolt of the Hebrew midwives against Pharaoh. They refused to carry out his order to kill all the male babies. They lied to him about the extra-rapid delivery of Hebrew women (Ex. 1:19), a lie so obviously preposterous that only a man blinded by God could have believed it. After all, if the wives were delivered so rapidly, of what possible use could a midwife be? There could be no such thing as a midwife. Then God blessed them in this act of rebellion (Ex. 1:20).

Notice that they did not inquire with any civil magistrate regarding the lawfulness of their acts of defiance. There is no indication that they checked with the elders of Israel. They simply began to resist the murderous plans of the Pharaoh with the only tool available to them: lying. *There was no biblical requirement that they gain formal public support from a lower magistrate, since they were not taking up arms against the state.* They were not violent in any way against lawful authority. They resisted peacefully, so they did not need the approval of any civil magistrate.

Similar acts of civil disobedience—acts of treason, in fact—were committed by Rahab. First, she committed treason by covenanting to the God of Israel through the spies. Ultimately, whenever a Christian covenants with God, he has committed an act of treason against “the powers that be,” unless Christians are these powers. Second, she hid the Hebrew spies. Third, she sent them on their way. Fourth, she remained behind, under the geographical jurisdiction of the city of Jericho, in order to fool the rulers. Fifth, she lied to the Jericho authorities about their whereabouts (Joshua 2). God then blessed her. Her whole family survived the fall of Jericho. In fact, she actually became part of the Davidic line, and her name is mentioned in Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:5).

These very acts of obeying God made them outlaws, if by law we mean the law of the civil governments that they were under.

Because of the nature of the public rebellion of the civil rulers against God, treason against the government was obedience to God.

The Hebrew midwives and Rahab took grave risks. They might have been executed. This risk was inescapable, given the nature of their deception. To have fled would have been either impossible (the midwives in Egypt) or self-defeating (Rahab's subsequent deception of the rulers). This raises a very important point that must be understood very clearly before anyone chooses to involve himself in similar acts of civil disobedience. *These women placed themselves under the threat of external civil sanctions. This was the price of a successful rebellion.* To have avoided these risks, they would have had to flee. Their unwillingness to flee placed them under the rebellious state's sanctions. They might have been executed. But they faced this danger without visible flinching. In fact, their courage must have been part of the success of their plan of civil disobedience. Had they shown fear, their lies might have been detected. Only because they did not show fear did the rulers accept their lies as true.

Another case in the Bible of someone who broke the law of the state through deception was Jehosheba, who saved the life of the infant heir to the throne, Joash. "And when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal. But Jehosheba, the daughter of king Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons which were slain; and they hid him, even him and his nurse, in the bedchamber from Athaliah, so that he was not slain" (II Kings 11:1-2). By whose authority did she do this? By her own, under God. She took the baby to God's house, which served as a sanctuary for him until he came of age. "And he was with her hid in the house of the LORD six years. And Athaliah did reign over the land" (II Kings 11:3). There was no lower civil magistrate involved here. The senior officer of the church took full responsibility for this revolt against civil authority. He surely deceived the civil magistrates.

*Is Lying Always Immoral?*

Isn't lying always immoral? The Bible certainly does not teach that it is. The Bible says that Christians should not lie to each other. "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another" (Ephesians 4:25). But this rule does not always prevail in dealings between civil governments or between governments and their citizens. For example, civil governments certainly believe in the legitimacy of military lying, so they train and send out spies, and they camouflage troops and weapons. Moses sent spies into Canaan before the invasion (Numbers 13). Joshua, who had been one of the spies under Moses, did the same a generation later (Joshua 2).

Are we to say such decisions by civil governments are morally wrong? If so, then why did God allow Moses and Joshua to send out spies to spy out the land of Canaan? In times such as today—days filled with life-and-death crises—Christians had better not be naive about such matters. If Christians are morally required by God to avoid lying to the civil government in all cases, then on what moral basis did Christians in Europe hide Jews in their homes during the terror of the Nazis?

If you have qualms about accepting the idea of self-conscious lying as a legitimate part of civil disobedience, please consider the following passages in the Bible to see how God deliberately lies to unjust civil rulers and false prophets in order to bring them low:

And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee (I Kings 22:20-23).

For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth

up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to inquire of him concerning me; I the LORD will answer him by myself: And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am the LORD. And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the LORD have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. And they shall bear the punishment of their iniquity: the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh unto him (Ezekiel 14:7-10).

The relevant New Testament passage is II Thessalonians 2:11-12: "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Are we to say that we cannot do likewise under any circumstances? Are we supposed to be holier than God? People who try to be holier than God wind up like Satan: initially tyrannical and then impotent.

### **Does Might Make Right?**

God brought negative sanctions in history against Egypt and Jericho. God also brought positive sanctions in history to the midwives and Rahab. This proves that God's civil government (the civil aspect of God's universal kingdom) is alone absolutely sovereign, and earthly civil governments are hierarchically subordinate to God's kingdom rule. The civil government that imposes final sanctions in history and eternity is the absolutely sovereign civil government in history and eternity.

This does not mean that "might makes right." It means that God is right, God is mighty, and the kings of the earth will bow down to him. It was not the task of the midwives or Rahab to attempt to force the kings of their day to bow down to God. They were not required or authorized by God to bring visible negative sanctions against these rebellious rulers. These women were not civil rulers themselves; they had no legal authority to bring nega-

tive physical sanctions against those in office over them. Vengeance was God's, as it is today. But they were required by God to act as law-abiding righteous people by lying to the rulers, confusing them, and thwarting their proclamations. Then God brought the rulers low.

When Paul was brought before the Roman council in Jerusalem, the room was filled with Jewish religious leaders, who were in fact subordinate rulers to Roman civil authority. They had already admitted this in public at the most judicially critical point in Israel's history, the crucifixion of Christ the Messiah: "But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15).

The Jewish leaders were divided between Pharisees, who believed in the resurrection of the dead at judgment day, as the Old Testament taught (Daniel 12:1-3), while the Sadducees, who ruled the temple, rejected this doctrine. So, when Paul testified to the Roman authorities, he told them the truth, the partial truth, and everything but the whole truth. He announced that he was on trial because he was a Pharisee and believed in the resurrection. Yes, he was a Pharisee — by birth. Yes, he believed in the resurrection — first of Jesus Christ, then of Christians, and then the unbelievers (I Corinthians 15). This was hardly orthodox Pharisaical doctrine. But he neglected to mention these "minor" doctrinal qualifications. Immediately, the two Jewish factions began screaming against each other, and the meeting broke up (Acts 23:6-10). Thus, he escaped civil judgment that day.

The moral and legal dilemma arises when there is a conflict among these lawful voices of authority. One or more of these God-authorized voices of lawful authority may issue commands that are in conflict with God's Bible-revealed law. What is the Christian supposed to do?

### Conclusion

We have seen that all covenantal government is hierarchical. Someone or some lawful agency must speak in the name of the god of that society or group. Biblically, men are required by God



to speak only in His name, according to His revelation of Himself in the Bible and in history. Because rulers often refuse to acknowledge that God is above them, they refuse to speak God's name. They become representatives of another god.

This makes decisions far more complex for Christians. Should they obey God or the civil magistrate? They must obey God. But as in all other decisions in life, there are levels of importance in decision-making. Some issues are more important than others. The human conscience needs earthly counsel in sorting out God's *hierarchy of values* and the *hierarchy of assigned responsibilities* that God presents to each person, moment by moment. We cannot fight every evil, right every wrong. We are creatures. We have limits on our lives. Thus, we must seek out our own specialized areas of service to God, which includes our own specialized areas of resistance to rebellious authority. Different people will regard different service as "the first and foremost," which others will not see so clearly. People also learn. They change their minds. Christian activists must be patient with other Christians in these matters, especially regarding timing. We live in a world governed by the principle of the division of intellectual labor. Success in competition often tells us which tactic was best, but only after the fact. Tactical questions and strategic questions in wartime baffle the best of generals, and daily living is surely more complex than mere military conflict. So, patience is basic to successful Christian recruiting and mobilization—in evangelism surely, but also in Christian activism.

When an individual decides what his priorities are, meaning God's priorities in his life, he must act in accordance with his conscience. He must march forward. If a Christian lives in a pagan culture, then his long-term goal should be the undermining of the present order and its replacement with a righteous order. This is the biblical concept of the leaven principle (Matthew 13:33). Evil must be replaced by good. *You cannot beat something with nothing.* You must have a positive program.

We cannot fight every fight, right every wrong, or save every life. We must pick and choose our tactical confrontations in terms

of an overall strategy. We may concentrate our limited resources on one city, one project, or one person. We do this because we believe in the biblical doctrine of representation. We understand the use of symbols. If we can hinder or stop a *representative evil* locally, we thereby give visible warning to our enemies and visible encouragement to our allies.

Choose your allies well. Most important, choose your leaders well. Do your best not to go into public confrontation with your family and church against you, as well as the state. Subordinate yourself to God through His lawful institutions. If your pastor, elders, or deacons are opposed to what you are doing to challenge the state, it is time to start looking for a new church.

## CRITICISMS OF OPERATION RESCUE

Operation Rescue's 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.

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 con-

frontations 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, noncontroversial prayer and preaching. But not imprecatory psalms, of course. Not Psalm 83:

Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison: Which perished at En-dor: they became as dung for the earth. Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna: Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession. O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind. As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm. Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O LORD. Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish: That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth (Psalm 83:9-18).

Surely not Psalm 83! 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.

### **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 seri-

ously. 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 now need to devote space to answering several of the arguments that have been offered by Christians. I cannot answer all of them. Too many naive Christians have been persuaded by these arguments with the hidden agendas. They have been bullied theologically into inaction and confusion. Meanwhile, unborn babies are being murdered.

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 Dressed in Biblical 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 v. 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 of the 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?

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 (Genesis 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.

Question: *Was Pharaoh's court the highest court in Egypt?*<sup>1</sup>

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1. For an answer, see Gary North, *Moses and Pharaoh: Dominion Religion vs. Power Religion* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985).



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 (Acts 4:15-19)? 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 in this book 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.

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

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."

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 to 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; notwithstanding 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.

**"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 "breakthrough 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 Birmingham's Sheriff 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.

### **Conclusion**

The criticisms of Operation Rescue that I have covered in this chapter are without theological foundation. This does not mean that there are no valid criticisms possible. The valid criticisms are of two kinds: strategic and tactical. Under strategic, I include the fundamental question of armed resistance, which I discuss in the Conclusion. Under tactics, I include such matters as counting the cost and timing. Are we sure that there might not be a better way to fight abortion, such as by organizing lawsuits against abortionists that have hurt women? For example, what would a series of successful multi-million dollar judgments against abortionists do to the malpractice insurance premiums of abortionists? But these tactical questions are not fundamental. They are not based on theology.

Christians should not dismiss the program of non-violent resistance that Operation Rescue recommends by appealing to silly arguments. If the critics cannot do better than what they have done so far, then Christians had better reconsider any initial hostility they may have shown to Operation Rescue.

## CONCLUSION

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. When we get these official statements, we can then offer our support.

As a matter of tactics, it would be nice to hear that Operation Rescue has advised all participants of the need to fight this battle

through the courts, and has recommended to everyone who gets arrested that he or she should immediately give name, address, and other pertinent information to the authorities, because he or she intends to demand a jury trial. What this nation needs is about 20,000 jury trials a year litigating this life-and-death issue. Eventually, the U.S. Supreme Court will reverse *Roe v. Wade* on some technicality. If we give the Court 20,000 or so cases a year to choose from, the Court will discover a way out of its dilemma, preferably short of civil war.

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. For more information about Operation Rescue, contact them at

Operation Rescue  
P.O. Box 1180  
Binghamton, NY 13902

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 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.

Abortion Lawsuit Project  
Family Concerns, Inc.  
P.O. Box 550168  
Atlanta, GA 30355

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 Christians to awake from their slumbers and get involved. Any Christian who is not actively part of the solution is part of the problem.

He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad (Luke 11:23)

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth (Revelation 3:15-16).