

“Deep” Questions for Dr. Cobin’s Radio Show

by John Cobin, Ph.D.

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1. Do Christians have a right of self-defense? If so, under what circumstances? Against criminals or also governments? Are there any instances in which Christians must not defend themselves? What biblical passages can be used to support the doctrine (see Luke 3:14, 14:31, 22:36, and I Tim. 5:8 for some texts)? Why didn’t Christ and the Apostles defend themselves against the Roman state? Were they just being pragmatic or expedient? Which of the following may be properly resisted with force—even deadly force—by Christians: (1) an angry Christian brother attacking you with a knife; (2) an armed robber or other predator who enters your home in the middle of the night; (3) the local mafia organization that wants to shake you down for monthly contributions; (4) a criminal in public (e.g., as you pass by a small group of thugs who are gang raping a woman outside of a bar, they turn their attention towards you in a menacing way); (5) the invading army of another nation; (6) the invading army of a nation that your people just declared their independence from (but they refuse to acknowledge your independence from them); and (7) your own state which is extorting money from you “legally” and in other ways has become a predator—maybe even violating God’s law.

2. May a government legalize crime or actions that God says are wicked? What does the Bible mean when it says that states are “ordained by God”? If a government does wrong, when and to what extent (passively or actively) may Christians oppose it? Were Lincoln and FDR criminals? Who or what defines what is a “criminal”?

3. How would the statements by the Apostles Paul and Peter (in Romans 13, Titus 3, and I Peter 2) have differed if they had been modern day Americans rather than under the Roman state? Why is the study of history, economics, political science, world religion, and philosophy important for proper biblical interpretation?

4. Rome had no welfare state. Would the Apostle Paul have encouraged Christians to participate in welfare state programs or employment?

5. The Second Amendment provides a form of built-in rebellion in the American system, which was not the case under the Roman Empire when the Apostles Paul and Peter wrote to Christians. Does the existence of a different government system like America’s change the application of Romans 13, Titus 3, and I Peter 2 to American Christians? To Christians in other nations?

6. The Apostle Peter tells Christians to “honor the king” and the Apostle Paul tells Christians to “be subject to the government authorities.” America has no king. Does that

mean that Peter's admonition is passé like other cultural nuances in the New Testament (e.g., holy kisses)? What are the "governing authorities in America? The President, judges, congressmen, and bureaucrats? The Constitution?

7. Do Christians have rights? Is it proper for them to assert their rights as Americans? If so, to what extent? Was Stonewall Jackson, a strong and devout Christian, wrong in asserting his rights to self-defense, property, and liberty? If so, why?

8. Many libertarians, constitutionalists and patriots claim that modern Americans are slaves. The Apostle Paul indicates that slaves should be content, but if they can be free to do so (I Cor. 7). Would Paul's advice if he were speaking to modern American "slaves"? Would he say that people could become free by "illegal" means or legal means only? Would the answer be different for those who voluntarily became slaves versus those who were kidnapped and placed into involuntary servitude? Would Paul speak differently to slaves under the Roman system than he would to those under the American one? Was it wicked for black slaves to try to escape in early America? What about in other modern nations? Would the same passages have to be interpreted differently in each country?

9. If God is not bound by political boundaries, then what does it mean that He deals with "nations"? What is a nation in a biblical sense?

10. What does the Bible say about the nature of the state? Does history confirm its thesis?

11. Is it important for American Christians to be informed and then vote? Or get involved with politics? Or sit on a jury? Organize First Amendment protests? How does Proverbs 24:11-12 relate to abortion clinic protesting and Operation Rescue?

"Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, 'Surely we did not know this,' Does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?"

12. Can a Christian be righteous while voluntarily requesting welfare state benefits?

13. How does the existence of democratic processes alter the nature of the action of government agents? Since we have representative government in America, are Christians precluded from complaining against legislation or decrees or disobeying edicts? Are extortion and abortion cleansed and no longer wrong because they have been approved by a democratic process?

14. What does economic theory tell us about the nature of political actors and the inadequacy of their knowledge in regulating society? Can such theory be born out in the Scriptures? Does the nature of man change on account of the ballot box or a political appointment? Are there truly any "statesmen"? Are some men so publicly spirited that

they are able to subordinate their self-interest in favor of the public interest/? What is the difference between self-interest and selfishness?

15. What is a “just war”? When may Christians participate in war? Who are the biggest beneficiaries of war?

16. Is it right for Christians to be nationalists? To oppose immigration of outsiders?

17. Were the Founding Fathers, pastors, theologians, and church members in sin by becoming revolutionaries? Proverbs 24:21 says “My son, fear the Lord and the king; Do not associate with those given to change.” Were they just seeking redress of grievances against the contractual charters they had with the king? Or were they just rebels? Were the Southerners who fought against Lincoln “rebels”?

18. Is slavery wrong (see Matthew 10:27 and Mark 10:44; I Corinthians 7:21-24; Galatians 3:28, Ephesians 6:8, Colossians 3:16, and Revelation 6:15; Philemon 1:15-18)? Theonomist R.J. Rushdoony provides his thesis that there is a distinction between “a slave by nature and by choice”, particularly “where debt and theft were concerned” (Deuteronomy 23:15-16)? Would it have been wrong for a black slave in ante-bellum America to run away from his master? How would your answer differ if a slave were such (a) on account of an indentured servitude contract, (b) as punishment for a crime (cf. U.S. Constitution, 13th Amendment), or (c) if the slave were kidnapped and forced into servitude, i.e, chattel slavery? How does one’s view of slavery affect one’s view of revolution or disobedience to the state? Are Americans slaves of the state? If so, in what sense (voluntarily or involuntarily) and to what extent?

19. May Christians kill each other in self-defense? What about Christians who are enlisted in the military? For instance, there were undoubtedly professing believers on both sides in both the American War for Independence and the War Between the States. Is it sinful to kill a Christian brother who is attacking you in an opposing army? What special obligation, *if any*, does a Christian have to know about the spiritual condition of his assailant? One way to avoid this problem is for Christians to not enlist, but what if he is conscripted? Should Christians resist the draft? If so, would that include resisting the draft in wars of national defense too? Or could we say with confidence that Christians can only enlist to defend their county but not to attack another one, thus leaving no room for Christians to have rightfully been part of either the British or Northern armies? (Think too of Iraq and Vietnam.) Even if the premise of Christians in combat is accepted, how can the righteous brother in the defending army justify killing his sinning brother in the opposing army? Should Christians favor or implement the use of weapons of mass destruction, knowing that innocent people—including many Christians—will be killed? How can one’s theology of warfare be reconciled with Galatians 6:10—“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith”?

20. In chapters 7–9 of *A Christian Manifesto* (1982), Francis A. Schaeffer argues that there is a point in which a Christian must take up arms against the state. Is he right? Following John Knox and Samuel Rutherford in *Lex Rex*, he says that prior to violent action, we must take certain steps: (1) petition elected officials, (2) utilize the courts to establish precedent in our favor, and (3) flee if possible. He notes that the American Founders were justified in their actions because they followed this prescription, and because the Crown lost its authority when it became a lawbreaker. Thus, to not resist the King with force would have been to *sin* against God. The threat of force is the only thing that keeps a state in line and Christians must be ready to use it. Nevertheless, force should only be considered for egregious, ongoing violations. Schaeffer agrees with Jefferson: “Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly, all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But, when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.” How can we reconcile all, or even part, of Schaeffer’s doctrine of civil disobedience with biblical teaching?