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Reformation  
& Revival



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## *An Ethical Evaluation of Operation Rescue*

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Charles Wingard

**N**o social evil has captured the attention of American Christians more than abortion. Supreme Court rulings declaring abortion a constitutionally protected right have opened the door for the murder of millions of unborn children.

Opposition to abortion itself has not been a contentious issue in churches which look to the Bible as the only infallible rule of faith and practice. The sixth commandment prohibits murder. Murder is the unjust taking of human life; therefore, abortion is murder. The fight for legal protection for the unborn is a logical carrying out of the duties required of God's people by the sixth commandment.

What has become controversial in orthodox Christian circles is the means Christians have employed to fight abortion and, in particular, the tactics of the antiabortion group Operation Rescue and similar efforts. Few orthodox Christians would oppose exercising all presently available legal means of insuring protection for the unborn child. However, by encouraging the violation of trespass laws, the resisting of arrest, and the giving of false information to civil authorities, Operation Rescue has raised a number of ethical issues which challenge the Christian and his relationship to the fifth commandment's requirement that honor and submission be given to divinely constituted authority.

The purpose of this article is to explore the ethical issues arising from the conduct of Operation Rescue. At the outset it should be noted that we concur with the two primary goals of Operation Rescue—both the saving of individual babies from destruction and the ending of legalized abortion in the United States. These goals are consistent with and demanded by obedience to Scripture. Nevertheless, the means employed by Operation Rescue in pursuit of

these goals, it will be argued, are themselves sinful. Use of them makes participants in rescues transgressors of God's law and brings reproach upon the church of Christ.

Not in question is the sincerity and earnestness of rescuers. Their devotion to the protection of the unborn, evidenced by their willingness to suffer the loss of wealth and freedom, is admirable. However, the responsibilities of Christian discipleship demand bringing not only our goals but the means by which we seek to achieve them to the touchstone of Scripture. It is in this second area, the means employed, where the efforts of Operation Rescue cross the boundary of acceptable biblical behavior.

We will now examine the supposed biblical support for rescue operations. It falls into three categories: specific commands to rescue, examples of civil disobedience, and the mandate to love one's neighbor.

### Specific Commands to Rescue

Supporters of rescue operations often cite two passages which they believe specifically command rescue operations. The first one is Psalm 82:3-4: "Vindicate the weak and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and destitute. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them out of the hand of the wicked." The second passage is Proverbs 24:11: "Deliver those who are being taken away to death, and those who are staggering to slaughter, O hold them back."

However, before concluding that these verses command direct intervention at abortion clinics, it should be noted that neither text specifies what tactics may be used to rescue the victim. The commandment is to rescue; no method of rescues is prescribed.<sup>1</sup> It would be an abuse of Scripture to cite these verses as granting blanket approval for any and every tactic used to save lives. What types of behavior are appropriate in pursuit of the goal of rescue must be determined by a careful study of Scripture as a whole. Since

Operation Rescue cites these verses as justification for forcible and direct intervention at abortion clinics, it is important to consider first whether the private Christian or the church has been given by God the authority to use force.<sup>2</sup>

### Examples of Civil Disobedience

Civil disobedience has been defined as "a public, nonviolent, and conscientious act contrary to law, usually done with the intent to bring about a change in the policies or laws of the government."<sup>3</sup>

To overturn through civil disobedience the permissive abortion laws of the United States is a fundamental objective of Operation Rescue, according to its founder and director, Randall Terry. He claims the pro-life movement has failed to create "the tension and upheaval necessary to produce political and social change."<sup>4</sup>

One of Terry's goals is to clog the court system with large numbers of Christians arrested at nonviolent rescue operations so that the judicial process itself will come to a halt, allowing rescuers to block the access of women to abortion clinics without further intervention from the civil authorities. He notes with satisfaction that "the police, the district attorney, the courts, and the jails are not prepared or designed to deal with such huge numbers."<sup>5</sup>

To support the call to social upheaval, rescuers frequently cite alleged instances of civil disobedience in Scripture and the historical precedents of believers throughout Christian history.

Alleged instances of civil disobedience may be divided into two categories. First, there are the disobedient acts of private individuals, such as the Hebrew midwives (Ex. 1:15-22; cf. Heb. 11:23), Rahab (Josh. 2, 6; cf. Heb. 11:31), Obadiah (1 Kings 18:1-15), Daniel and his fellow Hebrews (Dan. 2, 6), and Peter and the other apostles (Acts 4:18-20; 5:17-42).

The second category of disobedient acts are those undertaken by public figures in behalf of the people of ancient Israel. These include Moses' defiance of Pharaoh, some of the judges (e.g., Judg. 3:12-30), the rebellion of Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:26-13:34), and the priest Jehoiada's execution of wicked Queen Athaliah (2 Chron. 22:10-23:21).

In addition to these scriptural examples of civil disobedience there are the more recent precedents which involved large numbers of Christians: the American Revolution, the harboring of fugitive slaves, the sheltering of Jews during World War 2, and Christian participation in the American Civil Rights movements.

We offer the following four observations in opposition to this approach:

1) The emphasis on nonviolence is biblically irrelevant. Kenneth A. Myers notes that this category comes from Gandhi and Thoreau, not from Scripture. In Scripture, the distinction is not between violent and nonviolent force, but between temporal (physical) and spiritual (moral) force. Physical force involves compelling a person to behave in a certain way against his will; moral force changes behavior by persuasion.<sup>6</sup>

Operation Rescue may desire to reshape the thinking of the women seeking abortions, but it also employs physical force (by blockading clinics) to keep women away from the abortionist. Myers notes David Coffin's observation that

whenever physical force is justified, how much force is to be used is a matter of prudence, not a matter of principle. If physical force is justifiable, violence is always *potentially* justifiable, since the difference between nonviolence and violence is a matter of *degree* of physical force.<sup>7</sup>

Those who choose to participate in Operation Rescue need to be fully aware of the moral ramifications of their

decision. If nonviolent force (the passive blockading of clinics) fails, there is no reason in principle why one might not choose more aggressive action to stop abortion. Options might range from rendering the automobiles of abortionists inoperable to the bombing of clinics or the killing of abortionists or clinic owners. Indeed, the recent murder of a Florida abortionist by Paul Hill, a former minister of two Reformed denominations, may well stem from the impatience caused by the failure of less forceful measures, like blockades, to bring about an end to legalized abortion. All the above options are potentially justifiable if the use of force by private Christians is considered morally legitimate. The question then becomes how much force is most expedient in achieving the aims of the movement.

But, more importantly, Christians need to be aware of what the Bible teaches about the use of force. The New Testament plainly declares that the civil authorities are the institution in society which is called to "bear the sword" (Rom. 13:4). At no point is this power given either to the church or to individuals. Jesus Himself told Peter to put away his sword (John 18:11), for in view of the immediate redemptive plans of God, the use of such temporal force had no part. The authority of the keys of the kingdom is spiritual, and temporal judgment must await the Judgment Day or other immediate interventions of God before that time (Acts 5:1-11).<sup>8</sup> Paul instructs the Corinthians that "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses" (2 Cor. 10:3-4). Commenting on these verses, Philip E. Hughes writes:

This constitutes an admonition to the Church and particularly to her leaders, for the temptation is ever present to meet the challenge of the world, which is under the sway of the evil one, with the carnal weapons of this world—with

human wisdom and philosophy, with the attractions of secular entertainment, with the display of massive organizations. Not only do such weapons fail to make an impression on the strongholds of Satan, but a secularized Church is a Church which, having adopted the standards of the world, has ceased to fight and is herself overshadowed by the powers of darkness.<sup>9</sup>

To this list of carnal weapons we may add physical force. Manipulation, intimidation, and coercion, whatever form they may take, are the world's weapons and are nowhere to be found in the arsenal of the church. Rather, the church must rely on the God-ordained weaponry of "truth, righteousness, evangelism, faith, salvation, the Word of God, and prayer."<sup>10</sup>

The Word of God has not granted to the church or to individual Christians the authority to use physical force for the purpose of restructuring society. As horrible as abortion is, the church must not abandon the weapons of God's own appointment. And, no matter how worthy the goal of saving babies is, some methods for achieving it are off limits.

#### **No Biblical Example**

2) To my knowledge, there is not one example in Scripture of a believer disobeying a civil authority for the purpose of changing the policies or laws of a nation. For instance, abortion and infanticide were common in the New Testament period. Yet not one biblical writer urges his people to disobey the civil authorities for the purpose of changing the laws of ancient Rome. The aim of the apostles was a clear conscience and a holy life before God, not societal transformation. Creating social tension and upheaval through acts of mass disobedience was not the business the apostles were about.

Furthermore, during the Old Testament period, when

children were sacrificed to the idol Molech—the biblical event which most closely approximates the mass abortions in contemporary America—no prophet called the people to civil disobedience. In spite of the scathing denunciations of the prophets, the idolatrous high places were established and protected at the behest of the civil authorities (1 Kings 11:7). But the prophets did not summon the people of God to civil disobedience or rescue operations, even though they were in possession of the sixth commandment, Psalm 82, and Proverbs 24.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, civil disobedience becomes even more problematic when the law being broken is not immoral. Such is the case with laws against trespassing, which rescue participants break. As a matter of fact, such laws are necessary if the respect for property required by the eighth commandment is to be a reality. We may rest assured that pro-lifers should and would seek protection under trespass laws should abortion rights supporters seek to block access to Crisis Pregnancy Centers.

No law in the United States requires that a person perform or submit to an abortion. Should such a law be passed, Christians would have the moral obligation to resist and to offer assistance to those who do. However, mandatory abortion is not a fact of American life, and the trespass law which Operation Rescue violates is a morally responsible statute to protect personal property and to guarantee the right of assemblies, including those that are Christian, to gather in peace.

We now turn to the biblical examples offered by rescue supporters. It will soon become apparent that these cases are not analogous to the disobedience encouraged by Operation Rescue.

The disobedient acts of private individuals (the Hebrew midwives, Daniel, the apostles, etc.) are very limited in scope. They involve the choice by a believer to refrain from

doing what God forbids (such as killing Hebrew children when commanded by Pharaoh) or to continue in the practice of what God commands (Daniel continued praying; the apostles persevered in preaching). None of these individuals disobeyed the authorities in order to use force to keep others from sinning. Any believer, in the same circumstances, would be obligated to disobey the decrees of the magistrate in order to keep a clear conscience before God. The idea that God equips a certain number of people vocationally to endure the hardships of civil disobedience is alien to the Scriptures.

The disobedient acts of public officials in the Old Testament do not correspond to the contemporary situations in which rescuers find themselves today. Without entering into the thorny issue of how the polity of the ancient theocratic kingdom relates to contemporary life, it is sufficient to note that men like the prophet Moses and the priest Jehoiada were public figures. They occupied God-ordained offices within the theocratic kingdom. The participants in Operation Rescue, on the other hand, are private Christians, not public officials. This point is exceedingly important. The authority and power which are given to public officials to rule and to resist tyranny belong neither to private individuals nor to the church.

#### Alleged Precedents in Christian History

3) The appeal to past examples of Christian civil disobedience is not by itself conclusive.

There is a tendency to assume that the Civil Rights movement, the abolitionist movement, and the Holocaust present historical precedents that *require* no moral reasoning: actions in opposition to racism, slavery, and genocide are regarded as self-defining moral acts, in part because the evil being opposed is regarded as without equal. We all know

what the right side was in *those* cases. Therefore any strategy which was selected by the right side, or which we *now* believe might have been more effective, is an appropriate strategy in our modern battles. This argument is usually presented in a negative form: "But the same argument you use to refuse to break the law to save babies was used by cowardly, self-serving Germans who refused to save Jews from the ovens." Well, that may be so. But that fact renders the argument itself neither faulty nor false, merely suspect in the court of public opinion.<sup>12</sup>

The fact that Christians have opposed tyranny, racism, slavery, or genocide in the past may at first glance lend credibility to present-day summonses to civil disobedience. However, comprehensive reflection demands a more careful study of the historical precedents cited by Operation Rescue.

For example, Terry cites the drafting and signing of the Declaration of Independence as America's most famous act of civil disobedience.<sup>13</sup> But absent is any discussion of the Calvinistic concept of the duty of the lesser magistrate to oppose tyranny, and how, if at all, this concept relates to modern definitions of civil disobedience. A more sophisticated and nuanced approach to historical precedent is needed than that proposed by Terry.

Indeed, it is interesting to note that Calvin's *Institutes* are cited in some Reformed circles as support for rescue operations. Mark Belz finds encouragement for rescue operations in the following statement by Calvin: "if they [those who preside over us] command anything against him [God], it ought not to have the least attention, nor, in this case, ought we to pay any regard to all that dignity attached to magistrates."<sup>14</sup> Certainly, Calvin acknowledges the duty of God's people to obey God when men command His people to do what is ungodly. But does Calvin provide support for

the type of civil disobedience espoused by Operation Rescue?

Other important aspects of Calvin's *Institutes* more directly related to the issue at hand must be considered. It should be noted that Calvin declares that obedience is due to the unjust magistrate,<sup>15</sup> and that the wicked ruler serves as an instrument of judgment from God and is still to be revered as far as public obedience is concerned.<sup>16</sup> Calvin also argues that it is not the right of individual citizens to vindicate themselves against unjust magistrates, for in all relationships of submission, the people "are still subject even to those who are wicked and undutiful."<sup>17</sup> He goes on to write:

Therefore, if we are cruelly tormented by a savage prince, if we are greedily despoiled by one who is avaricious or wanton, if we are neglected by a slothful one, if finally we are vexed for piety's sake by one who is impious and sacrilegious, let us first be mindful of our own misdeeds, which without doubt are chastised by such whips of the Lord [cf. Dan. 9:7]. By this, humility will restrain our impatience. Let us then also call this thought to mind, that it is not for us to remedy such evils; that only this remains, to implore the Lord's help, in whose hand are the hearts of kings, and the changing of kingdoms [Prov. 21:1]. "He is God who will stand in the assembly of the gods, and will judge in the midst of the gods" [Ps. 82:1]. Before His face all kings shall fall and be crushed, and all the judges of the earth, that have not kissed his anointed [Ps. 2:10-11], and all those who have written unjust laws to oppress the poor in judgment and to do violence to the cause of the lowly, to prey upon widows and rob the fatherless [Isa. 10:1-2, cf. Vg.].<sup>18</sup>

Calvin instructs that in the face of oppressive governments and unjust laws, the individual Christian has no right to rebel against them. This does not mean, however, that people are necessarily consigned to suffer perpetually at

the hands of unjust rulers. There is a legitimate, God-given remedy for tyranny.

For, if the correction of unbridled despotism is the Lord's to avenge, let us not at once think that it is entrusted to us to whom no command has been given except to obey and suffer.

I am speaking all the while of private individuals. For if there are now any magistrates of the people, appointed to restrain the willfulness of kings . . . I am so far from forbidding them to withstand, in accordance with their duty, the fierce licentiousness of kings, that, if they wink at kings who violently fall upon and assault the lowly common folk, I declare that their dissimulation involves nefarious perfidy, because they dishonestly betray the freedom of the people, of which they know that they have been appointed protectors by God's ordinance.<sup>19</sup>

In conclusion, Calvin's *Institutes* lend no support to the civil disobedience advocated by Operation Rescue. Rather the duty to resist tyranny belongs to the lesser magistrates who are in God-ordained positions of authority. Calvin provides no foundation for the work of rescue operations; in fact, he explicitly condemns the individual rebellion against civil authority demanded by Operation Rescue.

#### **Foundational Passages**

4) Insufficient weight is given to Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17, which are foundational, comprehensive passages on the subject of the Christian's obligation to obey the state. But without careful exegesis, Terry claims that these passages do not address the question of what a Christian should do when the government fails in its God-given responsibility to punish evil and reward good, and thus is

irrelevant to Operation Rescue.<sup>20</sup>

Belz defends Operation Rescue-style civil disobedience by citing the examples of those in the Bible who refused to disobey God when required to do so by the civil authorities, yet he admits that *Roe v. Wade* does not require anyone to disobey God.<sup>21</sup>

The key question that all rescue writers fail to address is this: what unconscionable commandment of men are rescuers disobeying in order to remain obedient to God? In every instance of disobedience to civil authorities in Scripture, this issue is at the forefront. Unless rescuers can demonstrate that their acts of civil disobedience are in response to a specific commandment of civil authorities compelling them to sin, the biblical examples of disobedience to government are not analogous and have no bearing on the morality of rescue operations.

What is needed by advocates of rescue operations is a more careful study of Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2. In these texts, several all-inclusive statements are made. First, "Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities" (Rom. 13:1). Again, "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by Him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right" (1 Peter 2:13-14). Given the contexts of the biblical examples of civil disobedience, this submission is to extend in every area of life up to the point at which obedience to the civil magistrate becomes sin against God.

Second, "There is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God" (Rom. 13:1). There are no exceptions. Just as God uses harsh circumstances to chastise his people, so He can and does use wicked rulers for the same purpose. God established the rule of the tyrant Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:37-38; 5:18-19) and called the king His "servant" because he, though a

wicked unbeliever, acted as an instrument of divine judgment upon the people of Judah (Jer. 27:8-11).

When Jesus stood before the corrupt and cowardly Pontius Pilate, He could still say, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above" (John 19:11). Every ruler, good or bad, rules by the institution of God. In view of this truth, Paul asserts that "he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves" (Rom. 13:2).

Although in Romans 13:3-4 and 1 Peter 2:14 mention is made of the governmental responsibility to reward good and punish evil, it is not even hinted that rebellion by individual Christians is the proper response to injustice arising from governmental failure to perform these functions. Submission to authority is the subject under discussion, not civil rebellion. As a matter of fact, the context of the verses demands the conclusion that rebellion by private Christians is sinful. Romans 12:17-21 expressly forbids Christians to retaliate against evil. They are to remind themselves that wrath and vengeance belong to the Lord (and His appointed agents) and not to His people. Similarly, Peter wrote his first epistle to a suffering people. He tells them that enduring suffering for righteousness' sake is commendable to God, because those who suffer follow in the footsteps of Christ, who received torment at the hands of evil men, yet refused to retaliate (1 Peter 2:20-24).

"Wherefore," Paul concludes, "it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake" (Rom. 13:5). A conscience informed by the demands of the Word of God will not rebel against any authority unless obedience to a specific commandment of that authority means disobedience to God. Even then, rebellion or creating social tension is not the motivation for disobedience, but a clear conscience before God.

Operation Rescue's participants, however, find themselves in disobedience to God-ordained authority for quite a different reason. They break an acceptable commandment of men (trespass laws). This activity clearly goes beyond what the Word of God mandates or permits, and thus is forbidden.

In summary, it may be concluded that there are no examples in Scripture of civil disobedience for the purpose of social change, no biblical justification for the use of physical force by private Christians, and no abortion statute in the United States which would compel Christians to disobey the law for the sake of conscience (by requiring people to have or perform abortions). Furthermore, there is a broad duty placed upon Christians in the Scriptures to be in submission to the civil authorities. Therefore, the call of Operation Rescue to civil disobedience is not grounded in, but rather is contrary to, the revealed will of God.

### **The Mandate to Love One's Neighbor**

All Christians would agree that the sixth commandment requires that each person seek to preserve his own life and the lives of others. The proponents of rescue operations argue, however, that this moral duty extends not only to the ordinary care that every Christian should take not to injure others, but also to direct and forcible intervention at abortion clinics to prevent a mother from destroying her child. Love demands the use of force to stop others from sinning. Such are the mandates of love, it is argued.<sup>22</sup>

The crucial question faced here is: What is the biblical content of love? The answer is the concrete commandments of the law of God. Biblical love is not an abstract principle. When Jesus commanded His disciples to "love . . . your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27), and to "do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:31, NIV), He was not inviting them to decide how they would like to be treated in any and every situation and then to treat others in that

manner. Rather, the "doing" and the "loving" have a specific content—the law of God. Love is properly demonstrated only within the boundaries of God's revealed will.

As demonstrated earlier, the use of physical force to either change or limit the damage done by ungodly laws is not an option available to the Christian. Not even in the struggle against the terrible sin of abortion are all methods lawful, and when a method is unlawful, it cannot be used in love. To claim to act in love while rejecting the normative standards of the Word of God is sinful and does not meet the biblical mandate to love one's neighbor.

### **Conclusions**

Having discussed some of the moral issues surrounding Operation Rescue, I make the following observations:

1) Scripture requires disobedience to a civil authority only when that authority commands a Christian to do what is sinful or forbids him to do what God commands. That is not the case now in America's abortion controversy. To encourage disobedience on other grounds is sinful.

2) The church's authority is solely ministerial and declarative. The use of physical force to combat either unjust laws or social evils permitted by a nation is a power that God has invested in neither the church nor her individual members. Nor may the church call upon its members to use force to restrain others from sinning.

3) The ministerial and declarative authority of the church is the most powerful weapon available to reduce the number of abortions in America. Only the Word of God and the Holy Spirit can cut to the depths of man's being and lead to the new heart which loves God and loves the children whom He gives as a heritage to His people. Education and protest movements have only a limited usefulness.

Churches must be diligent in laying before God's people the terrible consequences of destroying the lives of image

bearers of God, and the need to cherish, protect, and promote life under the lordship of Christ. Public prayers should include pleas to God for those being led to destruction, for His rebuke of oppressive rulers, for the raising up and sustaining of godly leaders, and for a mind-set in our public officials that recognizes that they will one day have to give an account of themselves before the throne of God in the awesome Day of Judgment. We should pray that in our national and state capitols strong pulpit ministries will be carried out and that the preached Word of God will penetrate powerfully into the corridors of power.

If the church calls upon Operation Rescue to surrender the worldly weapons of force and disobedience, we must make sure that we are mighty in wielding the weapons of truth, righteousness, evangelism, and prayer. Opposition to civil disobedience must have its roots in a passion for godliness, and not in a sinful desire to escape discomfort or persecution. Although we object to the tactics of Operation Rescue, we ask ourselves if we are as willing to undergo hardship for the sake of the Gospel as they are?

4) In spite of the admiration we might have for the willingness of rescuers to suffer loss, we must still declare that the disobedience espoused by rescuers is sinful.

5) The work of Operation Rescue, besides being sinful, is an intolerable diversion of time, money, and energy away from the church's task of proclaiming the Gospel and nourishing a worshipping community of believers.

6) The church and its individual members, contrary to much popular Christian opinion, do not have the responsibility to stop abortion. Rather, the church's task is to preach the Word of God faithfully, which includes the condemnation of abortion. The church must also discipline its members according to God's Word. Pagan mothers who procure abortions, pagan doctors who perform them, and the secular authorities who permit them are accountable to God for this

abomination. If members of our churches are engaged in these dreadful activities, they must be brought before the courts of the church for the purpose of confronting them with their sin and bringing glory to God by their repentance. Should repentance of the erring not be secured, the church must proceed to the censure of excommunication.

7) Many evangelical Christians serve as lesser magistrates in our nation. Christians need to study carefully how to exhort these officials to use their offices to resist tyranny. Christians need to be informed about how to support a lesser magistrate who exercises his God-given authority to stand against the tyranny of a greater magistrate. Our opinion is that too little attention has been given to this most important matter.

8) Christians need to raise their children to have a high view of governing authorities as "ministers of God" (Rom. 13:4). Engagement in politics and government must be deemed a worthy vocation for covenant children to pursue.

Christians should be encouraged to work within the structures of the Democratic and Republican parties. Such work would demand that Christians develop a comprehensive philosophy of public life. In proximity to people of radically different world views (including abortion rights advocates), Christians would be forced to cultivate more carefully the art of persuasion, and to repudiate the slogan-chanting and name-calling that are so often identified in the popular press as the substance of the Christian position on a variety of public issues. Too often Christians think they make a vital contribution to American political life by attending public demonstrations or rallies when, in fact, what is needed is a life-long commitment to working within the complex machinery of the American political process.

9) Finally, in a nation that permits the intentional destruction of its unborn children, Christians should suffer and pray. We should long for the righteousness of God, leading to confession and repentance in our own lives, while at the same

time increasing our own diligence in the labors of prayer, evangelism, the proclamation of the truth, the pursuit of holiness, and the loving care of both the physical and spiritual needs of the members of Christ's church.

**Author**

Charles Wingard is pastor of First Presbyterian Church North Shore (OPC), in Ipswich, Massachusetts. This is his first contribution to *Reformation & Revival Journal*.

**Endnotes**

- 1 Indeed, Psalm 82 is not a direct commandment to individual believers in the old covenant to undertake the rescue of the weak and needy. The persons called to the work of rescue are the "rulers" (Ps. 82:1). It is the rulers who judge unjustly and who show partiality to the wicked (Ps. 82:2). It is they who are called to establish justice in the midst of God's people.
- 2 That individual Christians may use force in behalf of the civil magistrate when serving in the armed services or police force, and when stopping a crime against oneself or another, is assumed to be a point of agreement among most Reformed Christians.
- 3 John Jefferson Davis, *Evangelical Ethics* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1985), 208, quoting John Rawls, "The Justification of Civil Disobedience," in James Rachels, ed., *Moral Problems* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 186.
- 4 Randall Terry, *Operation Rescue* (Springdale, Pennsylvania: Whitaker House, 1988), 22.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 199. One wishes that Terry would reflect more deeply upon this scenario. Is it his intention to prevent the police and judicial system from fulfilling its God-ordained mandate to serve as "a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices

- evil" (Rom. 13:4)? What of murderers, drug peddlers, rapists, etc., whose processing at jails and courthouses is held up because of the chaos created by Operation Rescue?
- 6 Kenneth A. Myers, "Civil Disobedience: Duty or Temptation," *The Public Eye* (Summer 1988), 5. Myers' article contains an excellent discussion of the potentially adverse consequences of rescue operations.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 8 Edmund P. Clowney, "The Politics of the Kingdom," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 41 (Spring 1979), 302.
- 9 Philip E. Hughes, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962; reprint ed., 1982), 350.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 351.
- 11 David Coffin, "Why No 'Operation Rescue' for the Victims of Molech?" (copied). I am thankful to Mr. Coffin for passing along to me some of his own written thoughts on this subject, and for his assistance in locating other sources for this paper.
- 12 Myers, "Civil Disobedience: Duty or Temptation," 3.
- 13 Terry, *Operation Rescue*, 195.
- 14 Mark Belz, *Suffer the Little Children* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1989), 70, quoting John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4:20:32. The particular translation of Calvin's work is not cited.
- 15 John Calvin, *The Institutes of Christian Religion*, Vol. 2, trans. by Ford Lewis Battles, ed. by John T. McNeil (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1511-12.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 1513.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 1516.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 1516-17.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 1518-19.
- 20 Terry, *Operation Rescue*, 80, 92-93.
- 21 Belz, *Suffer the Little Children*, 73-74.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 76-78.