

ARMED REVOLUTION AS APOLOGETIC IN THE BRAVE NEW WORLD?
REEXAMINING THE UPPER LIMITS OF RESISTANCE BY THE CHURCH TO THE STATE
WITH A FOCUS ON THE DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN FRANCIS SCHAEFFER AND NORM GEISLER

PRESENTED AT THE 2023 MEETING OF
THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS
'APOLOGETICS IN THE BRAVE NEW WORLD'



CHRISTOPHER TRAVIS HAUN
FORT WORTH, TEXAS USA
MARCH, 2023
[HTTP://CTHAUN.TECH/PAPERS](http://CTHAUN.TECH/PAPERS)

Our descent into the brave new world dares us to make brave new inquiries into the ethical limits of obedience to the state.¹ As the state becomes more satanic, some measure of resistance from the servants of Jesus Christ is expected.² But are there any conditions under which we should shift from the *non-violent* types of resistance to the *armed* variety that could leave the agents of the state bruised, bloodied, and dead? Christian intellectual Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984) certainly thought so. Forty-some years ago, Schaeffer stirred up a controversy among evangelicals when he published four arguments in favor of defending the faith not just with words but with swords. Agreeing with Schaeffer generally, but opposing him on this one point, Norm Geisler (1932-2019) published seven arguments against armed revolution. Their disagreement in the last quarter of the 20th Century serves as a good entry-point into the debate for second quarter of the 21st Century.

Attempts at achieving consensus on armed resistance may prove elusive. While Augustine forbade it, Aquinas allowed it. While Luther and Calvin both condemned it, they left a loophole that would be enlarged by Presbyterians and Puritans. Among various anabaptist and radical reformation leaders there was wide variation of views of the sword. Evangelicals have been similarly divided. There was a noteworthy attempt to establish an evangelical consensus in 1986 when the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI) met for their third and final summit to deliberate over “some key areas of confusion and dispute . . . [in] late twentieth-century situations.”³ They achieved a remarkable degree of consensus about Church and State issues in general,⁴ found themselves divided along Schaeffer-versus-Geisler lines on the question of *forceful* resistance.⁵ While they all had antipathy towards the *offensive* revolutions inspired by Rousseau and Marx, some, like Schaeffer, were quite sympathetic to *defensive* revolutions.⁶ While they did not encourage armed resistance in the Chicago Statement on Biblical Application (CSBA), they did not discourage it either.⁷ Some of the thinkers who participated in the ICBI Summit III and signed the CSBA would continue to advocate against armed resistance⁸ while others remained more open to it.⁹

FRANCIS SCHAEFFER’S FOUR ARGUMENTS FOR ARMED RESISTANCE

Francis Schaeffer was prescient. Fifty years ago, he could see the onset of the brave new world more clearly than most. It had already established multiple beachheads in Europe, the UK, and North America. The evil spirits that were driving the religion of secular humanism into prominence in the West during the 1970s and ‘80s looked to him very similar to the spirits that sent Soviet tanks to crush uprisings in Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968). The countless millions of infants aborted in the U.S.A. under secular humanist law seemed comparable to the countless millions of lives snuffed out by Marxist-Leninism and Marxist-Stalinism in the U.S.S.R. The apologetic effort for Christianity had to include an apologetic against western secular humanism and eastern Marxist humanism. Schaeffer’s provocative book was titled *A Christian Manifesto* (1981) quite intentionally. It was a defiant response to *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), the *Humanist Manifesto* (1933), the *Humanist Manifesto II* (1973), and *A Secular Humanist Declaration* (1980). In his manifesto, he dared to make a case for armed resistance against the State:

There does come a time when force, even physical force, is appropriate. . . . when all avenues to flight and protest have closed, force in the defensive posture is appropriate. This was the situation in the American Revolution. (*CM*, 483)¹⁰

In other words, 1776 was the proper answer to Orwell’s 1984.

Before exploring his doctrine of revolution, it's important to emphasize that Schaeffer was extremely reluctant to recommend armed resistance to the State. He was first and foremost a proponent of peaceful, non-violent, vigorous, and legal protest against satanic statism. While he absolutely despised the bloody revolutions inspired by Rousseau and Marx, he was quick to praise the bloodless revolution in England made possible by the non-violent social reforms inspired in part by the evangelical revivals—reforms that allowed England to avoid their equivalent of the French Revolution (*HSWTL*, 452).¹¹ He recommended that Christians do all they can to keep the window of opportunity for peaceful resistance open (*CM*, 458). He also made it very clear that individuals, be they Christian or not, should focus on the first two of the three levels of resistance. He wrote:

. . . if the state deliberately is committed to destroying its ethical commitment to God then resistance is appropriate. In such an instance, for *the private person*, the individual, . . . there are three appropriate levels of resistance: First, he must defend himself by protest (in contemporary society this would most often be by legal action); second, he must flee if at all possible; and third, he may use force, if necessary, to defend himself. One should not employ force if he may save himself by flight; nor should one employ flight if he can save himself and defend himself by protest and the employment of constitutional means of redress. . . . On the other hand, when the state commits illegitimate acts against a corporate body—such as a duly constituted state or local body, or even a church—then flight is often an impractical and unrealistic means of resistance. Therefore, with respect to a corporate group or community, there are two levels of resistance: remonstrance (or protest) and then, if necessary, force employed in self-defense. . . . we should attempt to rebuild society before we advocate tearing it down or disrupting it. . . . At this time in our history, protest is our most viable alternative. This is because in our country [the USA] the freedom that allows us to use protest to the maximum still exists. (*CM*, 475-478).

While Schaeffer was mostly mainstream on civil disobedience, on this one point he went beyond where most evangelical ethicists were comfortable going.

SCHAEFFER'S 1ST ARGUMENT

Schaeffer's first argument is historical, pragmatic, and sobering. The success of Protestant Reformation was, in his view, related in direct proportion to the power of the swords that protected it. The success, for example, of the five *solas* in the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, Geneva, England, and Scotland, was contingent upon Protestants offering vigorous armed self-defense against their state-sanctioned persecutors (*CM*, 470). Conversely, the Protestant movements in Hungary and Spain, for example, died out when the Protestants were massacred by the Catholic states. Serving as examples in both directions, the French Huguenots resisted state-sponsored persecution until 1572 when most of their leaders were assassinated by the satanic State. After that, their movement, like the Waldensians before them, was crushed and scattered. Where the Protestant communities of the 16th and 17th centuries fought back, they tended to survive. But where the communities of faith allowed themselves to be killed off, the lights on those hills were extinguished. He projects that same trajectory into the future for our communities of faith.

SCHAEFFER'S 2ND ARGUMENT

Schaeffer's second argument is difficult to follow but flows roughly in paraphrase as follows:

- Tyranny is immoral and satanic in origin and nature.
- Resisting tyranny is resistance to the kingdom of darkness.
- Not resisting tyranny is resistance to God.

- Rulers are only *conditionally* granted the right to rule by God.
- When those conditions for ruling are not met, the ruler loses his right to rule.
- Citizens have a moral obligation to resist unjust and tyrannical government. (*CM*, 474)

Schaeffer's premise that only regents actively serving God possess the delegated authority from God to act as his regents is an interesting one. Whenever one of God's regents turns away from God (and God's laws), he loses his right to act as regent (*CM*, 467-469). In other words, a regent is only a true regent so long as he is truly acting as such. When a regent loses that delegated authority, he loses his protected status as a delegated authority. If we may use the term loosely, he loses his divine "anointing." At such a point, deposing the regent is no longer the evil of regicide but the good of tyrannicide. Opposing the leader with force is no longer a sin against God who presumably put that leader into power; it is a duty and service to the God who would prefer to have him removed. There may also be an interesting element of existentialism over essentialism here. Instead of focusing on the essence of the state as being something instituted by God, we can know a tree by its fruits. If those fruits are sour and noxious, its origin and nature are devilish rather than divine.

SCHAEFFER'S 3RD ARGUMENT

Schaeffer's third argument follows the Presbyterian tradition of John Knox (1514-1572) and Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661) and, with a focus on Rutherford's principle of *Lex Rex*, may be a refined extension of his second argument. Schaeffer writes:

What is the concept of *Lex Rex*? Very simply: The law is king, and if the king and the government disobey the law they are to be disobeyed. And the law is founded on the Law of God. . . . The governing authorities were concerned about *Lex Rex* because of its attack on the undergirding foundation of seventeenth century political government in Europe—"the divine right of kings." This doctrine held that the king or state ruled as God's appointed regent and, this being so, the king's word was law. (*CM*, 473)

Whereas Apostles Peter and Paul seem to focus on the human leaders as the sources of law that should be obeyed whenever possible, this *Lex Rex* idea transcends the human and sets the locus of the foundation for government in something more ultimate and less capricious than the humans who play god with the lives of the people they should be blessing.

SCHAEFFER'S 4TH ARGUMENT

His fourth argument endorses John Locke's (1632-1704) streamlined and secularized version of Rutherford's *Lex Rex* principle (*CM*, 476). The self-evident law that Locke and the 1770s revolutionaries embraced includes: (1) inalienable rights, (2) government by consent of the governed, (3) separation of powers in government, (4) and the right of revolution (*CM* 476). While a law still rules over potentates, this law is reduced to a kernel of the natural law. Lockeanism helped convince many colonists in the 1770s to revolt against their English overlords and form the constitutional republic of the USA. Schaeffer agrees with the Declaration of Independence, writing, ". . . the people, if they find that their basic rights are being systematically attacked by the state, have a duty to try to change that government, and if they cannot do so, to abolish it" (*CM*, 489).

Schaeffer does not pit Rutherford against Locke. Where we might have expected Schaeffer to dismiss Locke, as he did Rousseau, as a post-Calvinist thinker who had become "autonomous" with respect to

God and God's Word, he instead embraces Lockean revolutionary doctrine as a legitimate expression of the Calvin-Knox-Rutherford-Witherspoon ideological lineage. The continuity of inheritance seems to outweigh any discontinuity. Locke's political philosophy fits more into the northern Reformation flow than the southern Renaissance flow. The need for constitutional republics that contain internal checks and balances flows naturally from the ecclesiastical polity that Calvin and the Presbyterians saw in the Bible for presbyters governing the church (*HSWTL*, 137).

NORM GEISLER'S SEVEN ARGUMENTS AGAINST REVOLUTION

Along with Schaeffer, Norm Geisler belongs in the Apologetics Hall of Fame for his defense against secular humanism in all of its forms.¹² As with Schaeffer and all of the ICBI thinkers, Geisler deplored the tyranny of the U.S.S.R. One of the ways he gave resistance to it was by participating in the illegal smuggling of Bibles into Communist-controlled Poland. He taught and modeled vigorous-but-peaceful resistance at abortion clinics, local school boards, and more.

Geisler held Schaeffer in very high regard. In his only recorded lecture on the topic of revolution, Geisler stated, "I have the greatest respect for Francis Schaeffer. He's one of our great generals in evangelical Christianity today . . . I think his insights into our society—where we are going, the dangers involved—are necessary for every Christian to think about in a very serious manner."¹³ But in his book *Christian Ethics*, and in his lecture that closely follows the book, Geisler disagreed with Schaeffer by name when he wrote: "Some believe in revolting against an unjust government, but the biblical view calls for resisting it without rebelling against it" (*CE*, 259).¹⁴ He proceeded to give seven arguments for the position that "Revolutions are Always Unjust."

GEISLER'S 1ST ARGUMENT – GOD GAVE THE SWORD TO THE GOVERNMENT, NOT TO THE CITIZENS

Citing Gen. 9:6 and Rom. 13:4, Geisler's first and main argument is very simple: it is very clear in the Bible that God only gave "the sword" (the right to put evil people to death in the name of justice) to the state (to human governments) (*CE*, 254). While private citizens do retain the right to defend themselves with the sword, nothing in the Bible can be used to support the idea that the people have the right to raise their swords (in the name of justice) against their governments ever. God-sanctioned justice is a one-way street: the state may use the sword against the people but the people may not use the sword against the state.

GEISLER'S 2ND ARGUMENT – GOD EXHORTS AGAINST JOINING REVOLUTIONARIES

Geisler quotes Prov. 24:21 to prove that we should, "Fear the Lord and the king, my son, and do not join with the rebellious" (*CE*, 254).

GEISLER'S 3RD ARGUMENT – REVOLUTIONS ARE CONSISTENTLY CONDEMNED BY GOD

Geisler contends that the Bible records many examples of rebellions and they are all condemned by God. Some examples he cites are Korah versus Moses, Absalom versus David, and Jeroboam versus Judah (*CE*, 254). Regarding the one well-known exception, where God did clearly approve of the revolution

against Queen Athaliah, Geisler argues that this precedent was too exceptional in its circumstances to be used today to justify any revolution today (*CE*, 254, 257).

GEISLER'S 4TH ARGUMENT – MOSES WAS JUDGED FOR HIS VIOLENT ACT IN EGYPT

When Moses was a young man, he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave. He killed the Egyptian and hid the body (Exod. 2:11-15). Geisler judged, “As a consequence of this violent act, Moses was forced to flee from Egypt and spend forty years in the desert. After that, God used Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt without a revolution (Exod. 12)” (*CE*, 255). In his accompanying lecture, Geisler explained, “Moses had to flee for his life. And for forty years, Moses was put on the back burner by God until he was ready to trust God to bring the people of Israel out of Egypt” (Side A, Time 13:10-14:00). In his interpretation of the life of Moses, it was ultimately God who was judging Moses and not just the Egyptian Pharaoh who wanted to kill him (Ex. 2:15).

GEISLER'S 5TH ARGUMENT – ISRAEL DID NOT FIGHT PHAROAH BUT FLED FROM HIM

Geisler wrote:

If there was ever justification for a revolution because of oppression, it was the situation of Israel under Pharaoh. However, it was neither recommended nor approved by God. Israel did not fight Pharaoh; they fled from him . . . trust God to take care of evil tyrants, but do not rebel against them. God sovereignly set them up, and he will sovereignly take them down (Dan. 4:17). (*CE*, 255)

In his lecture on revolution, Geisler essentially concludes, “Is the tyranny you’re suffering from now worse than it was for the Israelites towards the end of their 430 years of captivity under Egypt? And is it worse than what the Christians of the first century suffered from during the Neronian persecution? If the Israelites and the early Christians didn’t rebel against Egypt and Rome, why should you?”

GEISLER'S 6TH ARGUMENT - JESUS EXHORTED AGAINST USING THE SWORD

When Jesus commanded Peter to put his sword back in its sheath “for all who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Mt. 26:52), Jesus was “warn[ing] his disciples against the aggressive use of the sword . . . [against] the servant of an existing authority. . .” (*CE*, 255)

GEISLER'S 7TH ARGUMENT - JESUS SPOKE AGAINST RETALIATION

In his famous sermon on the mount, Jesus spoke to a large Jewish audience against retaliation against those who do evil to us. Many Jews wanted to retaliate against their Roman oppressors. Some Jewish zealots were assassinating Roman soldiers. Revolution is a form of retaliation against a government which Jesus condemned. Only the Lord is allowed to take vengeance upon an oppressive government (Rom. 12:19) (*CE*, 255).

REACTION TO SCHAEFFER'S ARGUMENTS

REACTION TO SCHAEFFER'S 1ST ARGUMENT - SURVIVAL BY SWORD

Schaeffer's first argument—that the survival of the communities that held to the five *solas*¹⁵ was proportional to the armed defense they mustered—offers a persuasive impetus to take this matter seriously. Whichever way we go on this, it is a matter of life and death on a large scale. If Schaeffer's prediction proves right, if we fail to truly defend communities of faith from the attacks of a satanic state, those communities may be wiped out. We need to defend the faith by defending the faithful. The stakes are higher now than ever. In the 20th century, the problem of democide (murder by governments) may have prematurely ended the lives of 360 million souls.¹⁶ The number of humans who may be culled from the herd of useless eaters in the 21st century on the religious altars of climate change communism, depopulation campaigns, intersectional equity, transhuman eugenic genetic experimentation, and endless wars could vault the numbers of dead into the billions.

With the threat of democide in mind, it's difficult to ignore Edmund Burke's maxim that "the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." A variation suggests that the only thing that stops evil men from doing violence is good men who are better at it. While prayer and peaceful resistance remain paramount, it's difficult to shed the idea that it will somehow be our fault if we do not really do all we can do to defend our brothers and sisters in the faith. If we offer no tangible resistance—a resistance that provides a real fear-based hesitancy among the agents of the state to cull the mavericks from the herd—have we really succeeded in "doing good to all men, especially those of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10)? And might we even imagine God chiding us on the day of judgment saying, "You were my hands and feet in the world and you let me down. Why didn't you, protect your brothers and sisters? When I said, 'in so far as it is up to you, be at peace with all men' (Rom. 12:18), I was letting you know that sometimes peace is not possible." We do need to feel the weight of Schaeffer's argument.

While the "fact" that the reformation communities that could not successfully defend themselves were destroyed, such that many are killed, and some are scattered may be an excellent reason to take the question of armed resistance very seriously, it is not necessarily a persuasive reason to argue that armed resistance to the satanic state is justified. The idea that it is better for Christians to die at the hands of the state than for the agents of the state to die at the hand of Christians may still have better biblical coherence.

Besides, we don't really know what would have happened if all the protestants in Europe had refused to fight back against their states. Would the reformation have been strangled in its cradle? Perhaps not. Even if thousands of protestants perished at the hands of their catholic lords, the light would not have been extinguished. Perhaps if there had been more generations of peaceful-but-brave resistance and more martyrs, perhaps the light would have spread in other peaceful ways—as it did in the first three centuries of the history of the Christian Church. Even if all of the Christians we know are executed by the state, the gates of hell will not prevail against Christ's church. The church began with twelve apostles (Acts 1:12-2:14), 120 disciples (Acts 1:14-15), and 500 witnesses of the risen Christ (1 Cor. 15:6). The work of the Holy Spirit quickly grew the church to 3,000 (Acts 2:41) and then to 5,000 souls (Acts 4:4). When persecution began, the numbers continued to rise. The first four centuries of the history of the Christian church seems to prove Tertullian's assertion that that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.

The more modern precedent set by the churches in China also disarms Schaeffer's first argument. The brave new world we are being plunged into seems in many ways to be modeled after the authoritarian-totalitarian system in modern China that began with Mao. That seems to be the direction the globalists would like to take us. Arguably today's so-called Great Reset is just a euphemism for what in the last century was called the Communist Revolution. Being herded in that direction will of course have tremendous implications for our freedoms and, in turn, will affect countless aspects of the practice of our faith. The ostensibly communist state in China has been hostile to Christianity throughout its history. Between 1949-1956, the state attempted to suppress it. Between 1956-1978 it attempted to eradicate it. Between 1979-1995, the strategy was to try to weaken it. Between 1995 and the present, the best it can do is try to contain it.¹⁷ Based on official documents from the state, there are currently around 43 million Christians in China. Other estimates suggest perhaps 116 million.¹⁸ While no one knows how many Christians there are in China, it is not unreasonable to estimate that China will have the greatest population of Christians of any nation by the year 2030.¹⁹ This challenges the idea that communities of Christians can only survive and thrive with either toleration from the state or enough sword power to keep the state at bay.

Ironically, Schaeffer was in effect saying, "Those who *don't* live by the sword will die by the sword." And that is difficult to reconcile with Jesus' teaching. So while his historical generalization falls short, Schaeffer's argument nevertheless does have a sobering degree of truth in it. Although Schaeffer doesn't mention it, he reminded me of a good case in point where Calvinism was strangled in its cradle in the Eastern Orthodox Church. Cyril Lucaris (or Kyrillos Loukaris) (1572-1638) became a Calvinist while studying in Europe in the late 1500s, was elected patriarch of Alexandria in 1602, was elected patriarch of Constantinople in 1620, created a Calvinistic Confession of Faith that was discovered in 1629 and published, was forced to resign from the patriarchy five times by French and Austrian (Roman Catholic) ambassadors, and later reinstated with the help of British and Dutch (Protestant) diplomats. Dutch and Swiss Protestants helped him flee from Jesuit intrigues against his life. But ultimately killed by the State (the Ottoman Turks) at the behest and bribe of the Jesuits. One can't help but wonder if the history of the Eastern Orthodox confederation of churches would have been very different if Cyril had been given a few more bodyguards and a resistance network. Dilemmas like this do pose an apologetic quandary.

REACTION TO SCHAEFFER'S 2ND ARGUMENT - CONDITIONAL RIGHT TO THE SWORD

Schaeffer's argument that God gives our leaders the rights and protections of their office only on a conditional basis is intriguing and controversial. Assuming for the sake of discussion that he's right, one difficulty I see with this idea is one of arbitrariness and subjectivity. Which body of wise meta-state thinkers should carry the burden of judging when the leaders of state have lost their divine anointing, so to speak, lost their right to bear the sword against the people, and lost their shielding from the daggers of the people? And precisely which standards of judgment should they use? And who should be authorized by that council to commit tyrannicide? Or should it be a matter of popular movements where a mere twenty percent of the agitated people decide that they feel like the tree of liberty is overdue for the refreshing with the blood of patriots and tyrants; is it simply up to them to start and finish the tyrannicide? Since we do not have the option that the Israelites of old had, to ask a true prophet of God to directly rule on such a meta-state matter, it would be very difficult to appoint and encourage wise private citizens to judge such matters.

If we follow the judgment of the Magdeburg Lutherans and John Calvin, there could be room here for lesser magistrates to keep greater magistrates in check. Let the short swords clash with the long sword. In the modern American context, perhaps the state governors, state legislatures, and state militias of some of the fifty states could under some situations offer checks to tyranny at the federal level. But in the Calvinist tradition, not just any lesser magistrate is permitted to unsheathe against greater magistrates. Moreover, it is very difficult to apply this principle to private citizens who have formed private militias.

The burden of the proof seems to be on those who would prove that the office of leader and its right to the sword is conditional. Paul in Rom. 13 and Peter in 1 Pet. 2 seems to offer only one condition: If God sovereignly allowed a leader of state to reach that office of power, then that leader has the right to the sword. While Rom. 13 and 1 Pet. 2 don't give us enough data to answer all questions, it is difficult to find logical loopholes that would indicate the leader forfeits his right when not meeting certain conditions and, as a consequence, should become the target of his or her people. Schaeffer has not so far offered this burden of proof and we must look elsewhere for more complete argumentation. The question deserves more consideration.

REACTION TO SCHAEFFER'S 3RD ARGUMENT - RUTHERFORD'S *LEX REX*

While Schaeffer is favorable to the doctrine of armed resistance developed by Presbyterian thinkers (Knox, Rutherford, and Witherspoon), he defers to them more than explains them. There may be more sophistication in this tradition than either Schaeffer or I can represent here. It is quite possible that I may not be doing Rutherford justice.

My initial challenge with accepting Rutherford's *Lex Rex* theory, is that it seems difficult to reconcile with the precedents with Babylonian Emperor Nebuchadnezzar and Persian Emperor Darius discussed in the book of Daniel. Neither of these kings were guided by the Law of Moses. Neither of them sought regular guidance from *bona fide* prophets of God. God still put them into power, disciplined them, made them prosper, and even made them a blessing to other peoples of their empire.

Second, while there is a very clear instance of a type of *Lex Rex* mentioned in Daniel 6:15, this instance damages Schaeffer's theory because the law in focus there—the law that held greater authority than the emperor's decrees—was “the law of the Medes and Persians.” It was not the law of God. In an attempt to make his theory work, we could argue the Medo-Persian Law was based on the natural law alluded to in Romans 2:14. If so, there is an indirect and weak claim to be the universal law of God. But it would be tough to make a case for this and, even if it were persuasively made, it would be difficult to draw lines of demarcation on what the natural law must include and what it should not include. To limit it to the golden rule (do unto others as you would have them do unto you) or the silver rule (do not do unto others what you would not have them do to you) could lead to an infinite number of problems with subjectivity. Every leader would be in danger of being deposed if the criteria were so vague.

Alternately, the universal law of God could perhaps be condensed to the seven Noahide laws of Gen. 9.²⁰ The immediate problem with that is that the laws of various gentile empires God established may not provide excellent continuity with Noahide law. Rather than condensing “the Law of God” to a summarized form, however, Schaeffer seems to expand it and uses it as a synonym for the Bible as a whole (*HSWTL*, 136-138). As much as I like the idea of the states deriving their *Lex Rex* from the whole Bible, expanding the law to include the whole Bible causes more logical problems than it solves. The

Schaeffer-Rutherford theory seems to fail in so far as they are theonomic and bibliocentric in their definition of law. Other than Israel, Judah, and possibly by some stretch Samaria, no state of the past or present was ostensibly set up on a Bible-based set of laws. For these and other reasons, Rutherford's arguments so far seem to fail to deliver that burden of the proof that allows us to take some loophole around the emphasis of Apostles Peter and Paul on the human leaders as the sources of law that should be obeyed whenever possible.

REACTION TO SCHAEFFER'S 4TH ARGUMENT - LOCKEAN

Shifting from a theonomic-bibliocentric foundation of law to some kernel of "natural law" that all people have access to solves some of the problems which the third argument couldn't. It does run into the problem of how to know whether Locke and the authors of the American Declaration of Independence were right. There is room for debate there. And although it does not offer the burden of proof needed to interpret Paul and Peter differently, it may still open a logical loophole that is worth exploring. Although this argument may be difficult to apply to the empires and kingdoms of old described in the Bible, including the Roman Empire of Peter and Paul's day, the applicability and validity of the Lockean argument may increase with systems of government that were inspired in part by law-over-king import of the English Magna Carta (1215). Even if no version of the *Lex Rex* theory is correct in and of itself, and even if none of them could validate the American revolution of the 1770s, it is possible that the equation may change over time. As states around the world moved in the direction of a Lockean-styled *lex rex*, the *lex rex* principle may become true for them. Even if the Lockean *lex-rex* principle does not justify the revolutions needed to produce the many modern constitutional republics in the world today, the fact is that they now exist, they are legitimate states (despite possibly illegitimate revolutions producing them), and if they were created on the basis of some form of *lex rex*, it may be legitimate to then apply the *Lex Rex* principle to those republics. In theory, constitutional republics were set up such that their constitution is the *lex* that is supposed to ultimately be doing the *rexing*. Theoretically, the authority of their governing document(s) is above the authority of the elected leaders that come and go. In practice it is often the other way around. But for a true *lex rex* type of arrangement, there seems to be room to explore the *Lex Rex* loophole to determine if a justifiable position of armed resistance against unconstitutional (unlawful) leaders may be warranted.

DAVID VS SAUL

Many evangelical thinkers tend to see the appointed leader of state as still possessing his delegated authority, office, anointing, and protected status as regent even after he has started following evil spirits down the bloody and satanic path. He is still protected by the nature of his office rather than his own nature. This position is partially derived from the amazing self-restraint David showed when he had two opportunities to kill his nemesis, the tyrannical King Saul (1 Sam. 24, 26).

For multiple reasons, if anyone in human history ever had the right to commit righteous regicide, it was David. First, it clearly would have been in self-defense. Saul had made his murderous intentions known (1 Sam. 20, 23) and, along with 3,000 soldiers, was actively hunting David in the wilderness of Engedi (19:1-2; 23:15).

Second, satisfying Calvin's criteria, David and his band of armed followers could be seen as the smaller, anointed magistrate that could have the legitimate right and duty to chastise the larger anointed magistrate. Both Saul and David had already been anointed by Samuel as the King of Israel by this time. Moreover, God had already *rejected* Saul as Israel's king because Saul had "rejected the word of the LORD" (1 Sam. 15:26 ESV). The Lord had "turned away" from Saul and became his "enemy" because Saul did not "obey the voice of the Lord" (1 Sam. 29:16-18). God had also instructed the prophet Samuel to anoint David as Israel's next King (16:13). The Spirit of the Lord was poured upon David at the time that Samuel anointed David with oil and it was clearly recorded that God's Spirit immediately left Saul and rested on David (16:13-14). In its place, a "harmful spirit from God" had begun to harass Saul (16:16,23; 18:10 ESV). When David attempted to help Saul, Saul attempted to pin David to the wall with a spear (18:10-11). Saul also tried to spear his son Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:30-34). There is room to argue that Saul's divine anointing had worn off.

Fourth, the two opportunities David had to kill Saul were so uncanny and improbable as to seem providential. To David's little band of faithful warriors, it really seemed—and quite understandably so—that God had sovereignly delivered Saul into David's hand in a cave. It seemed like a miracle—too impossible in the history of asymmetric warfare to have been anything other than the result of divine orchestration. It seemed like the fulfillment of the prophetic word of the Lord and was easily harmonizable with the revealed will of the Lord.

But David surprises us all. He refused to kill Saul when he had the chance and he forbade his warriors from slaying him too. For David, who had a heart after the Lord's own heart, and whose leadership was presumably filled by the Spirit, Saul's anointing had not worn off. David explained: "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD's anointed, to put out my hand against him, seeing he is the LORD's anointed." (24:6). So great was David's Spirit-led respect for the anointing and appointing of the theocratic king that he even felt compunction over slicing off a small corner of Saul's robe!

In a second instance, Saul was given into David's hands again while Saul and his 3,000 soldiers were hunting David in the wilderness of Ziph (1 Sam. 26). David and Abishai crept into Saul's camp at night and stole Saul's spear and his water jar.²¹ Abishai was in one unintended sense quite correct when he exclaimed, "God has given your enemy into your hand this day. . ." (26:8). God clearly did superintend the occasion because "No man saw it or knew it, nor did any awake, for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the Lord had fallen upon them" (26:12). The reason David did not allow Abishai or himself to put evil tyrant out of everyone's misery was the same as before: "Do not destroy him, for who can put their hand against the Lord's anointed and be guiltless? . . . As the Lord lives, the Lord will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down into battle and perish. The Lord forbid that I should put out my hand against the Lord's anointed." (26:9-11). These two opportunities for tyrannicide were in fact divinely orchestrated. God used them both as opportunities to teach us divine truths of the doctrine of christology²²—truths that are not necessarily intuitive to human reason.

David's respect for the anointed Saul is emphasized again when David heard about Saul's death, Philistine archers who wounded Saul (1 Sam. 31:1-6; 1 Chron. 10:3) and then Philistine chariots and horsemen were making their way towards capturing Saul (2 Sam. 1:6). Saul fell on his own sword after his armor-bearer refused Saul's command to hasten his death. When the Amalekite who brought Saul's crown to David claimed to have ended Saul's life (2 Sam. 1:1-10), David asked, "How is it that you were

not afraid to put out your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?" before ordering his execution for claiming that he had "killed the Lord's anointed" (2 Sam. 1:14-16). In David's authoritative view of christology, nothing Saul ever did—tyranny, attempted murder, madness, necromancy, etc.—removed Saul's divine anointing. For David, only the Lord was allowed to end Saul's life.²³

There seems to be a palpable disparity between David's view of resistance to the anointed regent and the view of Schaeffer, Knox, and Rutherford. Schaeffer does not explain how he is able to get around this obstacle to regicide. He does offer, "While we must always be subject to the *office* of the magistrate, we are not to be subject to the *man* in that office who commands that which is contrary to the Bible" (CM 474). But he doesn't explain how to logically separate the office from the man while the man holds that office. This loophole is one that David seemed to be unaware of. As Schaeffer indicates that "Rutherford illustrated this pattern of resistance from the life of David" (CM 475) and refers to Rutherford quite favorably, we might assume a tacit deference on this matter to Rutherford. Rutherford did attempt to refute this objection in Questions XXXI and XXXII of his book titled *Lex Rex*. At the risk of oversimplification, he seems to suggest that since Saul's tyranny was only aimed at one man (David), rather than the entire kingdom, the need for personal self-defense (of one man) did not justify tyrannicide. But if Saul's tyranny had been "*againft the whole Kingdome and Religion, & labouring to introduce arbitrary Government, Popery, Idolatry, and to deftroy Lawes and Liberties, and Parliaments, then David were obliged to kill thefe murtherers in their fleep.*"²⁴ Enlarging the scope and depth of the tyranny has emotive and rhetorical value but loses coherence with the clear and singular rationale that David gave for not attacking Saul: IT IS WRONG FOR ANY OF GOD'S HUMAN SERVANTS TO ATTEMPT TO HARM GOD'S ANOINTED REGENT. Until a more persuasive explanation for their divergence is found, this remains a major weakness in Schaeffer's argument.

In the attempt to patch this hole in Schaeffer's argument, we could argue for discontinuity between David's christology and the leaders of our gentile states today. None of our leaders today are chosen by God according to the direction of a prophet of God, none are anointed with oil by a prophet of God, and none are given the Spirit of God (evidenced by prophesying) to help him rule. Contrary to some fringe theories, none of our modern leaders are descendants of King David either. In past centuries, when the Roman Catholic Church-and-States in Europe presumed themselves to be the new Israel, and imagined the Catholic Priesthood to be the replacements for prophets like Samuel, the coronations of the political monarchs and emperors by a priestly representative of the Latin Church may have resembled the Samuel-David dynamic in form while carrying none of its substance. After the era of monarchies in Europe ended, and the era of democratically elected leaders began, no pretense remained of any divine-royal connection in form or substance. The David-Saul principle may have only been applicable to the theocratic kingdom of Israel during its monarchical period(s). It's applicability to any gentile kingdom today is questionable. Another good question to be explored is whether God sovereignly puts all leaders of all nations into place and if they too enjoy a protected status much like Saul did. Although they are not visibly anointed by a prophet of God, it seems they have an invisible anointing that accommodates their sovereignly arranged appointment to leadership.²⁵

REACTION TO GEISLER'S ARGUMENTS

REACTION TO GEISLER'S 1ST ARGUMENT – GOD GAVE THE SWORD *ONLY* TO THE STATE

There is a possibility that Geisler undermines his own argument by starting with Gen. 9:5-6 before proceeding to Romans 13. Regarding Gen. 9, he explains briefly, “The sword was given to Noah to suppress unruly citizens.” He leaves us to try to unpack it ourselves. Here God told Noah and his sons that there was a new law that they and their descendants needed to start practicing: capital punishment. Every human who killed another human (here presumably premeditated murder and involuntary manslaughter) needed to be put to death. This was something that was not done in any formal sense before Noah's flood and, as a result, the whole earth became corrupt and filled with violence. In this new post-flood economy, which Geisler calls “the dispensation of human government,” the sword (the right to justly put other people to death) was given to men.²⁶

The first problem with his argument is the ambiguity with whatever is symbolized by “Noah.” Geisler interprets this fact to mean that the sword was given specifically to human governments—and not to private citizens. He fails to explain how he makes the leap from “Noah” to “human government.” The command was given to Noah, Noah's sons, and their progeny, which includes us. If the sword was given to Noah, as Geisler puts it, we may then naturally infer that the only condition so far for having the just right to the sword is being a son of Noah. In this equation, everyone Noahite collectively has a right to the sword and a duty to enforce the then-new law of capital punishment. And there is no way to differentiate between self-appointed militias of vigilante justice and group-appointed magistrates. Gen. 9 sets the stage for human governments but it doesn't get us all the way there. This invocation of Gen. 6 & 9 here could, in isolation, readily be used to create a *Lex Rex* styled argument favoring revolution. Such an argument could flow as follows:

1. It is God's clear and revealed will that the Noahites must kill everyone who is guilty of murder/manslaughter. (*I.e.*, Capital punishment.)
2. The Noahites tend to appoint one or more persons to perform this righteous and required form of killing. (*I.e.*, the state, the government, leaders, regents.)
3. When the Noahites who were appointed to do this form of killing fail to perform this duty, it is God's will for the other Noahites to disappoint them and, in their place, appoint another group of people to be appointed to do the job.
4. When the Noahites who were appointed to execute those guilty of murder/manslaughter become themselves guilty of murder/manslaughter, it is God's will for some other group of Noahites to put them to death, for they are guilty of murder/manslaughter.

With this argument, we are ushered back into the territory of Locke and Schaeffer. We may be able to invoke a modified form of the *Lex Rex* principle where we use the Noahide laws as the foundational law that ultimately has more authority than the people who are appointed to judicial, legislative, and executive positions meant to enforce that law.

Geisler's argument gains considerable strength, however, when he refocuses on Romans 13:1-7. The Christians in Rome knew who their “governing authorities” and “rulers” were. God put them there as his regents. They avenge and punish with the sword. It is abundantly clear that God gives the state the sword

and, at the risk of forming an argument from silence, there seems to be no hint that those being governed are given a sword with which to chastise their governors. The burden of the proof is on those who would say otherwise. For Geisler, the logic is simple, the argument airtight, and the matter concluded. He is not open to additional ifs, ands, or buts.

Keeping things simple and uncompromising is a strength in one way but oversimplification may be the biggest weakness. It is disappointing that he does not attempt to address Schaeffer's argument that the ruler's "anointing" is conditional upon his performing his God-given duties. It is also disappointing that while Geisler is fully aware that both Aquinas and Calvin reluctantly allowed for some modicum of armed rebellion, he doesn't interact with their reasoning either. Even if we grant Geisler his point that only government is justified in using the sword, he presents no rebuttal to the Magdeburg Lutherans and the Calvinists who under some circumstances would encourage lesser magistrates to check the higher magistrates—or, in other words, encourage the short sword to clash with the long sword.

While I would agree with Geisler that the burden of the proof rests upon those who would say there are loopholes, it is quite possible that Rom. 13 does not hold the answer to all problems that may arise. Some biblical scholars of Calvinist and Lutheran persuasions exhibit openness to additional layers of complexity in Rom. 13. For example, Leon Morris, a respected Anglican and neo-evangelical New Testament scholar offers the following in his commentary on Romans:

. . . we must take this passage seriously in its present context. . . . This understanding of the state has been strongly criticized on the grounds that it justifies every tyrant and compels the believer to obey him. It is this that is behind O'Neill's remark cited above that no passage has caused more unhappiness and misery than this one. But it must be borne in mind that Paul is writing in general terms to meet the need of the Romans and not legislating for every conceivable situation in which the Christian might find himself. He does not face, let alone resolve, the problem of when it is right to rebel against unjust tyranny (it has well been remarked that the first-century Romans had no experience of a successful revolt), or what to do when there are rival claimants to the crown or conflicts between legitimate and usurped authorities. He does not distinguish between legitimate and usurped authority, nor go into the question of when a successful rebel may be held to have become the legitimate ruler. . . . He does not say what the Christian should do when the state fails in its duty. He is not trying to cover every situation. His concern is authority, however it has come to be possessed. He is writing out of a settled order where there is no doubt as to who the ruler is, and he is telling his readers something of the duty of a citizen in such a situation.²⁷

Ernst Käsemann was a Lutheran scholar in Germany with haunting memories of the Third Reich. Starting in 1925, he devoted his life to the study of the book of Romans. Despite his theologically liberal bent, his level of scholarship is of the highest caliber and he has earned the right to be taken seriously. He similarly suggests:

. . . it must be connected with the fact that he is addressing the church in the capital city of the empire. . . . it is unlikely that among Jewish Christians in Rome, unlike the Palestinian Zealots, there were any rebellious tendencies, even if the Diaspora synagogue was not wholly unaffected by the events prior to the Jewish war. For the most part Jews enjoyed and protected the privileges of a recognized religion. . . . A basic change has taken place today, however, as the worldwide abuse of power has been so terrifyingly demonstrated. . . . Throughout church history our passages has been regarded as the classic statement of the Pauline and indeed the NT and Christian doctrine of the state, and has been made binding. . . . The doors have been thus opened in Christianity not only to conservative but also to reactionary views even to the point of political fanaticism. In opposition to this it must be stated emphatically that Paul is not advancing any theoretical considerations. He is certainly not making exhaustive statements about the relation to authorities. Thus he is silent about possible conflicts and the limits of earthly authority. The basis of what he demands is reduced to a minimum, while exegesis usually seeks to take from it a maximum. Over against the dominant traditional interest in

our text, he does not in fact say anything about the state as such or about the Roman empire. . . . As the apostle's terminology shows, he has in view very different local and regional authorities and he is not so much thinking of institutions as of organs and functions, ranging from the tax collector to the police, magistrates, and Roman officials. It deals with that circle of bearers of power with whom the common man may come in contact and behind which he sees the regional or central administration. . . . Even if one does not want to relativize the demand that every existing political authority be recognized as established by the will of God, one does not evade the problem of how it is to be translated into the present situation and how it can be put into practice there.²⁸

In his commentary on Romans, William Hendriksen suggests:

It is clear, then, that, in writing as he does here in Rom. 13:2, the apostle is thinking of the ruler who is performing his duty of preserving order, approving good behavior, and punishing evil. In *that* case he who opposes the authority is, indeed, resisting the divine ordinance. . . . The apostle is not establishing universally valid principle that opposing the authority and disobeying a command issued by a civil magistrate is always wrong. In reading Paul's letters, filled with instructions and exhortations, one must be sure to make allowance for restrictions and qualifications, whether expressed or implied. . . . That the apostle was referring to normal, and not to outrageous or mistaken, governmental functioning is clear from verse. . . . To be sure, the magistrates punish, but under normal circumstances those who receive punishment have only themselves to blame. . . . Paul's statement that, in the normal run of events, rulers are not a terror to good conduct but to bad, stands therefore.²⁹

Geisler may still be correct in his simple and uncompromising view of Rom. 13. Or perhaps his logic may be formally valid while one of his premises, and therefore his conclusion, may be wrong. Either way, there is a weakness here in that Geisler did not respond to a formidable amount of scholarship that suggests, along with Schaeffer, that there may be limits, conditions, loopholes, and additional layers to explore in the Rom. 13 obstacle to citizens taking up the sword against the state.

Geisler seems too quick to dismiss Schaeffer's Lockean-Jeffersonian argument. What if revolution is baked into the system? What if the state has revolution cemented into its foundation? What if the state demands revolution? Geisler anticipates this and offers two responses.

First, he says that the Lockeans were simply wrong because they don't have the biblical view of church, state, and revolution. For Geisler it is simply a matter of either obeying the biblical view or disobeying it by adopting the Lockean view. He sides with the Bible and against the Lockeans and the Declaration of Independence. It is a simple either-or proposition. But even though he disagrees with the justification for the 1770s American revolution, he still recognizes the legitimacy of the new state(s) produced in 1776 (*CE*, 258). This is where the loophole begins. Even if the 1776 system of state was produced by illegitimate means, as Geisler contends, it still becomes a legitimate state. If we grant Geisler all of his points, we still have room to develop an argument that goes something like this:

- 1) God encourages us to obey your human leaders.
- 2) The human leaders who founded our state and the foundational documents of your state encouraged us to fight off our tyrants.
- 3) Therefore, God (indirectly) encourages us to overthrow our tyrants.

Geisler's argument that the Lockean-Jeffersonian model and the biblical model are irreconcilable could be true in the pre-1776 past but might be irrelevant (*non sequitur*) after 1776. To develop this argument, the burden of proof would be on those arguing that the true American state is one that encourages armed revolution against American tyrants. It's obvious in the Declaration of Independence but less obvious in

the U.S. Constitution. Provisions for militias and the second amendment right to “keep and bear arms,” for example, could be leveraged but not without major obstacles. It seems like this loophole was in Geisler’s blind spot. And Schaeffer was going in that direction.

Geisler’s second response is more formidable. He seems to argue that whatever the current established government is, that’s the one you should obey. It doesn’t matter what the leaders would have said in the 1770s or 1810s. Governments evolve and that seems to be within the pale of God’s sovereign allowance. If the USA started off as a constitutional republic of several states with one very small and limited federal government over them in the 1770s, and then evolved to have layer upon layer of additional pieces of government stacked on top of the constitutional core, perhaps it does not matter that the new government has drifted far from the original core. It does not matter what the USA used to be in its original form. What matters is what our leaders are saying in the here and now. They are the ones in the positions of power. Not Jefferson and Madison. They are the ones who hold the sword and have the divine anointing to rule. If there was a gradual overthrow of the old constitutional system, the old is gone and the new is here. Now Geisler does not say any of this but seems to say a few things that would go in that direction.³⁰ The burden of the proof seems to be on those who would argue that we can operate on the ideal of the state as it stood in 1776 rather than the state as it stands today.³¹

REACTION TO GEISLER’S 2ND ARGUMENT – GOD EXHORTS AGAINST JOINING REVOLUTIONARIES

Geisler’s quotation of Prov. 24:21 to prove that we should always side with the existing rulers rather than the crowd that is interested in rebelling against him has some weakness. There is a possible scenario where those with righteous indignation against the state may not be joining with the rebellious but joining with the anti-rebellious. What should the patriotic citizen do when the group of rebels has been gradually taking positions of power from the legitimate rulers through multiple forms of election fraud, bribery, intrigue, conspiracy, and all the underhanded means that revolutionaries use? If the revolution is only partially accomplished, and the conglomeration of leaders are divided and polarized between libertarian, moderate, mildly progressive, and radical Marxist revolutionaries, then the proverb takes on new hues of applicability. In this type of dilemma, the patriot should not side with the revolutionaries who are only halfway through their “long march through the institutions,” as Antonio Gramsci phrased it. But if the patriots form a counter-revolution against the revolutionary forces, that type of revolution would be seen as patriotic, proper, and anti-revolutionary.

REACTION TO GEISLER’S 3RD ARGUMENT – REVOLUTIONS ARE CONSISTENTLY CONDEMNED

Geisler is correct in pointing out that the Bible does record several examples of rebellions that God condemned. We can also agree with him that we do not want to be that type of revolutionary. But there are at least three problems with his argument. First, as discussed above, he fails to leave room for the possibility of a patriotic counter-revolution to a subtle revolution. If there are five phases of a “color revolution” for revolutionaries to capture the state, and the revolutionaries have partially captured it, but not totally captured it, the counter-revolution might not be of the type of revolution that God would disapprove of.

Second, in admitting that there is one single exception of a revolution that God did approve of (against queen Athaliah), Geisler no longer has any ground to say that “revolutions are always unjust.” Even if he is right in saying that its surrounding circumstances were so particular that this couldn’t possibly be used as a precedent to support any other revolution with different circumstances, the fact remains that if there was one exception, there could be another. What if Geisler misunderstood God’s purpose for allowing it? Also, Geisler may be wrong about this exception being too exceptional. If there is one exception, perhaps there are others too. Perhaps the revolt against Athaliah proves that revolution can be a good thing.³²

The third and most glaring problem with this argument is that there are arguably several revolutions against established authorities in the Bible that God clearly blessed. The book of Judges, for example, has at least seven examples of God sovereignly giving the Israelites and their land into the hands of their enemies such that their enemies became the rightful lords and governing authorities. This was done in discipline of the Israelites. In each of those seven times, when Israel groaned and cried out to God for help, God raised up a man (and once a woman) to be a “judge” to deliver them. This invariably included bloody revolutions against their foreign overlords. Although Geisler neglected to factor them into his *Christian Ethics* book and lectures, he elsewhere enumerated these revolutions. He wrote, “The seven cycles of sin, servitude, supplication, and salvation in the Book of Judges are as follows...”

- 1) Depression by Mesopotamia for 8 years and deliverance through Othniel
- 2) Servitude to Moab, Ammon, and Amalek. Salvation through Ehud
- 3) Retribution through Canaan and rest through Deborah
- 4) Vindication by way of Midian and victory through Gideon
- 5) Ruination from Abimelech and release by Tola and Jair
- 6) Loss to Ammon and liberty through Jephtha, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon
- 7) Ensnarement by Philistines and emancipation through Samson

Even though he does not use the words like revolt, rebel, or resist, he does realize that in each instance the Israelites were *defeated* by their enemies and that “foreign powers ruled over Israel total 410 years.”³³ To be sure, there was bloody revolt. Under Ehud, the Israelites rose up and killed 10,000 Moabites. Under Samson, 4,000 were killed. God not only approved of this but gave them the supernatural ability to do the killing. God empowered them to liberate themselves. The fact that this happened in the past for Israel raises the question of whether God might do that in the present or future for another beleaguered remnant of believers.³⁴

Geisler does well in cautioning us to learn from the many revolutions that God disapproved of. But his cherry picking and deck stacking renders his third argument quite unpersuasive.

REACTION TO GEISLER’S 4TH ARGUMENT – MOSES WAS JUDGED FOR HIS VIOLENT ACT IN EGYPT

Although it is possible that Geisler may be right in thinking that God judged Moses for killing the Egyptian, a slightly stronger case can be made that God never judged him for this killing. What is clear from the text is that it was Pharaoh who judged Moses. Moses fled from Pharaoh who wanted to kill him. Pharaoh wanted to kill Moses for killing the Egyptian and siding with the Israelites (Ex. 2:15). There is nothing *explicit* in the Exodus narrative that causes us to think the Lord was upset with Moses for this

killing. What may be *implicit* may be open to more than one interpretation. The fact that God would command Moses to be his prophet and Israel's deliverer forty years later could just as easily be interpreted as a sign that God was pleased with Moses's earlier desire to be a judge and deliverer for his people. Perhaps God appreciated how Moses's heart was in the right place in killing the evil Egyptian even if Moses was not getting the timing, strategies, and tactics for the deliverance right. The author of Hebrews praises Moses for switching from team Egypt to team Israel and "choosing to be mistreated with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin" (Heb. 11:24-27). The events that mark Moses's moment of repentance and faith was killing the Egyptian and fleeing to Midian. Upon his arrival in Midian, Moses's use of the real threat of physical force to deliver the daughters of the priest of Midian from a gang of oppressive men was certainly smiled upon (Ex. 2:16-21).

Was God really keeping Moses on the "back burner" for forty years a punishment for killing the Egyptian? And was God really waiting on Moses's heart to be changed from a man of violence to a useable instrument? There may be better theories for why God didn't activate Moses's calling until forty years later. From what is *explicit in the text*, God was waiting for two things to occur: First, he was waiting for that Pharaoh of Egypt to die and a new one to take his place (Ex. 2:23). Second, and more importantly, God was waiting for Israel to groan and cry out to him for help (Ex. 2:23-25; 3:7-9). There is nothing in the text suggesting God was waiting for Moses to repent or learn some lesson. Forty years prior, the Israelites were not ready for deliverance. Moses may have been ready to deliver them back then but they were not ready to be delivered. Perhaps Moses was just ahead of his time and perhaps the death of Egyptian oppressors on behalf of the Israelite slaves was not in and of itself an evil thing. Perhaps God did not allow Moses and the Israelites to kill the Egyptians because he wanted to get all the glory for himself and make it abundantly clear to everyone—to the Egyptians, to the Israelites, to the Canaanites—that God was the one who delivered Israel. And perhaps it was no coincidence that the Lord arranged it so that Moses would spend forty years shepherding hundreds of actual sheep in Midian before God promoted him to be a shepherd to thousands of Israelites in the wilderness. Perhaps those forty years were not punishment but simply a unique form of leadership schooling.

REACTION TO GEISLER'S 5TH ARGUMENT – ISRAEL DID NOT FIGHT PHAROAH BUT FLED FROM HIM

In pointing out that God did not allow the Israelites to conduct a violent revolution against their Egyptian oppressors, Geisler points out a very powerful precedent. He is arguing from the greater to the lesser. If Israel had such a level of oppression and such a high degree of promise, and they were not allowed to take up the sword, those of us who have less oppression and no claim on the promises made to Abraham must have even less right to the sword. This event does set a powerful precedent that all would-be revolutionaries need to stay mindful of. And Geisler is surely right when he says that God sets mighty leaders up and he sovereignly takes them down in his own timing.

But should this precedent be extended to all future situations? Is what was true for Israel in that one time necessarily true for all peoples at all times? Not necessarily. God had very a very specific plan for making his glory known in a very unique way at that time in that place among those peoples. That particular equation has never quite been duplicated in history since. For other peoples at other times, perhaps God does not want to fight for them and take the same kind of glory. Perhaps he would rather they defend themselves. More biblical data from additional samples is needed for an inductive argument.

This precedent may be an exception. Perhaps the lesson to learn from it is this: IF AND WHEN IT IS CLEAR THAT GOD WANTS TO GAIN ALL THE GLORY BY DOING ALL OF THE FIGHTING TO DELIVER YOUR PEOPLE, GET OUT OF HIS WAY AND LET HIM DO ALL THE KILLING. But the converse might still be true too: If God is not going to do the fighting to deliver your people, perhaps it is up to you and your people.

REACTION TO GEISLER'S 6TH ARGUMENT - JESUS EXHORTED AGAINST USING THE SWORD

Geisler again gives an important and powerful precedent to ponder when he points out that our Lord commanded the well-intentioned Peter to put his sword back in its sheath. This fact may have profound implications for our revolutionary equations. However, his argument is weak because of two interpretational leaps he made which seem unwarranted. He argues that Jesus is “warn[ing] his disciples against the aggressive use of the sword . . . [against] the servant of an existing authority. . .” But Jesus didn’t actually say any of that explicitly. It is not recorded in any of the four gospel accounts. And there is no guarantee that it was implied either. While it’s possible that Geisler’s guess is right, we cannot trace his steps and cannot see a clear path from what Jesus actually said to what Geisler reasons he was saying.

To be precise, Jesus was saying to Peter (and the other ten disciples) that this one particular incident—where Jesus was being apprehended by Jewish authorities accompanied by an armed mob—was not the time and place for giving armed resistance to prevent his arrest. He never said anything like, “Guys, no fighting here because armed resistance to authorities is wrong in all times, places, and circumstances.” And we don’t know from this particular text exactly why Jesus told Peter to sheath his sword. Geisler asserts that the reason is the man Peter attacked was “the servant of an existing authority.” While it is true that the man was a servant of an existing authority, nothing in this text demands that this is the rationale. It is just a guess. It may be a good guess. But it has no glue to make it stick.

Second, we don’t really know what Jesus’s reason was from this text for commanding Peter to cease his attack. The rationale Jesus actually stated was: “for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.” While this is an ominous warning, we don’t really know what that means. We can’t unpack it. While it is possible to interpret the second sword as the “existing authorities,” a more generic and less symbolic interpretation may be more natural. People who use swords typically get killed by swords. Whatever Jesus means here, he does make it seem like a universal principle that could be generally true for all people in all times—including Christians in the brave new world. But if this is a proverb, it may be something that is just generally true and not always true. Surely there are some warriors who unsheathed their swords, won their battles, and died in old age in their beds. It’s difficult to say that this is an inviolable truth that applies to everyone in every situation. Even if we take it as true in all possible ways, we may be left with the subjective choice of deciding whether our own future deaths by the sword are really a persuasive reason to not start swinging ours now in what we imagine to be a just cause. Perhaps the cause is worthy of dying by the sword. If so, Christ’s warning is heard, heeded, weighed, and rejected without actual disobedience.

To attempt to salvage and strengthen this argument, we should consider the explicit reason that Jesus gave for sheathing Peter’s sword: “Pilate [asked] . . . ‘What have you done?’ Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.’” (John 18:35-36).

This narrows it down to a specific occasion and a specific application. This revelation hurts his argument by making it clear that the primary application of these two passages must be relegated strictly to one specific situation that will never be duplicated again in human history: the arrest of Jesus. It's not meant to be a universal truth for all people at all times. It may be fair to reapply it from Peter and the other ten to ourselves today as follows: If you ever happen to see Jesus being arrested, you should not try to prevent his arrest with swords, so long as his kingdom remains not of this world.

We may also deduce from this passage that the idea of Christ's servants fighting with swords against "existing authorities" (such as the Temple Guards, the Sanhedrin, or even Roman soldiers) is not discouraged for all times and places. The door is opened here to think that it is theoretically possible that if and when Jesus returns to establish his kingdom on earth, it will be good for his servants to unsheath our swords and fight against the enemies of Jesus. The question then will be not whether our enemies are "existing authorities" or not but, "Is Jesus establishing his kingdom on earth at this time?" It seems to me that a good, secondary application of this passage is that Christ's servants should not try to fight for Christ's kingdom on earth with swords in the name of Christ and his kingdom so long as Christ's kingdom is not being actively established on earth by Christ himself. This is hypothetical and unlikely as other passages indicate that Jesus and his angels probably won't be asking for our help when he returns in power to defeat his enemies and re-establishes the throne of David in earthly Jerusalem. Regardless, the principle of "while Christ's kingdom is not of this earth, his servants do not fight for him with swords" remains important to factor into our revolution equation. Doing so would help Geisler's 6th argument.

But other problems may surface. Within evangelicalism there is a spectrum of views about Christ's kingdom and disagreement about how imminent/transcendent it presently is.³⁵ Those who emphasize the "already" over the "not yet" may judge themselves more justified in unsheathing Peter's old sword against the brave new Sanhedrin and the brave new Roman Empire. And since we have dual citizenship, both in Christ's heavenly kingdom and in one or more earthly kingdoms, there is the option for a servant of Christ to consider unsheathing his sword for an earthly kingdom regardless of the state of Christ's kingdom. Moreover, as a community of Christians grows from a marginalized minority in an earthly kingdom to an influential population, challenges and questions increase in complexity.

Our view of the kingdom may dictate or at least heavily influence our view of armed resistance. But the subject of the kingdom is notoriously difficult to interpret with statements like, "the kingdom is near" and "the kingdom is among you." And what are we to do with the report of Jesus saying, "until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence and the violent take it by force" (Mt. 11:12 ESV)? One could interpret this to mean that Christ's followers are to wrench the kingdom away from the prince of darkness by whatever level of force is necessary and create the kingdom on earth ourselves.³⁶ One of the reasons evangelicals probably won't be able to achieve a unified consensus on armed resistance is widely differing views of the kingdom.

REACTION TO GEISLER'S 7TH ARGUMENT - JESUS SPOKE AGAINST RETALIATION

Geisler does well to point out that the movement Jesus started rejected the revolutionary spirit and actions of the Jewish zealot movement. This is another powerful precedent to weigh. With the

exception of one ear that was cut and then healed, Jesus and his followers had no blood on their hands. While a few of them were permitted to carry swords, which we may safely presume allows for some modicum of self-defense against bandits and highwaymen, they never formed a militia and never laid siege to any of King Herod's fortresses, the Antonia Fortress which allowed Roman soldiers to keep an eye on the Jerusalem temple, nor on the Roman settlements in Caesarea. When the Apostle Paul was arrested by Roman soldiers and asked by their commander, "Aren't you the Egyptian who started a revolt and led four thousand terrorists out into the wilderness some time ago?" (Acts 21:37-39) the mistake was almost comical. Paul suffered violence frequently and never dishd any out.

The idea of these forms of revolution are absurd not because of popular sentiment among the Jews of Jesus's day but because of the non-violent nature of Jesus's teaching and example. Geisler's invocation of the Sermon on the Mount and the need to not retaliate are good points. One possible weakness is that there is a spectrum of opinions in various Christian traditions about how applicable the Sermon on the Mount is to Christians today. Some may not be as quick to apply it as Geisler is. Presumably it should at least have some secondary and indirect application to Christians in the current dispensation. But it should not be superimposed on all things as if it answers all questions for all situations. Perhaps it addresses interpersonal relationships between private citizens of various kingdoms but cannot be realistically applied to kingdom-versus-kingdom relationships. Perhaps it was primarily applicable to a kingdom that Jesus offered, which the Jews rejected, and which waits for a future day to be installed.

Geisler seems right in saying that would-be revolutionaries are disqualified from revolutionary work if their motive is that of retribution. But a weakness in his argument is in saying that all revolutionary spirit is ultimately the spirit of retribution. Some revolutionaries are not actually motivated by retaliation, revenge, and vengeance. Some revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries are motivated by a high ethical IQ, a passion to "do good to all men, especially the brethren" (Gal. 6:10), a strong sense of justice, patriotism, a vision for how things should be, a compulsion to fight great evil for the sake of the benefit of future generations of people, or self-defense. These are not synonymous with retaliation. Nor is revolution. To develop this argument, one would need to show how justice (regardless of motivation) is synonymous with "vengeance" and retribution. Perhaps such an argument could be developed.

CONCLUSION

Schaeffer and Geisler both agree that Christians should give a brave new resistance to the brave new world with prayer, apologetics, polemic, evangelism, peaceful protest, and social action. Both would agree that the so-called Great Reset begs for a Great Resist. The question of defending the communities of faith with armed resistance is one that needs further development. While we may not be able to achieve a singular consensus, the urgency to hone our ethics of righteous resistance increases as the tolerance of the state for peaceful protest continues to decrease. While the Schaeffer-Geisler disagreement is a good place to start for those who want to develop their doctrine of resistance, it is not a good place to end. Schaeffer's arguments had some strengths and weaknesses. So did Geisler's. Both were formidable and thought-provoking but neither were fully persuasive. Neither were exhaustive either.

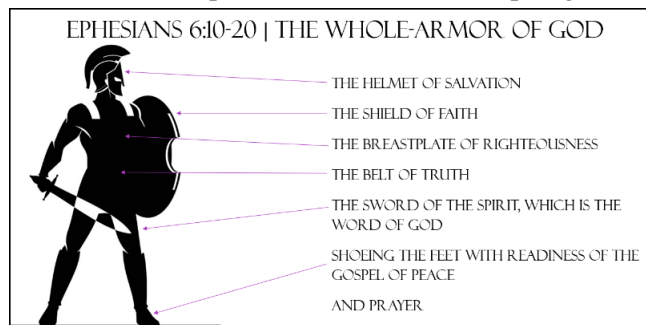
Schaeffer is particularly intriguing on the idea that the divine anointing of regents has a contingency clause. While he did not satisfy the burden of proof to establish it, it would be interesting to

see how others might try to develop it. Rutherford’s *Lex Rex* arguments are fairly sophisticated and perhaps not exhaustively or faithfully represented here. Perhaps if the *Lex* in mind could be condensed to a subset of the seven Noahide laws, or some condensed form of natural law, perhaps it would have a better chance of working. Schaeffer’s Locke-inspired argument seems like it could have potential and should be explored and developed further. Even if was not applicable to the empires of antiquity, or the monarchies prior to 1917, it may be especially applicable to modern constitutional republics. Calvin’s concession for lesser magistrates also seems worth further exploration. Assuming self-defense in general is permissible, thomistic tyrannicide³⁷ may be worth reconsidering. Having dual-citizenship, both in Christ’s heavenly kingdom and in an earthly kingdom, does not necessarily prohibit earthly work in earthly kingdoms even when our heavenly citizenship takes precedence.

Geisler seems for now to hold the high ground on Romans 13, which, not insignificantly, was written around the time the Neronian persecution of Christians began. But his view of R13 could be oversimplified and is not unassailable. R13 may not answer all questions and just may have one or more loopholes to explore. Geisler also has better affinity to the David vs Saul precedent. But further argument would be needed to apply that theocratic kingdom concept to today’s democratic systems of government.³⁸ Geisler’s premillennial view of Christ’s kingdom makes Peter’s sheathing of his sword at Jesus’s arrest an important precedent for the Church needing to not use the sword against the state while we wait for Jesus to return in power and establish his own earthly kingdom. In opposing armed resistance, Geisler seems to have on his side the precedents of Jesus, the Twelve Apostles, and the earliest Christians who suffered as sheep among wolves while being harmless as doves. Making a case for Christians to endure injustice and suffering is easy from almost any book in the New Testament (*e.g.*, Phil. 1:7,23,29; 2:5-8; 2:30; 3:8-11); making a case from the New Testament that Christians should ever cause suffering to others is, by contrast, a daunting challenge.

Although neither thinker brought it up, in the future, when the so-called Anti-Christ takes power over ten of the world’s kingdoms, the emphasis for Jesus followers is to endure the persecution, receiving violence but seemingly not offering any in return. In that brave new world, Christs followers are encouraged to flee, but not to fight. (Dan. 11-12; Mt. 24:13-22). This would tend to lend support to Geisler’s side. While it does not answer all questions, it makes it seem like two bookends between Christ’s first coming as the lamb and his second coming as the lion. At the beginning and at the end of this age, Christ’s followers are called to suffer, endure, and flee during their sojourns in this world as his ambassadors. But, not to cause suffering, even for our enemies. It could seem inconsistent to suggest that there is room for violence *against the state* in any of the centuries in-between.

While there is still room to consider nuances and loopholes for armed resistance to the state, apologists and evangelists today should focus on the fact that the Apostle Paul, who did his apologetics and evangelism in a time of persecution, saw the defense of the faith as spiritual and ideological rather than geo-political. He made that clear in Eph. 6:10-10. Our struggle is not against “flesh and blood” but against evil spirits. We are at war but our weapons are limited to the “sword of the spirit, which is the word of God,” and prayer.



This is also our takeaway from 2 Cor. 10:3-5 (ESV), which says, “For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ. . .” Living in a brave new world does not change the mission. When Paul wrote this to the believers in Corinth, he was almost certainly picturing the Acrocorinth, a formidable fortress built upon massive rock that overlooked the city of Corinth. Control of that stronghold helped the Macedonians control the Greek city-states. The Acrocorinth also had a pagan temple of the goddess Aphrodite and other idols. This is the type of stronghold that we need divine power to destroy with proper argumentation. Even if there do prove to be legitimate loopholes that may lead to the right of armed resistance to the state, the wars of this world with the weapons of this world shouldn’t be allowed to interfere with the more important spiritual-ideological war. It may be impossible to exhaust the options for non-violent resistance in this era of 5th generation warfare (5GW)—warfare that is “non-kinetic” and focuses on information and perception.

“Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do,
you will save both yourself and your hearers.” (1 Tim. 4:16 NIV)

Copyright © 2023 by Christopher T. Haun. All rights reserved.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christopher Travis Haun was born in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1973, and still lives there with his wife Trish and four young-adult children. In the Greek language, *Christo-pher* means “one who carries Christ.” He hopes to live up to that name. He was named ‘Travis’ after Colonel William Barrett Travis, the famed military commander of the Republic of Texas who met his end defending the Alamo. Christopher has worked professionally in the IT industry for 25 years and enjoys pondering the ethics of emerging technologies. Christopher majored in biblical studies at Tyndale Theological Seminary and Biblical Institute and has been slowly working through a Master’s Degree in systematic theology and Christian apologetics at Veritas International University. He is the director of Bastion Books, a small Christian book publishing company which he and Norm Geisler started together in 2013. He is also the editor of the *Journal of the International Society of Christian Apologetics*. He has contributed chapters to the *Comprehensive Guide to Science and Faith* (Harvest House, 2021), *The Harvest Handbook of Apologetics* (Harvest House, 2019), *Vital Issues in the Inerrancy Debate* (W&S, 2016). He has also contributed articles to the *Journal of the International Society of Christian Apologetics* and blogposts to <http://defendinginerrancy.com>.

This paper may periodically be updated at <http://cthaun.tech/resist>

Please feel free to send feedback to [cthaun\[at-symbol-here\]outlook.com](mailto:cthaun[at-symbol-here]outlook.com)

Notes

¹ In his dystopian fiction novel *Brave New World* (1933), Aldous Huxley, a humanist who preferred liberty and decentralization, warned us about a world in which BigGovernment, BigTech, BigMedia, and BigPharma all work together to condition the people to desire servitude to an authoritarian-totalitarian dictatorship run by technocrats and oligarchs. People will subtly be forced to freely choose servitude to the state. In his book *Brave New World Revisited* (1958), Huxley predicted that dictatorship of the Communist party would rule all the third-world countries by 1980. The dictatorships in the first-world countries would be similar but more able to rule more sophisticated forms of manipulation than fear, terror, kidnapping by secret police, torture and such which Soviet and Maoist implementations of Marxism were known for.

² Passages supporting civil obedience include Matthew 22:21-22 & Mark 12:17, Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-18; 1 Tim. 2:1-3; Tit. 3:1. *C.f.*, Prov. 8:15; Jer. 29:7; Dan. 2:20-21; Dan. 4:17, 32; Dan. 5:18-31; Acts 17:26. Examples of civil disobedience include Ex. 1:15-2:5, *cf.*, Heb. 11:23; Ex. 2:11-15, *cf.*, Heb. 11:25-27; Joshua 2, *cf.*, Heb. 11:31; 1 Sam. 14:45; 1 Ki. 18:3-19; 2 Ki. 11:1-6; Dan. 1:6-16; Dan. 3; Dan. 6; Esther 4; Acts 5:29, *c.f.*, Acts 4:19-20; Rev. 13:15.

Satanic here means not just tyrannical but *adversarial* with respect to God and the things of God—the revelation (both general and special) of God, the servants of God, people formed in the image of God, and the institutions instituted by God such as marriage, family, government that properly acts on God’s behalf, and anything that is “true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, worthy of praise, and excellent” (Phi. 4:8). As the State becomes more satanic, it naturally exhibits more of the classic attributes of the Satan—murdering and lying (Jn. 8:44), killing, stealing and destroying (Jn. 10:10), deceiving (Gen. 3:4-5; 2 Co. 4:4; 11:3, 14; Rev. 12:9), accusing (Rev. 12:10), usurping, rebelling, tempting, etc.

³ International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, R.C. Sproul, and Norman Geisler, *Explaining Biblical Inerrancy: The Chicago Statements on Biblical Inerrancy, Hermeneutics, and Application with Official ICBI Commentary* (Arlington, TX: Bastion Books, 2013), 50. Or, alternatively, https://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI_3.pdf.

⁴ In their introduction to The Chicago Statement on Biblical Application, the ICBI reported that they had “a fairly united mind” regarding the dilemmas raised by “modern statism, with its worship of centralization, its pervasively paternalist ethos, and its ready sanctioning of objectional views . . . whether in its fascist or Marxist form or in any other.” *Explaining Biblical Inerrancy*, 57.

⁵ When the council met for Summit III, Chuck Colson first set the tone by reading his paper “The State Under God” in council. Despite being one of Schaeffer’s greatest protégés, Colson couldn’t follow him on this one single point. (Charles W. Colson, “The State Under God,” in Kenneth S. Kantzer, ed., *Applying the Scriptures: Papers from ICBI Summit III* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987], 285.) Norm Geisler, one of the original core members of the ICBI and was one of its most influential thinkers in all three summits, would have agreed. Siding with Schaeffer, John W. Whitehead responded to Colson saying (A) a more “aggressive confrontation” is needed, (B) “I found him weak in his conclusions of how Christians should respond to the state when it violates its divine appointment,” (C) he expressed doubts over whether the non-violent ideal Colson expressed could and should adequately address all questions when the realities of “spiritual warfare [that is] often implemented through the temporal agencies of the state,” and (D) recommended “more emphasis on our response to the secular state” to the council. (John W. Whitehead, “A Response to the State Under God,” in *Applying the Scriptures*, 293-294.) Kenneth Kantzer argued that “the role of the Christian in the exercise of the sword” as an “area needing development by Evangelicals” and he encouraged the council to consider (A) “the boundary between nonviolent and violent opposition to bad laws,” (B) “what should the Evangelical do about opposition to a government that not only passes unwise and unjust laws but refuses to generally support the good and put down evil,” and (C) “When, if ever, does the Christian have the duty to resist violently or engage in seditious or rebellious acts?” (Kenneth Kantzer, “A Response to the State Under God,” in Kenneth S. Kantzer, ed., *Applying the Scriptures*, 296.)

⁶ The terms resist, resistance, revolt, and revolution may be used interchangeably in this paper. This may cause confusion. Armed resistance may seem softer than armed revolution. The former may connote the use of whatever minimum amount of force is needed to resist in a defensive stance with no intention of overthrowing the government. The latter could carry more offensive aims of overthrowing a government. Geisler and Schaeffer seem to use the terms interchangeably. There may be something unfortunate about words like revolution and revolt in Schaeffer's and Geisler's arguments. I have attempted to use "armed resistance" to the state where possible to indicate a level of force that may be far less than revolution. Resistance is minimalist and defensive while revolution is maximalist and offensive. Revolutionaries attempt to overthrow the government and replace it with a new government. But armed resistance simply is the use of whatever force is needed to frustrate the attempts of the state to destroy the lives of one or more segment of the population under their jurisdiction.

Schaffer is not necessarily calling for revolution, even if he uses that word and speaks favorably of the 1770s revolution. He instead seems to be calling for an incremental approach that starts with nonviolent resistance, moves when needed to a minimal amount of armed resistance in self-defense, and then, if the state declares war on its people, progresses to commensurate levels of force. His call to arms is not a calling of lambs to become lions for the sake of destroying the jackals and hyenas. He may just be calling some of the lambs to grow a pair of ram horns to brandish before the wolves. If there are no rams to protect the flock, the wolves have a ready invite to a free dinner. But if there are rams protecting the flock, even though the wolves may overcome them, the fact that there is some measure of defense might make it so the wolves may not attack at all. They may move on to find easier targets. In the USA, the porcupine is the animal most frequently used as a symbol for libertarianism and the libertarian party. It was chosen as a mascot because it is an animal that does no harm to its neighbors in any offensive sense. But by God's design, its body is armed with quills which give it a significant amount of defense against predators and aggressors. The wolf or mountain lion that makes the mistake of attacking it ultimately wounds itself. The level of defense is just enough to ward off the second attack. With this imagery in mind, it may be better to use the term "armed resistance" than "armed revolution."

⁷ See Articles X ("Law and Justice") and XI ("War") in Article IX of "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Application" (1986) in *Explaining Biblical Inerrancy*, 67-69. The one affirmation that could possibly be slightly discouraging to revolution is the affirmation "that Christ's rule through His Word must not be confused with the power He grants to civil governments." This could possibly—but not certainly—suggest God gives the right to use the sword to civil governments but does not give the Church, Christians, or private citizens in general the right to use the sword against the state.

⁸ In 1987, Colson was open to the possibility of revolution under the condition that "there must be a better alternative as a result of the revolution. Its advantages must outweigh the suffering, and the evil employed in the revolution must prevent a far greater evil than the status quo." But he seems pessimistic about that being possible because "as history reveals, revolution most often results, after the bodies are buried, in one form of tyranny replacing another. G.K. Chesterton summed it up well: 'The real case against revolution is this: That there always seems to be much more to be said against the new regime than in favor of the new regime.'" (Charles Colson, *Kingdoms in Conflict* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987], 330-331.) In 2015, Colson wrote positively of Samuel Rutherford's *Lex rex* principle, insists evangelicals need to lose their peacetime mentality and adopt a wartime mentality, but insists that our war is strictly spiritual-and-ideological rather than physical (Charles Colson, *My Final Word* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015], 176, 219). In his 600-page book *How Shall we Live?*, which is dedicated to Francis Schaeffer and predicated upon Schaeffer's work generally, he is careful to not advocate for armed revolution while advocating for an otherwise non-violent and revolution (Charles Colson and Nancy Percy, *How Shall We Live?* [Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1999]. In the judgement of John and Paul Feinberg, "even when disobedience is permissible, nothing scriptural justifies disobedience in the form of *violent disruption* of the state." John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, 2nd edition (Wheaton: Crossway, 1993, 2010), 734. Incidentally, the title of this book happens to have been the inspiration for the theme of the 2023 ISCA meeting. Os Guinness, another one of Francis Schaeffer's great protégés, also parted ways with Schaeffer on this one point in *The Dust of Death: The Sixties Counterculture and How it Changed America Forever* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1994), 171-179.

⁹ John W. Whitehead's book *The Second American Revolution* (Elgin: David C. Cook Publishing, 1982) came out four years before the ICBI Summit III and its forward was written by Francis Schaeffer to commend Whitehead's "foundation and framework for fighting the tyrannical, secularist, humanistic power, which has separated our country from its Judeo-Christian base and now dominates this nation and its courts." Geisler was responding primarily to Francis Schaeffer and secondarily to John Whitehead. In his endorsement for Gary Amos's book *Defending the Declaration: How the Bible and Christianity Influenced the Writing of the Declaration of Independence* (Charlottesville, VA: Providence Foundation, 1989), Ronald Nash admitted that Amos's arguments were forcing him to re-examine some opinions he had held for a long time. This suggests he was becoming more open to armed resistance. Professor Amos picks up where Schaeffer left off and gives a more scholarly treatment of Schaeffer's argument. While not necessarily being supportive of the 1770s American Revolution, some of the ICBI members who held postmillennial view of the kingdom, such as Jay Grimstead and Greg Bahnsen, would presumably have been favorable to an armed revolution in the future to establish Christ's kingdom on earth.

Disagreeing with John MacArthur directly (and Norm Geisler indirectly), Wayne Grudem later concluded, "I am convinced, after studying the historical situation and the principles of Scripture, that the American Revolution was morally justified in the sight of God." Wayne Grudem, *Politics—According to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 89.

¹⁰ Francis A. Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto*, The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Vol. 5, A Christian View of the West (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1982), 483. This edition of *A Christian Manifesto* may be abbreviated as *CM* going forward.

¹¹ Francis A. Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto*, The Complete Works, Vol. 5, 452. C.f., Francis Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture*, The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Vol. 5, A Christian View of the West (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1982), 143-147. This edition of *How Should We Then Live?* may be abbreviated as *HSWTL* going forward.

¹² Norman Geisler, "An Evaluation of Marxist Humanism (Part 1 of 2)," 1983. <http://normangeisler.com/marxism-1>. In the 21st century, he was particularly concerned about giving resistance to the community-organizing revolutionaries trained by Saul Alinsky. Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology: In One Volume* (Arlington, TX: Bastion Books, 2021), 1566. As part of the effort to update his 1983 book on secular humanism, Norm asked Christopher Haun to update the chapter on Marxist humanism and above all to be sure to address the problem of Alinsky and his followers. See Norman Geisler and Christopher Haun, "An Evaluation of Marxist Humanism (Part 2 of 2)," 2017. <http://normangeisler.com/marxism-2>. The updated book may be republished by Bastion Books in 2024 or 2025.

¹³ Norm Geisler's lecture "The Christian and Armed Revolution" may have originally been recorded somewhere between 1981 and 1984 (perhaps at Dallas Theological Seminary) and was sold in the 1990s as an audio cassette by ImpactApologetics.com. The cassette was digitized by Christopher Haun and the MP3 files were provided to Norman Geisler International Ministries (NGIM.org) per license of Geisler Enterprises, LLC. Although the lecture has not been made available at <https://ngim.org/audio-libraries> yet, it may be available there in the future. This lecture follows his sub-chapter on "Revolutions are Always Unjust" in his book *Christian Ethics* perfectly and sheds significant light on his dense chapter.

¹⁴ Norman Geisler, *Christian Ethics, 2nd edition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1989, 2012), 259. Going forward, this edition of *Christian Ethics* may be abbreviated as *CE*.

¹⁵ Article #3 of the ISCA doctrinal statement echoes the five solas of the reformation: "Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone based on the finished work of Christ alone, apart from any good works on the part of human beings." <https://isca-apologetics.org/doctrine>. Accessed March, 18th, 2023.

¹⁶ ". . . we have experienced in the toll from democide (and related destruction and misery among the survivors) . . . at the high near 360,000,000 end of the estimates." R.J. Rummel, *Death by Government* (New Brunswick, N.J.:

Transaction Publishers, 1994). <https://hawaii.edu/powerkills/DBG.CHAP1.HTM>. For the lower end of the estimate, Rummell says, “From 1900 to 1987, state, quasi-state, and stateless groups have killed in democide (genocide, massacres, extrajudicial executions, and the like) nearly 170,000,000 people.” R. J. Rummel, “Democracy, Power, Genocide, and Mass Murder.” *Sage Journals*, Volume 39, Issue 1 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002795039001001>.

¹⁷ Taken from the slide “Christianity in the People’s Republic of China” at 9:39 of Fenggang Yang’s presentation “Why Christianity is Thriving in China Today,” Berkely Center YouTube Channel, <https://youtu.be/dzbEQIUChzc?t=579>

¹⁸ Joann Pittman “How Many Christians in China? Preferred Estimates, Part 1.” *China Source*, Feb 24, 2020 <https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/blog-entries/how-many-christians-in-china-preferred-estimates-part-1/>

¹⁹ Eleanor Albert, “Christianity in China.” Council on Foreign Relations. October 11, 2018 <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/christianity-china>

²⁰ Since all humans today descend from Noah, presumably the laws given to Noah after the flood are still binding on all peoples—both Jews and gentiles—today. The Noahic covenant and the dispensation that started after the flood is still in effect today for all peoples. The Noahide laws seem to be echoed in the sojourner laws of Leviticus 17:8-20:27 and in the rulings of the first Christian council in Jerusalem (Acts 15:19-29). They are enumerated in the Talmud and Tosefta along these lines: (1) no idolatry, (2) no cursing of God, (3) no murder, (4) no extra-marital sex, (5) no theft, (6) no eating of flesh from a living animal, (7) courts of justice should be established (so that murderers may be put to death).

²¹ As an aside, perhaps at most here an argument could be made for resisting guerillas to steal some of the weapons and provisions of the attacking army of tyranny—but not to use it against them. More as a way to exemplify and communicate the principle of mercy and love of enemies.

²² By “christology” here, I mean the study of the doctrine of anointing. This can apply to kings, priests, prophets, and others who need to rely on God’s help.

²³ Confusion may arise from one exceptional episode in David’s life. When David fled Israeli territory and sought safety from Saul in Philistine territory and began to serve Achish, the prince of the Philistine city of Gath. David ultimately agreed to fight as auxiliaries of the Philistine army against Saul and the Israeli army (1 Sam. 27, 28:1-2). As this exceptional event could weaken the Davidic christology, it is important to note the reasons that this exception was outside of the will of God.

First, the record makes it clear that this episode started with David had to some degree lost heart, lost faith, and lost hope in the promises of God. David was tired of being pursued by Saul and came to believe that eventually Saul would kill him (27:1). Fear is the opposite of faith in the promises of the Lord. Fleeing to another kingdom to seek safety there may not have been in and of itself against the will of God were it not for the predictable pledge of allegiance to Achish and making “himself an utter stench to his people Israel” (27:12). While David did not volunteer himself and his 600 men for the battle against Saul, when Achish ordered him to do battle, David seemed rather eager to comply and happy with the prospect. Perhaps David was eager to help the Philistines kill Saul.

Second, some of his warriors from the tribe of Manasseh, however, deserted David when it became clear they’d have to make war against Saul (1 Chron. 12:19-20). Although we don’t fully understand their motivation, it’s no stretch to imagine that their civil disobedience against David and Achish was arguably righteous resistance at this point. Perhaps David had departed from the sphere of what was in harmony with God’s will.

Third, there are several indications that God was sovereignly orchestrated many of the events leading up to this battle and in this battle (1 Sam. 28-31). It is no stretch to see the prevention of David from going to battle against Saul as one of those orchestrations. The other military leaders in the Philistine confederation didn’t trust David and his men. It seems likely that it was ultimately God who closed the door to that opportunity to prevent David from

sinning. God did not want Saul to die by David's blade. He wasn't angered by David's weakness and lapse of faith and prevented it from escalating to the point of discipline-worthy guilt.

²⁴ Samuel Rutherford & John Maxwell, *Lex, Rex: The Law and the Prince, A Dispute for the Juft Prerogative of King and People. Containing the Reafons and Caufes of the moft neceffary Defenfive Wars of the Kingdom of Scotland* (Oxford University Library, 1644). Accessed March 2023 at <https://archive.org/details/lexrexlawandpri00maxwgoog/page/n8/mode/2up>

²⁵ See Dan. 2:20-21; Dan. 4:17, 32; Dan. 5:18-31; Acts 17:26. In the New Testament we see a similar respect for God's anointed when the apostle Paul apologized the High Priest of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin for "speak[ing] evil of a ruler of your people" (Acts 23:5). This suggests that the servants of God should not even use violent words against their rulers, much less violent weapons. Paul also paid similar levels of respect to gentile agents of the Roman state in Acts 16:19-40; 19:21-41; 21:27-26-32. This suggests that Paul considered these leaders to have the same (or very similar) kind of anointing as the anointed leaders in the system of theocratic Israel.

²⁶ Regarding "The Dispensation of Human Government," Geisler simply explains: "Since violence had filled the earth (Gen. 6:11) in the previous period, God established human government for humans to obey, providing the sword to enforce it (Gen. 9:6). However, here again human beings failed the test and used the powers of government to make a kingdom in defiance of God. This disobedience to God's established order led to disaster; He destroyed their tower and dispersed them by confounding their languages (Gen. 11)." Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology, Vol. 3: Sin, Salvation* (Bethany House Publishers, 2004), 162.

²⁷ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 458-459.

²⁸ Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 350-354.

²⁹ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 434.

³⁰ See the section "Revolutions are Really Obedience to Governments de Jure" in Norman Geisler, *Christian Ethics, Second edition*, 258. As part of his exposition of Rom. 13, he discusses "the authorities that exist [de jure]" and "governments de facto."

³¹ One challenging part would be to determine in a multi-faceted, multi-layered state, such as we find in the USA today, if and when the revolutionaries have officially wrested the power from the old guard and become the established, undisputed new guard. If, for example, neo-Marxist anti-constitutional revolutionaries became the dominant (but not exclusive) power in various seats in the legislative, judicial, and executive branches at the federal level, and at several state and city levels, and then appointed neo-Marxist judges and weaponized the FBI and DOJ against their political opponents, and started practicing multiple forms of election fraud to ensure that their party continued to grow in power, does that mean they officially the state that must be endured? Or does it leave room for armed resistance in a counter-revolution? This is difficult to answer.

It may seem like the dominant party in the state is anti-constitutional and the second party is only selectively constitutional. It may seem like we are now officially a constitutional republic in name only, but not in practice. But even today the fundamental, basic, and universal oath of allegiance taken by those who become American citizens, those joining the military, those becoming leaders, and ultimately for all Americans is aimed at the constitution of the USA. If the forces of brave new world statism (collectivism, centralism, socialism, Marxism, etc.) are fundamentally opposed to the constitution of the USA then every American citizen and leader should be against statism. Regardless of whether Lockean-Jeffersonianism was correct in the past or not, it has become legal and correct for Americans and citizens of other constitutional republics. In the U.S. Constitution, the Presidential oath (Article II section I Clause 8) is: "I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of the Pres of the United States and will to the best of my ability preserve protect and defend the Constitution." This is one of the proofs that we are in fact subjects to a *Lex Rex* system. There seems to be room for an argument that someone should enforce that ideal. Once the Marxist revolution is fully accomplished, and the U.S. Constitution officially

replaced and the oaths to support it cease, then it will be clear that a new government has been established and must be honored, even if they are dishonorable.

³² Gary Amos, *Defending the Declaration*, 131.

³³ Norman Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1977), 104-106.

³⁴ Other more debatable examples could be investigated. In Gen. 15, Abraham and his servants, who were sojourners in the land, attacked and defeated the forces of confederation of kings who had taken Lot in a raid. This wasn't even a war of self-defense. Rahab supported the violent overthrow of the city-state of Jerico (which she was a resident of) and she was praised as a great hero of faith. In the time of Esther and Haman, the Jews who captives in Babylon were attacked under the command of one royal decree and, as a corrective in their particular pagan *Lex Rex* system, were allowed to defend themselves by a second royal decree. After Saul's death, David and his forces fought with some of the descendants of Saul.

³⁵ Both Francis Schaeffer and Norm Geisler were futurist, dispensational, premillennial, and pre-tribulational in their outlook on Christ's future earthly kingdom. The connection in John 18:35-36 between the right to fight and the locus of the kingdom makes Geisler's sword-sheathing unsurprising. Schaeffer's premillennialism may have been overpowered here by his adoption of the Knox-Rutherford doctrine of resistance that was presumably predicated on an amillennial view of the kingdom and an anti-dispensational view of the relationship between the Church and Israel. I also presently lean towards dispensational premillennialism interpretations of the kingdom, such as may be found in J. Dwight Pentecost, *Thy Kingdom Come: Tracing God's Kingdom Program and Covenant Promises Throughout History* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1995); Arnold Fructenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events* (San Antonio: Ariel Ministries, 2004); Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology: In One Volume* (Arlington: Bastion Books, 2021). But even inside of premillennial dispensationalism there is some variety of views on the kingdom that may resist consensus building. Mark L. Bailey, "Dispensational Definitions of the Kingdom," in Charles Dyer and Roy Zuck, eds., *Integrity of Heart, Skillfulness of Hands* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 201-221. For variations within premillennialism, see Craig A. Blaising, "Premillennialism," in Darrell Bock and Stanley Gundry, eds., *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999).

³⁶ David Blivin and Roy Blizzard offer the following insight into the possible meaning of violent men taking the kingdom per Mt. 11:12:

This saying is certainly difficult to understand. It is not just ordinary Christians who have been stumped by it. There seems to be no satisfactory explanation of this verse even in scholarly literature. Apparently, a great deal of violence is connected with the Kingdom of Heaven. However, that does not agree very well with the rest of the teaching of Jesus. . . . The key to its interpretation turns out to be an old rabbinic interpretation (*midrash*) of Micah 2:13 discovered by Professor David Flusser. . . . These verses [in Micah] are full of rich imagery. It is the picture of a shepherd penning up his sheep for the night . . . the next morning, to let the sheep out, he makes a hole or breach in the fence by tossing some of the stones aside. He steps through the "gate" with the sheep following close behind. They have been penned up all night and can hardly wait to get out of their cramped quarters. Of course they push and shove, several trying to get through at once, literally breaking through, further breaching the little gate in their eagerness to get out and into the green pasture. Finally they burst out into the open spaces, rushing headlong after the shepherd. In Micah 2:13 the "breach-maker" and the king are of course, the same person, but in the rabbinic interpretation discovered by Professor Flusser, they are two different persons: the "breach-maker" is interpreted as being Elijah and "their king" as the Messiah . . . Now we can begin to understand what Jesus is saying. He is not only hinting at Micah 2:13, but also at a well-known rabbinic interpretation of it. "The kingdom of heaven," he says, "is breaking forth [not 'suffering violence'] and every person in it is breaking forth [literally, 'those who are breaking out in it, or by means of it,' not 'the violent take it by force']". . . . Two tremendous things are happening simultaneously: the Kingdom is bursting forth into the world (like water from a broken dam), and individuals within the Kingdom are finding liberty and freedom. . . . Elijah, or John the Baptist, is the breach-maker, the *Poretz*. He has opened the way. He is the Elijah of Malachi 3:1 And 4:5-6, who goes before the Lord to prepare His Way. As in the *midrash*, Jesus, the King, follows John. Jesus is the Lord himself, who leads the sheep through the gate. It is a powerful image. . . . Elijah [John the Baptist] had come and opened the way, and the Lord himself was leading a noisy multitude out to freedom.

David Blivin and Roy Billzard, *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus: New Insights from a Hebraic Perspective* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 1994), 85-87.

³⁷ The recommendation for a vigorous resistance to tyrannical leaders, leading up to tyrannicide, the execution of tyrants, was given some voice in the 13th Century writings of the Latin Churchman Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). His view on tyrannicide was factored in by Claus von Stauffenberg in the 20th Century to justify his plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler. Aquinas wrote on tyrannicide in at least four places: Aquinas's *Commentary on the Sentences* (~1254-1256 AD), second part of the *Summa Theologiae* (~1271-1272), the *De Regno* (1266), and *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (1272-1273). There is some debate among Aquinas's interpreters that his view evolved through his life from defense of tyrannicide in his early works, to a heavily moderated his position in his *Summa Theologiae*, and ultimately a repudiation in a private letter to a King. Others, however, have argued that the Aquinas gives a consistent view of resistance and tyrannicide throughout his massive corpus and his mature view was reluctance rather than repudiation. Aquinas still held firmly to the legitimacy of tyrannicide but he had become reluctant to popularize the idea due to concerns over enthusiastic masses abusing it and illegitimately putting good kings to death. John Finnis, "Aquinas' Moral, Political, and Legal Philosophy," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/aquinas-moral-political/>

³⁸ The word *democracy/democratic* here is used in a broad sense that includes all varieties of post-monarchical governments around the world. Regardless of the degree of corruption in their election processes, they ostensibly claim to have a government by the people. The thing they have in common is that the people are no longer ruled by a king or royal family. This is confusing as it may include states with minimal statism, states bent on ever increasing degrees of statism (democratic socialism) and states already high on statism (dictatorial socialism). This is confusing because it allows some to say, "We need to protect our democracy," when they seem to mean, "We need to protect our regime of dictatorial socialism." For a broader view of democracy, its weaknesses, and some non-violent strategies for revolution, see Hans-Hermann Hoppe, *Democracy: The God that Failed* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2001).