

Ethics

Articles on Morality, Social Issues and the Law of God

A Letter To Paul Hill by Gary North

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September 29, 1994

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Dear Mr. Hill:

Sometime in the months following the murder of the abortionist in Florida, Dr. Gunn, you sent me two position papers. One was called, "Was the killing of Dr. Gunn Just?" You added this parenthesis: "Rough draft, numerous revisions still being made." Obviously, you have other things on your mind these days besides continuing the revisions of your rough draft. I am responding to this paper belatedly because you seem to have taken your own suggestions seriously enough to shoot an abortionist, kill his escort, and wound the escort's wife. That, at least, is what you are accused of. A jury will decide.

The subtitle on your paper is called, “A Call to Defensive Action.” You also sent another paper titled, “‘Defensive Action’ Is a Pro-Life Organization Proclaiming the Justice of Using All Action Necessary to Protect Innocent Life.”

I did not respond to your letter or to your papers. I cannot find your letter in my files, but I did save your two papers. I should have responded. Perhaps I might have persuaded you that you were headed in a terrible direction. In all likelihood, though, you would not have taken me seriously. I say this because you were excommunicated by your church, and you did not take that seriously. Your church asked only that you cease speaking in public — such as on the “Donahue” show — in defense of the right of anti-abortionists to kill abortionists. So, there is no good reason for me to believe that you would have taken anything seriously that I might have written. I do not expect you to take this letter seriously. On the assumption, however, that men can repent before they are cast into hell, which is where you are headed if you do not repent. Let me explain why.

Judicial Theology

I say that you are headed for hell because I speak judicially. You wrote to me, presumably because I am associated with the Christian Reconstruction movement. You are well aware that we are noted for our judicial theology. You attended classes taught by Dr. Greg Bahnsen in the late 1970’s at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. In one of your papers, you cite a book by R.J. Rushdoony. We do think judicially and speak judicially. Ask a judicial theologian his opinion, and you should expect a judicial answer.

The New Testament is clear: when a man is excommunicated from his church, he is to be regarded by Christians as a heathen. We are told specifically by John that we are not to wish such a person Godspeed. “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” ([II John 1:9-11](#)).

The New Testament is equally clear that God honors lawful excommunications. Jesus spoke to church officers: “Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” ([Matt. 18:18](#)). So, I take your excommunication seriously, even though you do not.

You were educated as a Calvinist in a Calvinist seminary. What did Calvin say about excommunication? He cited [Matthew 16:19](#). “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Then he wrote that “the latter applies to the discipline of excommunication which is entrusted to the church. But the church binds him whom it excommunicates — not that it casts him into everlasting ruin and despair, but because it condemns his life and morals, and already warns him of

his condemnation unless he should repent. . . . Therefore, that no one may stubbornly despise the judgment of the church, or think it immaterial that he has been condemned by the vote of the believers, the Lord testifies that such judgment by believers is nothing but the proclamation of his own sentence, and that whatever they have done on earth is ratified in heaven.”

When an excommunicate then goes out to create his own house church and serve himself and his family the Lord’s Supper, as you did, this goes beyond mere excommunicate status; it goes to the status of outright rebellion. Here is a man who is creating his own church, his own world of supposed judicial authority. Here is a man who is bringing the sacraments of the church into his home, in the name of God, when he has been lawfully condemned by the institutional church and told to repent. That act alone judicially enables me to say that by every judicial standard the Bible offers, you are going to hell. You are in open rebellion. God does not honor those men who flagrantly rebel against His church, set up a home church, and ordain themselves to ministerial status.

You are accused of having shot to death two men and wounded a woman. You have not denied these accusations. Witnesses say you fired a shotgun several times at close range — a weapon not noted for its ability to inflict death on a discriminating basis.

The reports say that you ran. If correct, then you did not act as a man of courage would have acted. You did not act as one who believed in some elevated principle. You shot and ran. This indicates to me that you knew in your heart that you act was, biblically speaking, an act of murder rather than the God- authorized defense of a just cause. A man defending a just cause does not run. He commits his act of civil rebellion in the name of a higher law and then submits himself to the sanctions of the state for having violated state law. This is what the people of Operation Rescue do. They stand in front of an abortion clinic, to be beaten by the police, arrested, sent to jail, fined, and suffer a loss of their income. They suffer the consequences of their actions. They are people of courage.

Murder, Defined Biblically

The sixth commandment reads, “Thou shalt not kill” ([Ex. 20:13](#)). The God who mandates this is also the God who ordered the total annihilation of the Canaanites ([Deut. 7:16](#)), so this verse cannot legitimately be interpreted as a defense of pacifism.

What is murder, biblically speaking? It is the slaying of a human being by someone who has not been authorized to do so as a covenantal agent.

A member of the military can lawfully kill a designated enemy during wartime. In Old Covenant Israel, the man eligible to serve in God’s holy army had to pay blood money to the priesthood at the time of the army’s numbering, just prior to battle ([Ex. 30:12-16](#)). This was atonement money (v. 16). So fearful is killing, even as a member of God’s holy army,

that God mandated a special payment. While we no longer are required to pay money to a priest, the implication is clear: killing is a very serious matter.

A man can defend his household against an unauthorized criminal invader ([Ex. 22:2-3](#)). He is the head of his household: a covenantal office. This is not self-defense as such; it is the defense of a legitimate sphere of authority, the home, by one charged by God through the civil government to take defensive action. But this right is never said to be universal in the Bible; it is limited to the protection of one's family.

A man can participate in the execution of a criminal convicted of a capital crime. "At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you" ([Deut. 17:6-7](#)).

In Old Covenant Israel, there was an office called the blood avenger, which was the same as the kinsman-redeemer. This was the man who was nearest of kin. When a man accidentally killed another, he had to flee to a designated city of refuge. If the blood avenger caught the suspect en route, or outside the walls of that city, he was authorized by civil law to execute the suspect ([Num. 35](#)). This office no longer exists because cities of refuge were an aspect only of Mosaic Israel.

When a corporate crime was so great that God's negative sanctions threatened the entire nation, the state could authorize corporate executions. The example here is the national sin of the golden calf. The Levites' lawful slaying of the 3,000 men after the golden calf incident removed the corporate threat ([Ex. 32:28](#)). But they had specifically been called into action by Moses, the God-inspired head of the civil government. Moses deputized them prior to their judicial action.

Under holy warfare conditions, a Mosaic priest was authorized to kill someone who was committing a moral infraction so great that it would have brought bloodguiltiness on the entire community. The primary example here is Phinehas' execution of the copulating couple during the war with Midian. The visible mark of the displeasure of God was the plague that had broken out immediately prior to Phinehas' action. This plague stopped after he executed the couple ([Num. 25:6-14](#)). The same was true of Samuel's execution of Agag: he was a prophet, and it took place under wartime conditions ([I Sam. 15:33](#)).

The point is, in each case, the distinguishing mark of the right to execute an enemy of God was the holding of a covenantal office: military, head of household, witness, deputy, or wartime priest or prophet. That is, the authorization to execute a transgressor under the Mosaic covenant was ordained by God and revealed in His law.

To kill another deliberately is murder. The murderer is outside God's covenant of salvation. "Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as

I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" ([Gal. 5:21](#)). Christians are not to tolerate such people in their midst. "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters" ([1 Pet. 4:15](#)).

God will cast every unrepentant murderer into the lake of fire: "And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" ([Rev. 21:5-8](#)).

The Fundamental Issue

I want to talk at this point about what I regard as the real issue here. You will probably not admit that this is the real issue. Those who are psychologically disposed toward revolutionary violence, autonomous acts of rebellion, and premeditated murder will probably also not believe that I am balancing the judicial issues properly. Nevertheless, it is time for someone in the camp of the theonomists to address the judicial issues carefully and precisely. It is not that we have completely been silent, but there is a division in the theonomic camp, and since I am the one who has come out in favor of non-violent resistance in my books, I guess I should be the one to continue to defend the position.

The grim fact of the matter is this: abortion is a universal practice. Estimates today indicate as many as fifty million unborn infants are aborted annually, worldwide. In the United States, something in the range of a million and a half pre-born infants have been legally aborted every year since 1973. But compared to the total number of abortions worldwide, the abortions in the U.S. are a small proportion of the total.

It is not just that there are many abortions being conducted worldwide today; it is that abortions by the millions have been practiced over the history of man. It is such a common practice and has been such a common practice that the original Hippocratic Oath of the classical Greek world included a promise by the would-be physician not to practice abortion. This clause was taken out of the Hippocratic Oath in the United States during the 1970's. The lure of income was too great for the physicians, so they removed that ancient traditional clause from the modern version of the Hippocratic Oath. The point is this: abortion is an ancient practice, and God has allowed it to go on without bringing immediate judgement against those societies in which abortion was practiced. Why should this be?

The main reason why God has tolerated abortion without bringing judgment against societies that practice it is that abortion has been illegal in most societies. In the language

of the pro-abortionists, abortion has generally been performed in back alleys. This is where abortion should be performed if they are performed. Back alleys are the perfect place for abortion. They are concealed. They are difficult to seek out, for both buyers of the service and as civil magistrates seeking to suppress them. They are unsafe places, placing murderous mothers under risk. Back alleys are where abortions belong.

The covenantal problem comes when societies legislate to allow abortions to be practiced at a profit on Main Street. The problem comes when abortionists can lawfully advertise in the press for people to come in and buy an abortion. Main Street abortions are what bring a society under the judgment of God. Legalized abortions reveal a deep-seated lawlessness on the part of the community.

The Guilt of the Community

In your defense of the killing of Dr. Gunn, you continually refer to the “community.” I always get suspicious when people appeal to collectives in order to justify individual action. You quote from Michael Bray’s paper supporting Operation Rescue. This is under the section, “Ethical Basis for Defensive Action.” Here is what Michael Bray said, according to you: “The fact is that the guilt for the shedding of innocent blood remains upon the citizenry until the punishment is exacted from the offender. Blood guilt is purged only through punishment of the guilty. If the crime goes unpunished, the community bears guilt for the shedding of innocent blood. The community has a strong incentive therefore, to seek justice in order to avoid the burden ([Deuteronomy 21:1-9](#)).”

[Deuteronomy 21:1-9](#) is a very important passage. Bray was correct to cite it. So were you. But you have not understood it. That passage deals with a dead body found in a field. The victim has been murdered, but no one knows who committed it. The elders of the city closest to the field come out to participate in a sacrificial offering in order to remove the bloodguilt from the city. They kill a heifer; the Levites then sacrifice it. The text reads: “And all the elders of that city, that are next unto the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley: And they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it. Be merciful, O LORD, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel’s charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them. So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the LORD” ([Deut. 21:6-9](#)).

Michael Bray’s citation of this passage was proper. There was corporate blood guilt under the Mosaic Covenant, and the way to escape God’s corporate negative sanctions was for both the priests and the civil magistrates to acknowledge before God that they did not know who had slain this victim. They had to slay an animal to atone for the unsolved crime. They were atoning not only for the sin of murder but also for their own ignorance. They washed their hands of the crime. They were making certain that blood guilt did not extend to the society. They were announcing publicly that they did not approve of this murder.

And because they did not approve of it, and they sacrificed something valuable to prove they did not approve of it, God brought them out from under corporate judgment.

We must think judicially about this passage. The intent of the passage was to show God does not hold a community or a society guilty for the acts of an individual that are immoral, if the community takes appropriate actions to suppress the action. That is, if the community passes laws against the practice, and seeks to enforce these laws against the practice, and bring sanctions against those who violate the law, then that society is not brought under the judgment of God. The state is authorized to bring sanctions against those individuals who commit such acts against the law of God precisely because of the threat of God's corporate sanctions. If the State does not take action in the name of God, then God will take action in the name of God and bring the sanctions against the whole society. This is the teaching of [Deuteronomy 28:15-66](#). This is the teaching of the whole covenant pattern of Old Testament law.

Finally, if societies do not acknowledge this by seeking to suppress illegal acts, God does bring judgment against them. This is why God sent the prophets before the people and before the kings: to warn them. By violating God's law, the people risked bringing the entire society under the direct negative sanctions of God. They risked captivity to Babylon, they risked captivity to Assyria, they risked military invasion, they risked being subordinate to Moab and Philistia and all the enemies around them. God would bring his sanctions against them all, corporately, if their ordained civil and ecclesiastical representatives did not act humbly and confess their ignorance in the face of an unsolved crime, and attempt as best they could to bring sanctions against evil doers.

The point that Bray makes is correct. The community must seek out justice. The community does have an incentive to bring evil doers to justice, and if the community cannot locate the evil doers, then the community has to admit that this is not because the community approves of such actions that the authorities do not bring sanctions against evil doers. Rather, the authorities do not know who the evil doers are. They can't find the evil doers, or the evil doers somehow have escaped the nets of justice. This is the focus of the Deuteronomy passage.

But then you come along and say that the individual Christian has the right before God to act in the name of the community. In that statement, you have moved away from biblical law into open revolution.

The Question of Judicial Representation

In your paper, "Was the Killing of Dr. Gunn Just?" on page 4, you cite R. J. Rushdoony's 1971 book "The One and the Many." You cite his discussion of the Trinity, in which he discusses the Trinity as being equally one and equally many: the equal ultimacy of both unity and diversity. As a philosophical concept, this is a correct analysis of the meaning of the Trinity. But then you apply it in a unique way. You write: "All of reality reflects the nature of God

and the equal ultimacy of the one and the many. When applying this principle to our civic life one may ask, which is more important, the leadership the individuals have elected (the one) or the individuals that constitute the society (the many)? The answer is that neither are more important, they are equally ultimate.” And then, in bold face, you add this: “Therefore, both the individuals and their authorities have equal ultimacy as to their responsibility to defend life.”

Here you make the classic mistake of the revolutionary. You move away from covenantal law to radical individualism. You go in the direction of pure anarchism. You are an anarchist. Your statement reveals anti-covenantal outlook.

The biblical position is that there must always be judicial representation. Adam represented all of mankind before God in the fall. Jesus Christ represented all of mankind as well as His people before God in His death, resurrection, and ascension. There must always be representation. Moses represented the civil magistrates of Israel. Aaron represented the people as the high priest of Israel.

There must always be judicial representation, and it is established biblically through ordination. There are but three covenantal institutions that God recognizes: Church, State, and Family. Each of them is established by a vow taken before God. A self maledictory oath and we say in our marriage vows, “‘til death do us part.” In the Church, we are baptized, which symbolizes going through the death and resurrection with Jesus Christ. Death is always a possibility for covenant-breaking. This death is announced through excommunication. In the State, we take a vow, or at least implicitly we do, to uphold the law. We are brought under the sanctions of God if we unlawfully violate an oath of subordination. The point is: there must be, in every covenant, a representative. This representative is ordained to his office.

The father represents his wife and his children before God because he holds high covenantal office to which he has been ordained. The minister represents the congregation because he has been ordained. The civil magistrate represents the covenanted nation because he has been elected or lawfully appointed by those who have been elected. There is no lawful covenantal office without ordination.

What you are talking about in your essay is the equal ultimacy of both the individual and the ordained civil magistrate in fighting crime. This position is utter nonsense biblically. There cannot be equal ultimacy of those two, for one of them has been ordained, and one of them has not. The officer has a covenantal responsibility before God that is unique, but the individual does not. The officer is oath-bound to enforce the law, while the individual is oath-bound to obey it. One of them is at the top of the hierarchy and is invested by God with the power to exercise the sword, while the other is not.

Your theory of civil law does not reveal any trace of judicial subordination. Your system of interpretation of Rushdoony's passage is a violation of every principle of biblical covenantal law because there is no hierarchy in your system. Every covenant has to have a hierarchy. Every legal order has to have a judge. Every ecclesiastical order has to have a minister. But you obviously do not believe this. When you were excommunicated, you set up your own home church in which you were the self-ordained authority, by which you said you had the right to administer the sacraments to your wife and your children. But who ordained you? Who anointed you? No one. You were an excommunicate at the time you ordained yourself.

You are an anarchist and a rebel. The problem is, there are a lot of others just like you, with the same mind set, who are equally armed and dangerous.

The secular anarchist says that he speaks for himself — a pure anarchist. He says, "There is no authority beyond me." This is the doctrine of the divine right of the individual. The divine right of the individual teaches that there is no lawful court of appeal beyond him. This is the pure anarchist.

Most anarchists are not pure anarchists. You are not a pure anarchist. You claim that you speak in the name of the community. And presumably, you have two communities in mind: the church of Jesus Christ, which excommunicated you, and the civil government, which has locked you up and now threatens to execute you. Yet you, as an unordained individual, claim that you possessed the right to act for the community in the name of the community. Either you spoke in the name of the church and the state or else you spoke in the name of the broad-based community as an whole. This is not clear in your essay.

Here is the judicial reality: no one ordained you to this ecclesiastical position as spokesman; no one anointed you to this civil position as spokesman. You ordained yourself, anointed yourself, to speak both as priest and civil magistrate in issuing your theological manifestos. Then you gunned down a man, gunned down his escort, and wounded the escort's wife. And you did this, you claim, not in the name of yourself simply as an individual, but in the name of Jesus Christ. You did this, you say, as a representative agent of Jesus Christ's kingdom, both ecclesiastical and civil. Because you were once ordained and issued a theological manifesto, you took up a shotgun and killed them. Who ordained you? Who anointed you? The answer is: you anointed you. You ordained you. You, in your supposed capacity as an equally ultimate judge under God, ordained and anointed yourself. Then you got your gun.

Not many people are trained to think judicially. Not many are trained to think biblically. Even fewer are trained to think covenantally. The problem is, you had a little theonomic training, a little theological understanding, and a whole lot of pride. You also had a

shotgun. And so you combined what little you knew of biblical law and what little you knew of theology with your shotgun. The result is your incarceration.

Fortunately, your church had excommunicated you before you grabbed your shotgun. The press has not been able to tar and feather the Christian church, because the church exercised its good judgment and declared you outside the jurisdiction of Christ's ecclesiastical kingdom. It publicly announced that you are going to hell unless you repent. That cleared the church of any responsibility for you. This is an enormous blessing to the church of Jesus Christ. If more churches would do this, there would be less embarrassment for the church of Jesus Christ when those who are excommunicated go out and practice exactly what they preach. But churches do not excommunicate people very often, and so churches get tarred and feathered by the press when those under their jurisdiction do things much less violent than what you did.

Community Standards

Your problem is a theological one. But you did address a real problem. The problem you addressed is the problem you would not admit. The problem is that the American community agrees with the Supreme Court of the United States. The general American public agrees that abortion should be legal.

Maybe it does not agree that the third-trimester abortions should be legal, but it is not going to throw out of office the civil magistrates who enforce the Supreme Court's ruling. In fact, the Supreme Court has authorized third-trimester abortion and any other kind of abortion, but the public will not fight it. A handful of people have fought it, but the public refuses. The voting public will not vote out of office a man who is pro-abortion. In fact, time and time again, the public re-elects those people to office.

So, the fact of the matter is this: your problem is not that Deuteronomy 21 is not being enforced just because it is an Old Testament law. Your problem is that the basic presupposition of that law is being manifested today. God is eventually going to bring corporate judgment against a society that approves of the slaying of the innocent. This is our problem. It is not some local doctor down in Florida who was practicing abortions. The problem is a majority of the community approved of the doctor in Florida who was practicing the abortions.

I have already said that abortions have been going on for a long time. Abortions have been universal. But God's wrath isn't universal because most societies in the past have had laws against abortion and have tried to stop the abortionists. So, God acknowledged that they were doing the best they could. He did not bring His judgment against those societies because they were at least trying to stop this terrible practice. The problem comes when communities decide that the murder of the innocent is a convenience worth legislating.

When societies make abortion legal, God's wrath can be expected. And so I will put it in one phrase. The problem is not abortion as such, the problem is legalized abortion.

If you identify an individual abortionist as a murderer, you are saying that he is guilty of a terrible sin. You are correct: he is guilty of a terrible sin. Nevertheless, the Bible is silent on the systematic practice of abortion. The governing passage in Exodus 21 can be used and should be used to justify laws against abortion, but it does not deliberately talk about self-conscious abortion. It says that when two men are struggling, and one of them strikes a pregnant woman and the child is born, if the child is born dead, he should be executed.

>From the relatively narrow concept of abortion in this case, we can make legitimate judicial applications. If, as an accident, a woman has her child aborted, and this is a capital crime, then we can legitimately conclude that if it is a self-conscious effort to kill the woman's child, then abortion is still a capital crime. We move from the narrow case law to the broader application. This is the biblical judicial principle of "If this, then how much more that."

But the reality is that there is no verse in the bible that says directly that the practice of abortion is illegal. There is no verse in the Bible comparable to the original clause of the Hippocratic Oath forbidding abortion. There is nothing this graphic; there is nothing this specific. But there is undoubtedly a very clear passage, which you quote at least indirectly through Michael Bray, regarding the blood guiltiness of a society that does not wash its hands ritually of murder when it cannot locate the murderer. The fundamental judicial principle is clear: societies must enforce God's law and must seek out, as best they can, the perpetrators of crimes, and bring sanctions against convicted criminals. That is what is clear in the text. The law against abortion is less clear.

I contend that the Christian's focus of legitimate concern regarding the abortion law is the abortion law itself. The focus of God's primary civil concern is not with the practice of abortion as such, but rather with the moral character of the people. He wants to see if they will pass laws against abortion and enforce these laws against abortion. He wants to see if they will legalize abortion. When they legalize abortion, they subject themselves to God's corporate sanctions against bloodguiltiness.

This covenantal concern is not the focus of your concern. It is also not the primary focus of most pro-lifers. They are concerned with stopping individual abortions. The more radical their theology, the more they focus on the deaths of specific infants at the hands of specific abortionists. This is not the focus of the Bible.

I am not saying that abortions are right. I am saying that the practice of abortion as such is not God's primary focus of concern. It is the practice of legalized abortions that is the focus of God's concern and wrath. When abortion is legalized, this testifies to the depraved moral condition of the community. It is the moral condition of the community that concerns God, not the fact that this or that physician is practicing abortions. God can bring

judgment in eternity, and will, against those who practice abortion and against the mothers who authorize it. Abortion is a crime in God's eyes. But the focus of God's concern is not with stopping the abortions by his representatives' individual actions. The focus of God's concern is to legislate against abortion and then to have the representative ordained agents, that is, the civil magistrates, take public action against the abortion. God's judicial focus, in other words, is corporate and judicial. This is the focus of God's concern in the question of abortion.

The local question — whether or not babies are being killed by specific abortionists — is a secondary matter judicially. In the eyes of God, the primary concern is corporate and judicial. This is what we are supposed to learn from [Deuteronomy 21:1-9](#). This has not been understood well by the pro-life movement. And surely, this was not understood by you.

The problem is the community. The community approves. Let us not mince words: the United States electorate approves of abortion on demand. It will not bring political sanctions against those politicians who remain silent on abortion or who actively promote abortions. The problem is in the hearts of the people. This is our primary covenantal problem.

What can be done about abortion if the primary focus of concern is not abortion but the legalization of abortion? What has to be done is to change the minds of the people. Then, second, what has to be done is to enact laws against abortion, and to pass a constitutional amendment authorizing the law to legislate against abortion. The matter is judicial. The matter is civil-political.

The Technology of Low-Cost Murder

Now come chemical abortifacients. This is what is going to stop physicians from practicing abortion in the United States. Price competition is the great threat to the local abortionist, not some self-appointed revolutionary bringer of justice like yourself. It is the fact that women will be able to walk into some large store or local drug store and buy some pills — “morning after” pills — for \$10.95 (or \$39.95, on special, for a giant, economy-size bottle), take those pills, and kill their own infants. Price competition is the looming treat to the killer physicians, not the pro-life movement.

When such products are finally for sale, the pro-life movement will be forced to come to grips with the judicial reality of abortion, namely, that it is legal. At that point, all of the pro-life posturing had better end. We will have fewer picket lines in front of physicians' offices. It will do no good to picket a physician if he has been driven out of the death business because it is so cheap to get home-based abortion out of a bottle. He is not going to be practicing abortions. Mothers will be practicing abortion. It will do no good to go out and shoot physicians. The advent of cheap abortifacients is when the legalization of

abortion visibly becomes the real problem, when it becomes discount abortion, mass-produced abortion.

The problem is the legalization of abortion, not some killer physician on the corner. The physician on the corner who is practicing abortion is a symbol, and it is good to challenge the symbol in the name of the real issue, which is the legalization of abortion. But that local physician is not the main problem. The big problem is that modern technology is going to find a way to have dirt-cheap abortions and make millions of dollars doing this. We are going to get mass-produced abortions. We will no longer worry about a comparative handful of abortions: a million and a half a year. We will not know how many deaths will be administered. It may be twice as many; we will have no sure way of knowing. What we know is that it will be so unbelievably easy that the numbers of abortions will skyrocket. There is going to be no way to stop it by picketing. Besides, we will not have anyone specific to picket.

What are pro-lifers going to do? Organize picketing against Wal-Mart when it sells 10,000 products? Are we likely to get the buyers of 9,999 of those other products not to walk in the door, just because the store sells one product which we don't like. Do we think that such picketing is going to stop some murderous mother or anyone else? Picketing will stop almost nobody. We will not be able to target a particular practitioner any more. There will not be a visible representative any more. There will only be the society that wants the abortions and millions of women who want abortions.

There are tens of millions of men and women who will not vote to ban the sale of such a product. This is our problem. It is a political problem resting on a specific moral foundation: humanism. The problem is judicial. It is corporate. And finally, when the physicians are driven out of business by mass produced abortifacient, pro-lifers are going to face a new reality. They are going to realize that it is not abortion as such that is the problem. It is the problem of a society that has legalized abortion.

An anti-abortion protester today may save a few lives on a particular day. There may be a protest that saves a couple lives, but there is still going to be a million and a half that are not saved this year. There will be a million and a half who are going to die, whether or not you protest. The protests are symbolic. The protests are focusing on the evil of the act. But if they are to be life-saving, the protests must be used to call the whole society to its moral senses. The primary problem is the whole society, not the abortionist around the corner. This is a symbolic war which must be fought politically. When mass produced, inexpensive, price-comparative abortifacients are available on the shelves of Wal-Mart, most pro-lifers at last will figure this out.

To picket an abortion clinic is legitimate. It is a public way of saying, "We do not approve of what goes on in there. We call upon God to give us time to organize, to seek out ways to

get abortion re-criminalized. We ask God not to bring His negative corporate sanctions against us. We are doing our best.”

It is also a way of scaring other physicians who would become abortionists if there were not so much embarrassment attached to the profession. The physician inside the clinic has a seared conscience (I Tim. 4:2). His professional colleagues may not. In any case, they fear the public exposure.

Picketing an abortion clinic rarely saves lives directly. It saves lives indirectly. Picketing is for God’s sake. It can sometimes save lives directly, but picketers should know the truth: the act is more symbolic (representative before God and men) than immediately corrective. The act is part of the process of consciousness-raising and conscience-raising for the participants, not a way to save lots of lives directly.

When cheap abortifacients are readily available, picketing will no longer work. The standard confrontational tactics will no longer work. The murderers will no longer be visible, nor will the places of execution. When murder is done in the privacy of the home, picketing will no longer serve many purposes, other than picketing politicians and, perhaps, the manufacturers.

Picketing is a temporary tactic, not a long-term strategy. But at least it has benefits. Murder does not.

When mothers perform in-home abortions, what will men like you do? What good will a shotgun be? Will your imitators invade homes and shoot down women they suspect of using morning-after pills? And if your disciples do this, what will happen to those unborn infants? Your disciples, not the mothers, will become the murderers.

Your perfectionist, guilt-ridden tactic of self-ordained judge-and-jury execution may make perverse sense to fanatics today, before the technology of mass murder is on the shelves, but the tactic clearly becomes self-defeating the day the new technology arrives. This should tell you that your tactic is wrong today. You obviously did not think through the implications of your recommended plan of action. I hope that those who might otherwise imitate you do think it through, before it is too late for them and also for the hundreds of thousands of innocent infants whose lives will be lost because of the political reaction your tactic will produce in normal human beings. These people vote. This is what your murderous perfectionism ignores.

Voices of Virtue

But there will still be a few people like yourself: self-appointed voices of virtue on Robespierre’s model, who will not accept this political frame of reference. They will move to the next stage. Your position is really quite mild compared to what may come. Your position is that you, as a self-ordained and self-anointed man, have the lawful authority before God to gun down one lone practitioner of abortions and his escort, and put a

couple of pellets in his wife while you are at it. That is a mild-mannered position compared to what may come. The real hard-core practitioners of revolutionary virtue are going to understand the logic of your position. You really were not consistent. People say that you finally became consistent with your position, but they are incorrect. You were not consistent with your position because the real position that is consistent with what you are saying is to put bullets into Supreme Court Justices. The real position you are advocating is to gun down every legislator who will not vote against legalized abortions.

Your position is really revolutionary. Open revolution, that is what you are calling for. Your “defensive action” theology is aimed not only at some local physician who is going to kill two or three babies or ten babies today and more tomorrow. The problem for your theology is the U.S. Supreme Court, which has authorized the killing of a million and a half a year. If the government is the problem, and it surely is the problem, then what is the logic of your position? If you can save a life by gunning down a local abortionist, how many lives can you save if you gun down authorities who have legalized abortion?

You gunned down an abortionist’s private escort. What if that bodyguard had been a policeman? What is the difference, given your doctrine? You teach: (1) the individual’s right to gun down local abortionists; (2) the individual’s right to gun down their bodyguards; and (3) the equal ultimacy of the individual and the civil magistrate in saving lives. So, kill cops.

We saw such a plan in action in Colombia. The drug cartel would gun down judges. They would gun down policemen that opposed them. They understood that their problem was at the top, not at the bottom, and so they offered rewards: \$1500 to kill a policeman. They offered more to shoot a judge.

This is where your position is heading. Someone will make the jump which you have been unwilling to take. You shoot down a local abortionist. The policeman arrests a local drug seller. Will either action stop the action? The people at the top are the problem, some follower of yours will conclude. He will see the logic of your position: “If I have the right to gun down a local abortionist, I have the right to gun down his accomplice. If I can lawfully fire a shotgun and wound the escort’s wife because she is basically an accomplice, then I have a right to gun down the ministers who excommunicate people for publicly advising the shooting of abortionists. If I have the right to gun down a practitioner, don’t I have a right to gun down the judge who has authorized the practice? Don’t I have the right to gun down the politician? Don’t I have the right to gun down the voter who has voted for the politician, who in fact is in favor of abortion? Don’t I have the right to gun down everybody who is pro-abortion. Aren’t they all responsible, and if they are, am I responsible for stopping them in any way I can?”

That approach to justice is what the French Revolution rested on. You are creating the legal basis of just such a revolution. You are the self-appointed voice of virtue, and all someone needs to put your theology to work is a guillotine or its technological equivalent. One of

your disciples will figure out that the problem is not the guy on the corner who commits the abortions; the problem is the entire society which has approved and authorized and legislated the abortions. There is nothing in your theology to call a halt to someone who takes your principle of revolutionary violence and does his best to impose it. Here is where your theology ends: on the guillotine. It ends with the Robespierres of this world cutting off the heads of tens of thousands, or hundreds of thousands, of the accomplices of evil. That is where it autonomous, "equal ultimacy" revolution always ends when it is not stamped out early. That is where your position ends.

When the individual has the right to take up arms against the local practitioner of evil, even when the practitioner has been authorized by law to practice whatever it is, then the next step has to be to take up arms against his representatives: the judicial representatives of the people. Remember, the people approve. The fundamental problem is the people and the hearts of the people, not some profit-seeking physician around the corner. The real problem, biblically speaking, is the hearts of the people. How are we going to change the hearts of the people by gunning down the physician on the corner?

Perfectionism and Unlimited Guilt

You ask in your essay on Dr. Gunn, "At what point do you think it would be just to use force to protect innocent life?" I ask in response: "At what point do you think it is no longer legitimate to use force to protect innocent life?" (p. 8). You seek to legitimize the theology of the lone-gunner for Jesus. I seek to ward off the theology of the anarchist revolutionary movement.

There are 50 million abortions conducted each year. Am I responsible to pick up a gun and shoot any abortionist anywhere on earth? Has God ordained me to cleanse the earth of abortionists? Your theology sets no boundaries on the use of violence. National borders have no judicial relevance for those seeking to cleanse by force the world of abortion. Evil is evil, wherever it is practiced. If the lone-gunner for Jesus has been given equality with the civil magistrate in protecting the lives of the unborn, this license cannot end at a national border. The late Ayatollah Khomeini issued a death warrant with a \$5 million reward for the man who kills Salmon Rushdie. He did not place any geographical restrictions on this death warrant, nor did he place temporal boundaries. The death warrant is presumably still in force, and Rushdie is still at risk.

Where are the judicial boundaries of responsibility? Where are the judicial boundaries of violence? By removing the death penalty from the State, your theology transfers it to the lone gunner. What restricts him? His common sense? That is what your essay appealed to: "Common sense tells the individual that he should protect his neighbor from unjust harm" (p. 1). But how clearly does common sense speak in history, and how carefully do lone gunners with a sense of mission listen to it?

Your theology offers no judicial boundaries. It offers no boundaries on the sense of guilt in the hearts of men. There are unborn babies dying today, all over the world. Where does my responsibility end?

The unbounded perfectionism of your theology leads to intense guilt and the deviant behavior such guilt can produce. I am not guilty for my refusal to kill abortionists. I have not been authorized by God to kill abortionists. Abortionists are not under my God-given authority. They have not invaded an area of responsibility for which I am responsible to the point of being authorized to kill them. But I am guilty if I do nothing politically to reverse the legalization of abortion. That authority has been given to me.

Yours is a vigilante theology. Where in the Bible does God authorize the vigilante? Where in the Bible is the vigilante authorized to conduct a trial and execute its verdict?

The political reaction against vigilantism will likely prolong the legalization of abortion. Your vigilante theology, if believed and acted upon, will prolong the legalized slaughter of the innocents. Your personal perfectionism and your guilt-driven vigilantism may well result in the deaths of more babies than your victim could have performed in a lifetime. To delay the re-criminalization of abortion by just one week would allow the slaughter of almost 29,000 innocent lives in the U.S. Your act will probably delay it much longer than a week.

When it comes to responsibility for the deaths of the innocent, you are a guilty man. The blood of far more than an abortionist and his escort is on your hands, especially if you are declared innocent. If you are declared innocent, you will have imitators.

Non-Violent Resistance

I am in favor of non-violence and non-violence resistance. I have written two books about it: "Trespassing for Dear Life" and "When Justice Is Aborted." Gandhi won, not because he used violence, but because he used non-violence, and his opponents used violence against him. The strategy of non-violence works because it calls forth the worst manifestations of the evil in the hearts of those against whom the non-violent protest is aimed. The public can see the police clubbing the protestors. They can see them breaking their arms dragging them out, throwing them into paddy wagons, putting them into jail for months at a time. The tactic's action is the reaction: public revulsion.

The strategy of non-violent resistance is premised on these facts: (1) the public as a whole is doing the wrong thing; (2) the public is allowing the government to do the wrong thing in the name of the public; and (3) the public's mind can be changed if non-violent tactics reveal that those who enforce the law have to do terrible things against righteous people who are standing up for principle.

The difference between non-violent resistance and violent resistance is very great. Non-violent resistance says that we must take a public stand against a public evil and suffer the consequences. Non-violent resistance says that those magistrates who represent the

people as a whole are going to do evil things in public if what they have been authorized to do is essentially evil. Non-violent resistance against legalized abortion is aimed at calling the public to its collective senses. But if the public no longer has collective senses, and if the public in its heart is murderous, then non-violent resistance is not going to work directly. Non-violent resistance is going to call down the wrath of God on the society.

What you forgot, and what violent resisters want to forget, is that there is a God in this process, and He does act in history to bring His sanctions. You were not authorized by God to represent the public. You were authorized by God to do non-violent things and suffer the consequences personally. You were authorized by God to stand in the gap and get your head beaten in, maybe on videotape, to be broadcast at the six o'clock news. You were authorized to get the public infuriated against the agents who bashed your head in. That is what you were entitled to do. But you were not entitled to gun somebody down. God allows the sword to be used only by someone who is ordained to do it. "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord." So says [Romans 12:19](#). Romans 13 says that the state is authorized, as a minister of God (v. 4), to act as God's lawful agent of vengeance. If he brings vengeance against evil doers, then God does not have to, and He will not bring vengeance in history against the society as a whole for authorizing a civil magistrate to do evil.

There is a biblical hierarchy of vengeance. God is at the top, and the civil magistrate is under him. You and any other private citizen are not part of this hierarchy. That is why it says, "vengeance is mine, saith the Lord." You forgot that. Those with a revolutionary bent in their psychology will also forget that.

What you are accused of was not only against civil law, it was against God's law. What you recommend is not only against civil law, it is against God's law. Individuals do not have the right under biblical law to bring violence in the name of the community. They have not been ordained to do it, and they are not part of God's lawful, ordained hierarchy of vengeance.

Your position would bring bloodshed to all of society. There are no judicial limits on your position; no boundaries around those who will be at risk from the self-ordained vengeance-bringers with their shotguns and their weapons of violence. Your position cannot be limited judicially to the abortionists around the corner. Logically, it must go beyond that. It must go to the civil magistrate who is the legal bodyguard of the abortionist on the corner. It must move from the civil magistrate to the judge who has authorized this protection, and must finally move from the judge who has authorized it to the public which approves of it. There are no limits on the bloodshed and the violence in your system. There are no limits because there is no hierarchy. There is no civil court of appeals. There is no hierarchy of vengeance in your system. It is each man bringing judgment on the others in his capacity as a self-ordained magistrate. You ordained yourself to serve the Lord's

Supper as a minister of God in the church, and you ordained yourself to gun down individuals as a civil magistrate. You possessed neither authority.

If we had biblical law, you would be tried and, if convicted, executed by the witnesses who testify against you. You would have no possibility of appeal. You would be delivered into God's supreme court. The only reason you will probably not be executed is because we live in a society that does not believe in biblical law. The only thing that will save your earthly life is the corrupt legal system that would not prosecute your victim, the abortionist. The only thing that is going to give you time to repent is the moral and judicial corruption of the American legal system. The legal system you thought you could replace will probably not do what God says should be done with you.

That is the great irony here. You are going to be able to think about what you did and, by the grace of God, repent of what you have written and what you have done, only because this is a corrupt society. You will be given time that you do not deserve before God because this society pays very little attention to God. The society that legalized abortion is the society that is probably going to let you get off the hook compared to what biblical law absolutely requires be done with you.

Caught in a Crossfire

I write to you, not because I really expect you to repent. I write to you because you are a representative of others who are afflicted by the same revolutionary mentality. I write also to the churches that may have men and even women who think like you inside their own congregations. I would warn every church that has someone like you voicing such opinions publicly to excommunicate that person immediately. Because if people like Paul J. Hill go out to wreak their private vengeance — their self-ordained, self-anointed vengeance — against others in this society, and the church has not publicly excommunicated such people in advance, then the church of Jesus Christ will be tarred and feathered by the press for not having had the courage to deal with these law-breakers.

It is time for the churches to think judicially. It is time to bring an end to the theology of individual license and individual ordination. It is time to issue a warning against all the self-ordained civil magistrates with their shotguns and all the self-anointed home church, family-church ministers who are serving the Lord's Supper to their families.

This should not be regarded as a letter favoring abortion. It should surely not be regarded as a letter favoring legalized abortion. It should not be regarded by the public as being against non-violent resistance against abortion and legalized abortion. It is a letter which must be understood as a call to return to biblical law, a biblical doctrine of the covenant, and a concept of lawful order. It is a call to return to the doctrine of hierarchy and sanctions. I pray that this call will be taken seriously, for if it is not taken seriously, we are going to enter into a period in which vengeance is appropriated by individuals who are in rebellion against man and God, who are going to spread lawlessness on an individual basis

into a society that is already committed to a rebellion against biblical law and against Christian principles. Godly people will be caught in the crossfire. The crossfire will be between the secular humanists who pay no attention to God's law, and therefore legalize abortion, and the self-anointed, self-ordained bringers of private justice who pay no attention to civil law or church law and who, on their own autonomous authority, are going to gun down the beneficiaries of the secular humanist order.

We are caught between the collectivized corporate evil of humanist civil law and the anarchistic autonomous evil of self-ordained revolutionaries. We are caught, in other words, in a crossfire between the autonomy-claiming one and the many. That is not where I want to be and where I want the church to be. The church had better begin taking steps to cleanse from its midst judicially all those who call for violence against individuals in the name of the community, when in fact in our present community, the community stands against God and against God's law. It does no good to take up the sword privately against representatives of an evil community or against the beneficiaries of an evil community. God's judgment threatens the entire evil community.

The problem is not the abortionist around the corner. The problem is the hearts of the people. The hearts of the people can be changed by prayer and perhaps by personally costly symbolic resistance. But the hearts of the people cannot be changed by gunning down the abortionist around the corner. That will set the hearts of the people in their wicked ways. Nothing will change for the better; it will only get worse. More babies will die. Then the judgment of God really will come.

This is a political fight, a judicial fight, but not a military fight. It is not a fight to "save one life today." It is a fight to keep the judgment of God from coming on the entire society. That is the meaning of [Deuteronomy 21:1-9](#). We must take those verses seriously.

Conclusion

Your statements to the press and your arrogant demeanor indicate that you are now engaged in creating a media image: a man who does not fear men because he fears God more. In fact, you do not fear God at all — not the God who has revealed Himself in the Bible as the eternal foe of all murderers. Jesus warned: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" ([Matt. 10:28](#)). You have despised the limits that God has placed on vengeance ([Rom. 13:1-7](#)). You have forgotten His warning: He shall bring vengeance ([Rom. 12:19](#)). He ordains some men to bring vengeance in His name. He did not ordain you to such an office. On the contrary, He has ordained your prosecutors, your jury, and your judge. They have the authority and, if you are convicted, the responsibility of delivering you speedily you into God's heavenly court. Your sentence there, apart from your public repentance in history, is sure: "Guilty as charged!" Why? Because you refused to plead guilty God's earthly court.

The blood of tens of thousands of innocent infants whose lives will not be spared because of the predictable political revulsion against your public testimony will be on your hands. Do what you can to wash it off while you can. Change your public testimony before the trial begins. Change your public demeanor from strutting arrogance to heartbroken apology. Above all, repudiate your murderous tactic as expressed in your essays. If you don't, you are eternally doomed.

You asked months ago me to comment on your essays. I have now done so.

You were quoted in the "New York Times" (July 31, 1994) as having announced: "My role is a prophetic role. . . ." A prophet in the Old Covenant publicly identified transgressions that were so great that God threatened the society with corporate negative sanctions. The office of prophet disappeared when God ceased to give men totally accurate knowledge of the immediate future. But a prophetic role still exists: identifying public evils and forecasting the kinds of judgments that God brings against such public evils. In this respect, I have served you in a prophetic manner. But I am not alone. Your church warned you prophetically by excommunicating you. You ignored this warning. The state warned you prophetically by passing laws against murder. You ignored this warning. I am now warning you. I suggest that you do not ignore this warning.

Very truly yours,

Gary North

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