

## Hypothetical Morality

by *Terry Sullivan* bulletin # 8 September 1994

(This was originally written in response to a challenge from David Leach, the editor of the Prayer & Action News in Des Moines, Iowa and a signer of Paul Hill's *Defensive Action* statement.)

In your letter addressed to me you give your own version of what you describe as Paul Hill's basic questions:

*You have indicated you are an absolute pacifist, [I never did] and would never kill, not even in self defense. But even that doesn't answer Hill's questions. So let me put them to you (in my own words) again:*

- (1) If your own daughter were being assaulted within your view by a man with a knife, and the only way you could save her was with a gun (you say you are a good shot) would you use it ?*
- (2) If it were your brother in that situation, and he killed the assailant, would you condemn the shooting as unjust and unbiblical, and him as unChristian ?*
- (3) If it is just to use force to rescue your own daughter, how can it be unjust to use force to rescue your neighbor's daughter?*
- (4) How old does a child have to be before it is just to defend its life with force ?*

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### imaginary situations

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I am going to make an extended answer to these questions. First let me put them in perspective by asking you some ethical questions:

- A. If you fail to prevent the rape and your daughter is pregnant as a result, would you agree that she should have an abortion?
- B. What if the doctor says that she will lose her life if the pregnancy is not terminated, would you then agree to an abortion ?
- C. Suppose you are on a plane which has been captured by terrorists. One of them orders you to kill a fellow passenger. If you refuse, he will kill you and your family. Do you do it ?
- D. Lot's daughters imagine that there are no men left on the earth after the destruction of Sodom. So they figure out that they have to get their father drunk and seduce him, in order to have children and continue the human race. Was this moral ? (Genesis 19.30-38)

E. The cruise ship sinks and you are stranded on an island with your friend's wife. You may be there the rest of your lives, and your spouses are probably drowned. Do you begin living in a "marriage" with her?

F. The plane crashes in a remote jungle and there seems no hope of rescue. The kids are dying of hunger. Granny is old anyway, and, if you turn her into a stew, the rest of you can survive a while longer. Do you do it?

G. A dedicated pro lifer with a large family to feed is out of work because of his principles and his family is hungry. He goes by the grocery store but the security guard on duty is the one that caught him shoplifting before. Just then an obviously affluent man comes along and our friend robs him at knife point. When the man resists, he has to stab him. What else can he do? His kids are hungry !

H. The gestapo is at the door: *any Jews here?* You have to lie to save these Jews from the concentration camp, don't you ?

I. I am desperately short of money to carry on my pro life work. (It's the truth ! ) Should I rob a bank, or maybe a Planned Parenthood ?

J. Every adolescent knows how to fantasize situations in which immorality becomes morality because of the pressure of circumstances: You and your girl friend take a wrong turn while skiing and get lost. Just before nightfall, you find a mountain cabin for shelter. But there is no firewood and ONLY ONE SLEEPING BAG ! A blizzard is coming . . .

What questions like these have in common is that they create a hypothetical situation in which a lesser evil is necessary to avoid a greater evil. They rely upon certain unstated assumptions: I. We live in an evil world in which you can't always choose what is good, so *sometimes you must choose the LESSER OF TWO EVILS*. (Mark 17.17) You have to *FIGHT FIRE WITH FIRE*. ( Saint Paul's letter to the Americans.) Realistically, good violence is the only way to stop bad violence.

II. We arrive at moral principles by relying upon our own natural reasoning powers.

III. The moral principles we arrive at by applying logical reasoning to imaginary situations are then to be applied to real situations. I must use a gun to defend my daughter in this imaginary situation, so that means it was right for Paul Hill to shoot the abortionist, so that means it was right for us to go to war in Vietnam to defend our daughters here in America.

In fact you can use your imagination to create a hypothetical situation that justifies any immorality, especially when you apply ethical principles taken from Saturday morning cartoons, westerns, space fantasies, spy novels, detective stories and war melodramas--all the scriptures from which Christian folk learn their most basic moral principle: *A GOOD MAN WITH A GUN ANSWERETH TO EVIL* ( John 30-30, Luke 45-70, Matthew 12 gauge)

An assumption basic to this kind of ethical reasoning is that you and I are our own moral philosophers. We challenge one another to reason logically to reach the principles of practical ethics. How would a pagan do it any differently?

What is left out is the fundamental obligation of a Christian to look at what Jesus taught and what Jesus did in deciding what is moral and what is not. Paul Hill's original arguments to me were based on examples from the Old Testament. But now you have all set up shop on your own. Never mind Moses or Jesus either, we are the ethical teachers here. Believe me, your confidence in your powers of ethical reasoning is entirely misplaced. But if you were ten times the philosophers you think you are, you would still be fundamentally astray in substituting your own notions for the life and teaching of Jesus Christ as your moral guide.

This kind of ethical reasoning leaves out what is fundamental to Christian morality: faith in Jesus Christ and confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit to see us through. Did Jesus never have to deal with evil men? Did he leave us no example and no teaching as to how we do it?

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the real world

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The other assumption basic to this kind of hypothetical morality is that we are required to be moral in all theoretically possible situations, and that if we can't meet that test, we can modify our morality accordingly.

Rather, we are required to be moral in the real situations of our lives, and God will not tempt us beyond our strength, nor abandon us to evil. We are not called upon to resist having an affair with our friend's wife while stranded on an island with her. (case E) We are called upon to resist such temptations in the ordinary circumstances of our lives and we have a lot of control over those circumstances--if we choose to. Don't call on her when the old man is away from home.

Let's look at H.--you have to lie to save the Jews. Lesson: you can't always be a truthful person, son. Sometimes it is necessary to lie. Lying is normally wrong, but, sometimes it is a minor evil that prevents a major evil.

Actually it is very important to teach our children this lesson because in fact, to get along in this world like most Christians do, you have to lie on a regular basis. Whether you are selling used cars or real estate, running for political office or practicing law, the regular practice of deception is necessary to success. Never mind the Jews ! We have to lie to save our own lives--our lifestyle anyway. Deception is basic to war, business, politics and fund raising for good causes--such as pro life organizations. You need it to carry on your personal relationships. You can't get through school without it.

Suppose you are the householder when the Gestapo comes knocking. You are normally a truthful person, but, this once, you will lie in order to save these lives: *ha! ha! Jews in my house? Don't be silly Herr Oberfructer !* The gestapo commandant blushes with embarrassment, puts one foot over the other and apologizes: *O well, sorry to bother you then. My mistake. Have a Nice Day!* They leave.

No, actually, in the real world, amateur lying is not effective. Lying is an art that requires a lot of practice. In the real world, when the gestapo or the police or the BATF come to your door because of a report that you are hiding something or someone in your house, they are going to come in and have a look around. So you can save your breath.

If you resolve to shun lying and to tell the truth regardless of the consequences, what will the consequences be? Many Jews will die because of your prissy refusal to tell a lie? More likely the consequences will be that you will lose the job that requires you to practice deception on a daily basis. Then, with God's help you will find honest work that allows you to do the Lord's will. Your relatives will be alienated, and your hopes of inheriting their money will be gone. So you no longer have to consort with people who use their influence to turn you and your family away from living the Christian life. Yes, it takes faith to do that. It takes faith to live by Christian principles and accept the consequences. But the alternatives are worse, and it is only the Deceiver that makes them appear better.

(And how does a supposed "Christian" ever get into this kind of a situation in the first place? -- a situation in which, long after the Nazis have come to power, long after they have launched a genocide against the Jews, you are still being treated as a respectable citizen of the Third Reich? Obviously, it happened because you were never living a Christian life in the first place. It happened because you were still trying to conform to a world which was growing more and more evil. If you had been seriously trying to live a Christian life, you would long since have collided with the Nazi program. If the "Christians" of Germany had been seriously trying to live a Christian life, the Nazis would never have come to power and the genocide would never have gotten started.)

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faith and morality

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The basic assumption in most of these hypothetical examples is that the evil choice is the only realistic way to deal with the problem. That is exactly how the devil deludes us. That is why faith is the necessary basis of morality. Without it, your "logical" ethical reasoning only causes you to stumble into the pit.

The guiding principle in these situations and in every situation is that you follow Jesus Christ by adhering to moral absolutes which make no sense to worldly people. The Italian woman who refused to abort her child at the price of her own life, who hung on just long enough to give birth to a healthy baby before she died, answers the ethical question about abortion for us in a real way. If you have to die or else do what you know is wrong, then accept death with the confident faith that there is a life beyond this one.

You absolutely refuse to put Granny in the stew pot. (example F.) You pray to God that rescue might come in time but you resolve that, if it doesn't, you will resign yourself and your children and Granny into the hands of the Lord of life and death with full confidence that He will take you all Home.

If our Christian principles are to be given up whenever the situation is desperate, of what use are they? In fact, it is just in the desperate situations of our lives that we have to cling most firmly to

our faith in Jesus Christ. You must do the right thing, regardless of the apparent consequences, and put your trust in God that it will all come out right somehow.

You refuse to rob or steal to feed your family. (example G.) Instead, you pray to God with full confidence that He will open up an honest way by which you can feed your family. And, strange to say, that is just what He does.

Without that kind of faith, you cannot live the Christian life. If you are going to derive your morality from your own feeble attempts at philosophizing, you may as well give up the name of "Christian" sooner rather than later, and save yourself a lot of bother. When you begin your study of morality with the words and teachings of Jesus Christ, you come out in an entirely different place. When you perceive that the indwelling Holy Spirit is present in every perilous situation, you learn to reason quite differently as to what your options are.

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answering the question

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But now let me answer your # 1 question: If someone were attacking my daughter across the street and I could only stop him by shooting him with my gun, would I shoot him? Yes, I would. That is, if I believed in this world you have created with your imagination, in which the only possibilities are the ones you have allowed, that would be my only choice. And I would give a similar answer to your related questions.

The trouble is that this kind of question arises from 1) a comic book imagination 2) a lack of knowledge of the real world 3) a lack of faith in God 4) an ignorance of and an indifference to the teachings of Jesus Christ. 5) And it is irrelevant to the question as to whether Paul Hill did the right thing when he shot the abortionist.

In what world does this imaginary melodrama take place? It doesn't take place in this one because you have left out two major actors: God and the state.

Where is God in this situation? Out to lunch. He has gone off and left us to deal with an evil situation as best we can. He hasn't even left us any instructions as to what we should do. We are on our own. So we watch the Saturday morning cartoon and read the spy novel. We consult with the Buddhist and the Hindu and the Moslem and the pagan and the secular Christian. We employ our own wonderful powers of ethical reasoning. And we all agree that the only way evil men can be stopped is by good men with guns. We all see it don't we? This is Wisdom, isn't it? Of a sort. It is the wisdom that the god of this world teaches us. *God has forgotten you ! He doesn't care about you ! You must do this thing or you will die ! Don't be foolish !* It is the wisdom that is sounding in the ears of those customers that I see coming into the abortion clinic every day.

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the state monopoly of violence

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But even if you don't believe in the reality of God as an actor who is present in all of our melodramas, you have to believe as a matter of fact that the state is always present. In the time of Jesus Christ and in our own time and in every time in between there is a state which claims a

monopoly on violent force, which pretends to protect us, and which disarms us. The obvious reason I won't be able to defend my daughter with a gun is that the state does not give me a permit to carry one. By the time I get that gun from the dresser drawer or the trunk of my car it will be too late. If I carry that gun without a permit, I am liable to be in jail when my daughter needs me.

Paul Hill's morality and yours simply ignores the most obvious factor in the abortion situation. Your imaginary example makes the killer a solitary individual, outside of the law, and it leaves you entirely free to deal with him just like a comic book hero is free to deal with bad men. What comic book hero is ever arrested for carrying a weapon?

Suppose you have accepted the Seamless Garment argument that abortion, war and capital punishment are all equally to be regarded as murder. From the morning paper you see that an execution is scheduled for today. So you hurry down to the prison, succeed in sneaking in there, and then, just before the executioner can pull the lever, you whack off his hand with your machete. (Make the prisoner an innocent man, wrongly convicted, if you prefer. Imaginary episodes are handy because we can make them come out any way we want--yes?)

Is this an heroic action which is justified by analogy with the one in which you use deadly force to keep some maniac from killing your child or someone else's child?

When you think about it further, you recognize that the executioner is only carrying out the instructions of the warden. So rather than go to the prison, you go to the warden's house, put a gun to his head and order him to telephone the prison and put a stop to the execution.

And then you begin to see that you have only temporarily delayed this execution. And you see that it is only one of many scheduled executions. And then you see that there are in effect many hands on the executioners' levers: the governor, the judge, the jury, the prosecutor. the legislators and the people that elect the legislators. You begin to see that executions go on because the state mandates them and because the people support the state in this policy.

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private and public

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You discover that someone is chained up in your neighbor's basement. You live in a remote area and by the time the police get there it may be too late. Do you do what you can to rescue this person? Of course you do.

But what if many of your neighbors have people chained up in their basements or their outbuildings because these people are slaves and slavery is legal? Is this the same situation? Obviously it is a very different situation. You have to confront the fact that there are many chained up people who need to be freed and that it is the state, not just your neighbors, that is standing in the way. You have to recognize that people are persuaded to go along with it because most of the Christian preachers are giving a moral sanction to slavery by invoking the Old Testament.

And this of course is the reality of the abortion situation. The abortionist is only one of the hired executioners. The parents who hire him to do it, the police that protect it, the judges that made it legal, the clergymen that won't speak out against it, the voters that vote for the pro abortion politicians, the pro life pretenders who never do anything effective to stop abortion, the passive "supporters" of pro life pretenders and the passive "supporters" of vandalism, bombing and shooting--all these people have their hand upon the lever that executes the unborn child, in one way or the other. By commission or omission, they are all guilty of abortion.

You don't have to save everyone or else resign yourself to saving no one. But if you are going to deal with an evil situation in a responsible way, you have to do something which is relevant to the situation and which is derived from that Christian faith which we are supposed to believe in as giving us the guidance and the weapons which we need to confront evil. You have to set an example which other people can follow. Signing statements endorsing the irresponsible actions of mentally ill people is not a good substitute.

What kind of an example do Michael Griffin, Rachelle Shannon, Paul Hill and John Salvi set us? One that is no use to us, one that no one will follow. If I entirely believed in using violent force to stop abortion I would still have to disown what they did as foolish and irresponsible. Why did they all do it in such a way as to get caught and locked up for life? Why did they all do it in such a way that they will be permanently separated from their families?

How many others will follow this example and accept life in prison as the consequence? Yes, all sorts of people will sign your silly support statements and use them as their excuse for doing nothing themselves. But the road these people have shown us to stop abortion is a short dead end street. In the 1960's we had three American pacifists who imitated the Buddhist monks in Vietnam by setting themselves on fire. I had to respect their mad sincerity and their crazy courage and I mourned the man I personally knew, but there was no way I could agree that this was the Christian way to oppose war. And, Christian or not, who will follow such an example? And so it is with these people. Their example is no help to us, and neither is yours when you "support" them.

The logic of responsible vigilante violence--if there were such a thing--is that it will lead to a revolutionary army and a revolutionary government. If you were in any way serious about stopping abortion through military force--instead of signing statements that mean nothing--you would have recognized this by now. But no doubt there are people who do recognize it. (cf. bulletin # 5, *The War for the Unborn*.)

The logic of righteous violence as the only realistic answer is that we either create a revolutionary state and a rebel army or we get control of the existing government. That is the intention of those in the political wing of the pro life movement, if they have any serious intention to stop abortion. Actually most of them want to be Senators regardless of whether they can do anything effective to stop abortion in that position, so they readily deceive themselves into believing that they can.

Most of those who have condemned the shooting of abortionists do not really oppose killing. They oppose killing when it is done without official sanction, when those doing it do not have on the proper uniform. They readily accept killing by police officers and soldiers. Their strategy to

stop abortion, by getting hold of the coercive apparatus of the state, is the safe and respectable version of vigilante and revolutionary violence. We get control of the government and then we use the policeman's gun to stop abortion. Even if we don't, it is nice to be a Senator. And so they go on year after year in the forlorn hope of some day accomplishing this.

There is in fact a real possibility of a civil war over abortion. Rather, there is a real possibility of a civil war about power and wealth--which is what all wars are about--which will also catch up the issue of abortion as one of its moral justifications. And many people will be drawn into such a contest because they don't believe there is any way to stop abortion except with the gun. And they are beginning to realize that the effort to get hold of the policeman's gun through the rigged system of conventional politics is futile. It is in opposition to both of these false beliefs that I argue for the necessity of nonviolent direct action as the way that Jesus showed us, as the only effective way to fight the evil of this baby-killing society that we live in.

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stopping killer # 1

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Suppose you are about to use deadly force against the hypothetical attacker of your hypothetical daughter and he puts her in front of him as a human shield. Do you continue to blaze away freely? I will assume that you have sense enough to modify your strategy because of this complication. What you might recognize then is that there is a complication in the situation of the unborn child: somewhat inconveniently for our rescuer with the gun, she is being carried around in the belly of her # 1 attacker. It isn't much good eliminating her # 2 attacker, the boy friend, or her # 3 attacker, the abortionist, if you can't figure out how to rescue her from her # 1 attacker.

It is just at this point that the idiot with the gun should put down his comic book and recognize that his gun isn't the right weapon to stop the # 1 killer of the unborn child. At this point, since *THE GOOD MAN WITH A GUN* is the only remedy for evil that he knows, he is helpless. That describes you: politically, morally and spiritually helpless. That is why you are no use to the pro life movement. Your idle gun talk is a smoke screen for the fact that you have dropped out of the effort to rescue the unborn babies from death.

The most obvious fact about abortion is that parents are using force against their children. It is **JUST THE OPPOSITE** of your example! The father isn't trying to rescue his daughter from an attacker, rather **HE IS PAYING HER ATTACKER TO KILL HER** ! And they are encouraged to do it by the rest of society! It is our friends and relatives who actively and passively create the moral climate in which they do it. The abortionist is only the hired hit man. The moral complicity of our entire society, of our churches--of ourselves!--is what we have to shoot. In fact, the logic of violence is that we should shoot ourselves for our long time complicity with abortion, whether it was by what we did or by what we neglected to do, whether it was by commission or by omission.

If you think that shooting is the answer, start with Billy Graham. Continue with all the Baptists and all the Catholics that voted for Bill Clinton. If you want war, get serious about it, instead of circulating sign-up sheets for the Phil Donahue show. We may have a war, thanks to all of you

who have run away from the nonviolent war against abortion. If we do, those of you signing these "support" statements will be assigned to cleaning the latrines. You obviously don't have the courage or the wisdom to take responsibility for anything else.

Consider the alternative to the gun. The pro life leaflet in the hand of the person who is willing to hand it out personally to everyone that needs to get the message. It is only a piece of paper--like the gospel--but when it has the backing of **courageous personal witness** it becomes the most powerful weapon there is: The Truth. It is **THE SWORD OF THE LORD** and it is the nemesis of the abortion industry. Instead of 4 one time shooters "supported" by 400 people who support them by posing for the TV cameras, we need 4000 who will personally witness to the truth about abortion.

If we had 4000 pro life witnesses in every state, if each one would spend two hours once a month passing out 200 pro life leaflets, we could personally witness to every person in America with the truth about abortion in one year's time. We could attack abortion at its roots--the lies about abortion that most people believe. And no one has to abandon his family and spend the rest of his life in prison in order to do it. It puts the responsibility where it belongs--upon all of us--instead of upon some lonesome escapee from the insane asylum, who believes himself to be God's designated Lone Ranger.

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idle questions

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Instead of doing something effective to stop abortion and build the pro life movement, you drop out of it and propound idle questions: *(2) would you condemn the shooting as unjust and unbiblical, and him as unChristian ?* And you mean of course the shooting of the abortionist by Paul Hill.

Wrong questions lead to wrong answers. That is the wrong question. The right question--to you--is: **IS THIS THE WAY TO STOP ABORTION ?** *Should we all follow this example? Will you follow it? If not, what example will you set for us?*

Is the major task before us to pass judgment on Paul Hill? Or is it to rescue the babies scheduled to die tomorrow ? Whether he was right or wrong doesn't matter in the context of unborn babies scheduled to die tomorrow because Paul Hill is history. Paul Hill is out of the fight. Paul Hill can spend the rest of his life writing justifications for himself at leisure, and the **Life Advocate** and the **Prayer & Action News** can publish them. The babies scheduled to die tomorrow have no leisure to spare.

He can go on judging himself as far as I am concerned. He has condemned himself to eating prison food for the next 25 years at least. There is nothing I could add to that if I wanted to and I don't. Meanwhile, the abortion mills will be rolling tomorrow morning and I have to be there. I know Paul Hill won't be there. Where will you be? Signing "support" statements ?

If I "condemn" those who shot the abortionists, it won't add a day to their sentences. If I refuse to condemn them, it won't take a day off their sentences. Their condemnation in this world to life in prison has already been made by what they did themselves, and by the way that they chose to

do it. Their judgment in the next world is not up to me. Your "refusal to condemn" and your "support" are equally meaningless as moral statements. When Jesus refused to condemn the woman taken in adultery, it saved her from having her head beat in with a rock. It meant something. Your refusal to condemn means nothing. It is something to talk about so you don't have to talk about your refusal to act on behalf of the babies who are condemned to die tomorrow morning.

My judgment on them is an entirely pragmatic one. No, that is not the example we need. They have made my job harder, not easier. They have hurt the pro life action movement by the totally irresponsible and impractical example they have set. They have provided a propaganda harvest for the abortion industry. They have provided the excuse to stay away from the picket line that timid folks were looking for. They have provided the justification for the inertia of their "supporters"--all those who have to "support" something because they never do anything themselves.

Why do you distract yourself and others with these idle questions? The question you will have to answer before God is not: *What verbal position did you take when somebody else shot an abortionist?* Instead he will ask you: *What were you doing at this time to rescue these unborn children ?* I don't think you have a good answer, or any answer. I would find one, if I were you, while you still have the time to do it ! (And I don't mean just you, I mean all the nominal pro lifers who are morally in the same position.) I suggest you read Matthew 25.31-46, and recognize who is meant by *the least of these* and take warning from what is going to happen to those who fail to come to their aid.

If you knew you had to face a **LIFE AND DEATH** examination, and you had a chance to peek at the questions you were going to be asked, would you peek? Then peek at Matthew 25.31-46 and see the questions upon which your salvation or your damnation will depend. And the answers you must give are not verbal answers, they are the actions you are taking or that you are refusing to take right now ! There is no indication in there that verbiage, or "taking a position" will be counted as the equivalent of that which you are supposed to have done. Contrary to what you have been taught to believe, righteousness does not consist of having a right opinion. Righteousness means doing right--fulfilling every demand of the Law by loving your neighbor. (Romans 13.8) Love is action--not hot air.

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fantasy & morality

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How many times in your life have you been in a situation where you had to use a gun to save your daughter from a violent attacker? The answer is that you have never been in that situation, yes? And, if you live another 50 years, the chance of your ever finding yourself in that situation is almost nil.

Second question: how many times in your life have you been in or near a city where unborn children were being killed by abortion and you did nothing to prevent those abortions? How many days have there been on which you neglected to do the simple and obvious things that you could do to stop abortion: picket the abortuary; hand out pro life leaflets; wear an **ABORTION**

**KILLS CHILDREN** badge ? And the answer is that you are in that situation every day of your life. It happened yesterday, it is happening today and it will happen tomorrow.

That is why I argue that these theoretical questions about shooting the abortionist are false moral questions which are being used to conceal the real moral questions that so many of you are refusing to face. In your fantasy, you are the hero with the gun who rescues the child. In reality, you are the coward who lets the child die because you are unwilling to do anything. Your fears paralyze you and prevent you from doing those things that take a little bit of courage.

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what is pacifism ?

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Since I am to answer these questions of yours and Paul Hill's as an *absolute pacifist* I am going to have to explain what that is. You seem to know more about my pacifist position than I do. It never ceases to astonish me how people seem to know all about pacifism who have never read about it, or thought about it, or tried to live up to it, or paid any attention to all the things that Jesus said about it.

First of all, I have never said that I was an *absolute pacifist*. In fact I am not sure that I am a pacifist. I am sure that Jesus Christ could be accurately described as a pacifist. And I aspire to be a follower of Jesus Christ--I am trying to be a *Christian*.

Now I may be misguided in this. I haven't had the benefit of your exegesis as to the various texts I cited in *II PRINCE OF PEACE* (in bulletin # 7). I am a simple-minded fellow who tends to take texts literally. I don't see how you can get round texts like *love your enemies* or *my followers don't fight because my kingdom is not of this world*. No doubt you do see how to get round them but you haven't shown me yet. I balk at the assertion that if you are having trouble with the pacifism of Jesus, you just substitute the teachings of Joshua. (Yes, I realize it is the same name in the Greek.)

I am convinced that Jesus did forbid us to go to war and that we have to try and live up to that. That isn't just my opinion, it was the universal belief of the early church before the anti church of the Roman Empire appeared, as witness Polycarp, Origen, Tertullian etc. and the thousands of Christians who went to their deaths for refusing to serve in the Roman army. Respect their courage and their witness in blood to their belief that Jesus taught us not to kill. What do modern Christians believe in enough to die for ? They believe in the state enough to draft other people's sons to die for it.

That pacifist witness has persisted through the centuries despite the brutal persecution of the state and its ally the state church. The refusal to kill for the state is characteristic of the "heretical" sects that tried to restore the Christian Church to its original integrity. It reappears in the early Baptists, (= the present-day Amish) in the Quakers and in the authentically Christian part of even main line churches.

I have been studying war and pacifism for 35 years now and I have even gone to prison for it. But I am still trying to understand the mystery of the life of Jesus Christ and what his nonviolence means for us. Thinking about it is one thing, trying to live up to it is another. For

most of those years I have had a gun handy. It is only in the last few years that I have tried seriously to follow Jesus more closely. I think the gun is one of the things you leave behind when you get serious about following Jesus Christ.

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secular pacifism

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Pacifism means that you are opposed to war. It doesn't necessarily mean that you reject personal self defense or even vigilante action. You may or may not, but it is a separate question. There is an obvious difference between one conscientious man using force in a desperate personal situation and a war in which the prisons and the slums are emptied to put a million armed hooligans into uniforms. Then they are sent halfway around the world to shoot people whose language they don't even understand. It is one thing for an American to shoot someone who is trying to rape his daughter. It is another for him to be raping a Vietnamese woman at the point of a gun, or prostituting one with his army pay. As with your arguments, the imaginary situation is used to justify an entirely different one--the one that actually happened in the 1960's. The dumbest draftee must sometimes wonder if he is really defending his family and his country when he finds himself 10,000 miles from the nearest American shoreline.

Like conservatism or any other ism it can mean many different things. Just as there are secular conservatives like Rush Limbaugh, there are secular pacifists. A person need not be a Christian pacifist. He may simply subscribe to some such propositions as these: 1) If I want to fight my enemies, I don't have to travel 10,000 miles to find some--I don't need to go any further than Washington D.C. 2) I don't need to have Bill Clinton decide for me as to who the enemy is.

War has to do with the state. It has nothing to do with self defense, nothing to do with defending your daughter and rarely has anything to do with *defending our country*--although simpletons are routinely deceived into believing that it has to do with all of these things. It has a lot to do with furthering something called *the national interest*--supposedly--but even that is debatable. That "interest" seems usually to coincide with the interests of rich and powerful people who are very unlikely to be sharing with the rest of us.

If you are really concerned with protecting your home and family, you might note the obvious fact that you can do it much better if you are at home instead of 10,000 miles from home and that attacking somebody else's home and family in a foreign country isn't actually the same thing as protecting your own in this country. So you can be a "pacifist" and still go around armed to the teeth because of your fears for your daughter's safety.

A good reason for being a pacifist is that war always brings an epidemic of rape. If you are serious about preventing rape, you have to be serious about preventing war. The thousands of rapes committed in the war in Bosnia are only the latest example. Our Russian allies in World War II were notorious for raping all across Europe. (In Berlin alone, Russian soldiers raped an estimated 110,000 women.) The American army wasn't as bad but that isn't saying much. Every army in the field in war time turns into a gang of rapists. How else can it be? You take young men away from their homes and their wives and their girl friends at the lustiest time of their

lives. You put them in desperate situations where death is a daily reality, where there is no law except the soldier himself. You turn them loose on a defenceless population.

That raw fact is routinely covered up and left undocumented. That isn't the image of the soldier that we want to present to the folks at home. It is another of the basic lies about war. There was a rare candid report done after the war in which Pakistan split into West and East Pakistan--now called Bangladesh. Some 40,000 women were raped in East Pakistan by the soldiers of the West Pakistan army, and that in a small war, between former countrymen, that only lasted a few months. Many of these women were then cast out by their orthodox Moslem families, and so some of them committed suicide.

The fiction is that armed men will protect our women folk from being raped. The fact is that these armed men are themselves the primary cause of rape. And how do you defend yourself and your family when the Russian army--or the American army--comes marching down the street? *An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.*

So pacifism, that is, being opposed to war, can be argued as a common sense proposition to the secular-minded--that is, to most "Christians." But common sense seems never to provide a sure foundation for morality of any kind when faith in God is lacking. For some reason it seems that we have to learn to see the invisible and the far off before we can see what is visible right in front of us.

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#### Christian pacifism

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Pacifism which is based on faith in Jesus Christ takes on an entirely new dimension. It is no longer just a negative opposition to these epidemics of rape, robbery and mass murder, which are called "wars," it is an affirmation that there is a way to go to war against evil which works. (I will briefly argue Christian pacifism here because I have already argued it in bulletin # 7, ***THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE OF JESUS CHRIST***. I also tackled the subject in ***The War for the Unborn*** in ***BULLETIN # 5.***)

In describing Jesus Christ as a pacifist, I mean that he refused to go to war, and that he taught his followers to do the same. He refused to be the secular King of Israel or to lead a rebellion against the Roman occupation of Israel. The church he established was entirely independent of the Jewish nation, unlike the Old Testament church, which was a state church. The true Christian church is the antithesis of the state church. So there is no such thing as a Christian nation. It is a contradiction in terms. The state church or the Christian nation both describe the unholy union of the secular state and the Christian Church

--as if *the world* and the kingdom of God could merge. (for more on this see ***Where is the Church ?*** in ***BULLETIN # 5.***) When Jesus says that his kingdom is not of this ***world*** and that his followers therefore do not fight (John 18.36) He means just that. We are spiritually and morally separate from ***THE WORLD*** and so we do not go to war on its behalf. That is exactly how the first Christians understood the teaching of Jesus and thousands of them went to their deaths rather than join the army. They saw themselves as belonging to a kingdom which was separate in a fundamental spiritual and moral way from the Jewish nation and from the Roman empire.

So in the primary meaning of pacifist as one who refuses to participate in war, that is, in the contest by which nations are established or destroyed, clearly Jesus was a pacifist. He didn't just say it, he obviously meant it and he did it. He did refuse to go to war to defend his nation or to liberate it from the foreign conquerors and it was soon thereafter destroyed as the direct result of his refusal.

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power & money

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The major causes of war are not, as simpletons are taught to believe, that we have to defend our families. The major causes of war are the love of money and the passion for power. We have never fought a war that was necessary to defend our families. We have fought a dozen wars that were necessary to establish and maintain the power and the wealth of the American empire. We did not go to war with England because the English soldiers would not leave our women folk alone. The great slogan of the American Revolution was: *taxation without representation is tyranny* ! That is, they are taking our money and they won't let us run for Parliament so we have to go to war with them.

If you read what Jesus taught us about power and money you see that he taught us to shun both. And therefore, if we live as Christians, we will find that we have eliminated the major reason for war. So if we do not go to war for money or for power, if we do not go to war for the nation, what is left ?

I don't understand *turn the other cheek* to mean that we are forbidden to defend ourselves or others from a serious violent attack. It seems plainly to mean that *we must abate that prickly self pride which is the source of 99% of our quarrels*. Self defense and defense of one's family etc. is a different question from the question of war and a different question from the one about personal honor defined as a readiness to fight when challenged.

But there are many other things that Jesus said and did which have to be taken into account before we can really understand what the nonviolent witness of Jesus means. (And I am still studying them. I mean that I am trying to live in accordance with them--I don't think we can ever really understand them in any other way.) I can't imagine Jesus standing by while someone was attacked or beaten. I am sure He would do something effective to prevent it or stop it, because everything he did in his life was effective, but what would he do?

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self defense

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In fact the problem of self defense is a real one for me as it is not for most people. I am down in front of Planned Parenthood five days a week as I have been for the past five years. And one of the things we do down there is that we say uncomplimentary things to the boy friends of the abortion customers that tend to make them hostile: ***A REAL MAN DOES NOT BEAT UP ON A BABY! YOU ARE GOING TO BE THE FATHER OF AN ABORTION, THAT IS HOW MUCH OF A MAN YOU ARE ! IF YOU'RE A TOUGH GUY, TAKE HER OUT OF THERE AND TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE BABY!***

The result is that, on a regular basis, we have boy friends huffing and puffing at us and threatening us with mayhem. And it happens once in a while that they actually do attack us physically.

So what do I do? I can't carry a gun down there or I am certain to be arrested. We have had 80 tickets or arrests on spurious charges--just for picketing really--but this would be a far more serious charge. So I don't dare take a gun down there even if I was convinced it was the right thing to do.

Now most of you fellows would give up at that point wouldn't you? That is, you have given up because you feel too vulnerable being down there with no way to defend yourself.

I don't run from a fight, but I don't dare hit anyone for the same reason I don't dare take a gun down there. They are just waiting for any excuse to file an assault charge against us--it is the only time we make the newspapers. And I would rather take a punch or even two punches than go through another trial or even spend a day in jail. Those are the realistic alternatives.

Once when a hostile boy friend attacked my friend Al, I wound up tackling him. Then three of us sat on him until he saw reason. Is that what Jesus would have done? I don't know, and I won't say that it is. I will not defend the idiot proposition that whatever I do is therefore the model of the Christian life. Even if I did shoot the hypothetical attacker of my hypothetical daughter I would not therefore conclude that this is what Jesus taught us to do.

Recently, we had another incident in which Al was attacked by a hostile boy friend (he is something of a lightning rod for these attacks). It was far and away the most violent and vicious attack we have suffered in five years and also the most sudden attack. The fellow came running out of the parking lot, knocked Al down and began hitting him with a metal frame baby buggy we keep there for display purposes. It happened so fast that I was just starting to Al's rescue when two more fellows jumped out of a maroon van, grabbed the attacker and arrested him. Turned out they were two plainclothes cops who just happened to be passing by at the exact moment that this fellow attacked Al. Except for a bump on the head, Al wasn't hurt.

Now I might conclude that I had better not go down there any more because it is a dangerous place. I guess that is what all of you fellows who have dropped out must have concluded, but it isn't my conclusion. Or I might conclude from this episode that I have to start taking a gun down there, but I can't, for the reasons already explained.

I might conclude that we should say only sweet and pleasant things to the abortion customers and their boy friends--*if you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all* ! (Mark 17.17 modern bible translation)--but I still believe that you have to speak out the truth loudly and effectively, whether people want to hear it or not.

I might conclude that we must rely upon the police to protect us. But that is almost the only time in five years that the police have done anything to help us. And I have to put it up against about 300 times (at least) that the police have harassed us and threatened us, or ticketed us, or arrested us or even physically attacked us with "pain compliance" as they did in the 1989-90 rescues. So

I still think that we need protection from the police and that we cannot depend upon them to provide protection for us.

In fact my conclusion is this, and it is based not just on this episode but on many others: God fights for us when we take up the battle in the way that he showed us. One way or another he will protect us and defend us and we may proceed with absolute confidence that we are never at the mercy of evil men, no more are we at the mercy of evil spirits. God isn't looking the other way, He isn't out to lunch, He isn't sleeping, and He hasn't turned His back on us, not if we are doing His work and fighting his fight. He is an employer who takes good care of his employees.

When you get that into your head, and when you finally learn to believe it, it changes all your calculations as to where safety lies. In fact, it changes your life. I suggest you try it.

It isn't that nothing bad ever happens to me. Bad things happen to me all the time. But, somehow or another, sooner or later, God turns them into good things. And that teaches me to put my trust in God, not in things. It teaches me to trust in God in bad times just the same as in good times.

This morning [Saturday, September 10th] we had a Spirited singing group as part of our witness at 20th & Vine. And one song they were singing stayed in my mind:

*Some may trust in horses  
some may trust in chariots  
But we will trust  
in the name of our God !*

*In the name of Jesus  
our salvation lies  
He will hear from heaven  
And answer every cry !*

I think I almost believe that. Do you ? Or would you rather continue to put your faith in the Lone Ranger ? My only argument with the verse is that Jesus isn't so far away as *heaven* implies. When we have real trouble, He is right down here with us.

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we the undersigned

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Now I am going to discuss the **DEFENSIVE ACTION** statement put out by Paul Hill in support of Michael Griffin, which a number of you signed. I see that a new version of the statement with Paul Hill as the one to be supported is now being circulated. But his former supporters at the *Life Advocate* seem to be experiencing either pangs of conscience or cold feet about continuing to "support" their former leader. They had a lot more enthusiasm for belonging to his group when it was a talk club that might get you on the talk shows. Now that it has become an action club, that might get you life in prison, they don't seem to be in a hurry to renew their memberships.

At this point, I appreciate the fact that there is such a published statement because it serves to clearly and publicly identify that group in the anti-abortion movement which does endorse violent action. And Paul Hill's recent conspicuous action has highlighted the existence of such a group. That is at least a good first step in helping the rest of us to distinguish ourselves from this group.

I will try to win you over to a better mind if I can--I am trying--but my major concern is to protect the integrity and the reputation of the pro life nonviolent direct action movement from the moral confusion and the abortion industry propaganda that these violent incidents have created.

Our problem has been that the media allies of the abortion industry refuse to distinguish between violent action and nonviolent action. They in effect made Paul Hill the spokesman for all of us. They gave him the microphone because he said just what they wanted him to say. And there are many drop outs from the rescue movement who will mumble something by way of "support" for violence as their excuse for not participating in nonviolent direct action. Yours is a movement with 4 activists and hundreds of passive verbal "supporters."

I think it is much healthier for the movement if the group which advocates violence or which "supports" it is clearly identified. Then you can all sign support statements to your heart's content and we can point out: *that is an entirely different wing of the movement, we don't have anything to do with it.*

(My next goal is to draw a clear line between ourselves and what I regard as the most destructive and self defeating part of the pro life movement, that which forever wastes all our time, money and energy on political elections and legislative campaigns. Then perhaps we can finally get started on a serious effort to stop abortion.)

I recognize that there are many people, besides those that signed the statement, who do in fact "support" violent action. They have been raised to "support" things rather than to do things. And they have taken in with their mother's milk, or with the Saturday morning cartoons anyway, that basic Christian teaching that ***A GOOD MAN WITH A GUN IS THE ANSWER TO EVIL.***

All the same, to save political simpletons from signing your statements, I am going to show what is really in this one.

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1993 statement written by Paul Hill  
and signed by 24 others

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***DEFENSIVE ACTION***  
*Pensacola, Florida Paul J Hill, Director*

*We, the undersigned, declare the justice of taking all godly action necessary to defend innocent human life including the use of force. We proclaim that whatever force is legitimate to defend the life of a born child is legitimate to defend the life of an unborn child.*

*We assert that if Michael Griffin did in fact kill David Gunn, his use of lethal force was justifiable, provided it was carried out for the purpose of defending the lives of unborn children. Therefore he ought to be acquitted of the charges against him.*

(24 signers follow, including Paul Hill)

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godly guns

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Let us analyze this declaration, beginning with the opening sentence. Let us start with that word "godly"--small "g". What "god" is meant here? Not *the god of this world* I hope? (2 Corinthians 4.4) If not, let us spell out which God we believe in--Jesus Christ.

Who else should be the model for a virtuous and heroic action if not the number one hero and man of action who was also God? What else can we mean by "godly" if we don't mean Jesus Christ?

Let us also replace that vague word "force" with what the declaration is actually endorsing. Does this materially alter the declaration? I think not. Rather it brings out what is really in there:

*We, the undersigned, declare the justice of taking all necessary action, to defend innocent human life--IF THE ACTION IS IN KEEPING WITH THE TEACHING AND EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST--including the use of A GUN.*

Do you see something wrong with it as it now reads? I hope so. If not, you might re-read bulletin # 7, ***THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE OF JESUS CHRIST***. Since I have made my case there, I won't belabor the point here.

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defending children

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Then the declaration says that: *whatever force is legitimate to defend the life of a born child is legitimate to defend the life of an unborn child.* I could agree with it except that it contains a false assumption--that "legitimate force" is normally used to protect children. The fact is that "legitimate force"--violence which is sanctioned by the law--is normally used to kill children. From the days of the Roman empire, when they legally exposed children to die, down to our own time when children are legally killed everywhere in the world by abortion, war and the poverty which the law creates, the "legitimate force" which always pretends to be the defender of children is regularly the destroyer of children. That is why we have to disregard the law and use nonviolent direct action.

The violence which pretends to be in defense of children leads to killing them. *Defending our children* is the perennial excuse for wars in which millions of children are killed. It is used as an entering wedge argument, just like *Saving the life of the mother* is used as an entering wedge argument for the mass murder of abortion. The allied bombing of Dresden created a fire storm which killed all the children of Dresden. All the children of Hiroshima and all the children of Nagasaki were destroyed by the atomic bombs that America dropped on those cities. The

children at Mylai were massacred without mercy by American soldiers who would tell you that they went there to protect their families back home in America.

A mother's watchful eye is the weapon that protects children. The police & the army are no use--the children keep getting in the way of all that firepower. You don't need a .357 Magnum to protect your child from being knocked down on the playground by a bigger kid. But the justification of *protecting my child* is used over and over again to justify killing somebody else's child. The fantasy is that guns protect children. The reality is that guns kill children.

The children of the world are not protected by our guns. Rather, they need protection from the guns and the bombs that we use so wantonly in these wars that we fight for wealth and power and national glory. They need protection from these armaments that we sell around the world to keep our faltering economy going. Thousands of children are killed or injured every year by the millions of antipersonnel land mines scattered in various foreign wars and never collected. Most of them were made in the U.S.A. [ see the account of the 1776 shelling of Boston by Washington's army in *Roots* ]

And that is only one of the several kinds of child murder that we perpetrate. Thousands of children die from preventable causes in those slums which are created here and abroad by our love of money and our indifference to the poor. It isn't our guns that are needed to protect children. It is the money that we spend on weapons--100 billion and more ! --and on luxuries for ourselves while others lack basic necessities. This *protecting a child* argument is invoked as a cover for something very different. We are "protecting children" like Planned Parenthood is "helping women."

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the spirit of deception

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*if Michael Griffin did in fact kill David Gunn . . .* What in the world can that mean? Michael Griffin shot David Gunn in broad daylight in front of two dozen witnesses. He then surrendered to the nearest policeman. So in fact there was never the least doubt, was there? But because he let the lawyers talk him into a futile attempt to try and deny doing what everyone knew he had done, your statement goes along with a futile attempt at deception.

One of these days, when you have a case in which there is some doubt, you can play these games of deception which are characteristic of those who leave the path of truth. Here come the famous trials of the 1960's revisited. He / She was justified in doing it ! But also he / she was framed ! (maybe) We'll let you know later which version we are going with. Instead of witnessing to the truth, you make propaganda. You take a lying spirit for your ally. Do you know who that is? Do you know who the spirit is that teaches us that lying and violence are the weapons we must use ? I see it in you--in what you do (what you don't do) and what you write. I don't mean Satan himself. Why would he bother with those so easily led astray? But some 3rd assistant junior demon has become your counselor.

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purpose

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*provided it was carried out for the purpose of defending the lives of unborn children.* Which it obviously was not. If Mike Griffin's purpose was to defend the lives of unborn children by shooting the abortionist, he would never have done it that way. He would have ambushed the abortionist, anonymously, a mile away from the clinic, and made his escape. He would have gone home to meet his responsibilities to his wife and his children. He would have remained free to do in another abortionist.

What is obvious in the case of all four assassins of abortionists is that 1) they did it in a way that insured they would get into the media spotlight 2) they did it in a way that allowed them to escape permanently from their families 3) they did it in a way that would get them locked up for a very long time. 4) they aren't going to ever have the chance to shoot another abortionist; and that situation comes from their own choosing; from now on they are free to theorize about it like the rest of you, but they aren't free to do it. Purpose and lack of purpose is readily deduced from what people do and from what they fail to do. If this criteria was a serious one, then you have to disqualify all of them. *I want an interview with Barbara Walters . . . I want the death penalty* says John Salvi as he follows in Paul Hill's footsteps. Like Michael Griffin, Paul Hill waves goodbye forever to his wife and kids, and for no apparent reason. What sort of a "god" calls a man to dump his responsibilities like that? What sort of a "purpose" does a man have who is so obviously mesmerized by the media spotlight? Obviously, his real purpose is coming from a desire to be the Center of Attention and the Star of the Show.

And those are the kinds of questions that have to be asked and answered about the rest of the pro life movement as well. From what they do and what they fail to do, it is clear enough that the purpose of the political wing of the movement is to seek power and to pursue their own careers while they pretend to have the purpose of saving babies. The primary reason we have done so little to stop abortion is that so few of us are really trying to do it in a straightforward way that isn't compromised and effectively negated by other purposes. Instead of dedicating themselves to building the pro life movement, they are dedicated to using the pro life movement to build careers for themselves.

To tell you the truth I sometimes wonder how serious any of us are--how serious I am--about rescuing unborn children. We do rescue unborn children--three customers drove away today, [Tuesday, September 6th 1994] and I am a little bit happy about it. But it is hard to really care about other people's children in a natural way. And being out there every day with this life and death drama going on is like working in a hospital emergency room. We can't let the ones we lose bother us too much and so it is hard to rejoice much about the ones we save. Like the medics in the emergency room, we tend to get callous. I think "purpose" has to mean a surrendering to God's purpose. I started there with lots of purposes of my own. But I would not have lasted this long if I had not discovered along the way that there was a Purpose to what I was doing that was beyond my comprehension, and that I achieved my own purposes best when I bowed to that Purpose.

*Therefore he ought to be acquitted of the charges against him.* Try living in the real world for an hour. A judicial system that finds a **right to kill babies** in something called a *right to privacy* lurking in the shadow of an amendment is going to acquit someone who shoots an abortionist?

Rather a lame conclusion. You might more truthfully say: *Therefore we are going to shoot an abortionist and become famous just like he did.* Or: *therefore we are going to use this opportunity to get ourselves on the Phil Donahue Show.*

But why don't you instead say: Therefore, recognizing the futility of this course of action, we will re-dedicate ourselves to nonviolent direct action to save babies ? One more chance, fellas.

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in guns we trust

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These gun fantasies come from that fantasy land which is the devil's play ground. The faith in guns is one variety of the faith in power and money. It is a cousin of the faith in the law and the lawyers. It is spiritually akin to the fantasy that we can win a victory for the unborn children and also, especially, ourselves, through conventional politics. People who are afraid of guns have instead the faith that morality can be popularity, that it can be established by popular vote. They have the illusion that there is a safe and respectable way to fight the battle that requires no real sacrifice or courage from us.

What is missing is faith in the way that Jesus Christ showed us. What is missing is faith in courageous personal witness, the commitment to nonviolent direct action.

Five years ago we had the largest nonviolent direct action movement that this country has ever seen. 50,000 people participated in rescues. They did it once and then went home. They quit at the first sign of serious opposition because they did not have the faith to continue. They had no faith in it, because they still believed there was an easier way. The way of conventional politics. The way of power and money and legal force.

Then, when the nominally pro life candidates lost the elections, they were plunged into despair, because their faith was in worldly power. So they sat at home behind locked doors, listening to the talk shows, polishing their guns and waiting for the BATF to come, while hoping that the Rapture came first. Their apocalyptic visions are all mixed up with paranoid fantasies and they are too spiritually sick to tell one from the other.

That sickness is what happens to you when you put your trust in guns. When you are unable to put your trust in God. When you don't catch the fresh spiritual winds that blow on the front lines of the battle. That is what has happened to the pro life movement.

Instead of worrying about how we are going to defend ourselves when they come to get us, we should be worrying about the best way that we can get them ! The best defense is a good offense. The best offense is the one that Jesus Christ chalked out for us and showed us how to run.

Were Jesus and his disciples safe from evil men? They aggressively challenged a society that was 100 times as dangerous as anything we have ever faced. Like Saint Stephen, you could be summarily executed just for saying the wrong thing. But Jesus Christ walked unafraid down the narrow streets of Jerusalem for a high noon confrontation with the bad guys. Just like Gary Cooper, but without the guns. The Man had Guts! And the Son of Man had a Spirit of Courage

which he bequeathed to us! So we don't have any excuse for not following his example because we don't have to rely upon the puny spirit that is in us. It is the very Spirit of God that gives us the necessary courage to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Of Saint Peter. Of Saint Paul. Of Saint Stephen. Of all the other Christ-imitating Saints that boldly confronted the evil of their day, following in the footsteps of the Master. They were mortal men like us, who showed that they were animated by an immortal Spirit.

We could beat the pro-abortion forces tomorrow if people only had Christian faith enough to get out there. We are beating them, those of us who have kept the faith, who are still out there.

Please cast out these Lone Ranger fantasies and find your Courage. Leave your gun at home, put your trust in God, and Come Out !

*Terry Sullivan*