

John Brown's Shadow

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On October 16th 1859, Captain John Brown led 21 men--16 white and 5 black--in a military expedition to capture the arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia. His purpose was to arm the slaves for a rebellion against slavery. They succeeded at first, but the arsenal was soon re-captured. Brown's men were killed and he himself was badly wounded. On October 27th he was found guilty of treason and murder.

Many of the abolitionists admired his self-sacrificing courage and mourned his death even though they themselves were unwilling to sanction violent acts. Henry David Thoreau, who had known him personally, wrote a passionate defense, *A Plea For Captain John Brown*, in which he said:

It was his peculiar doctrine that a man has a perfect right to interfere by force with the slaveholder, in order to rescue the slave. I agree with him. They who are continually shocked by slavery have some right to be shocked by the violent death of the slaveholder, but no others. Such will be more shocked by his life [the slaveholder's life] than by his death. I shall not be forward to think him mistaken in his method [John Brown] who quickest succeeds to liberate the slave.

He quotes John Brown himself as saying to the slavery men, after his capture: *I think, my friends, you are guilty of a great wrong against God and humanity, and it would be perfectly right for anyone to interfere with you. . . . You may dispose of me very easily. I am nearly disposed of now; but this question is still to be settled.*

Against the claim of the government that it has the exclusive right to use force, Thoreau says: *When a government puts forth its strength on the side of injustice, as ours to maintain slavery and kill the liberators of the slave, it reveals itself a merely brute force, or worse, a demoniacal force. . . . The only government that I recognize--and it matters not how few are at the head of it, or how small its army--is that power that establishes justice in the land, never that which establishes injustice. What shall we think of a government to which all the truly brave and just men in the land are enemies, standing between it and those whom it oppresses? A government that pretends to be Christian and crucifies a million Christs every day!* And he described by this the government of his own state of Massachusetts, as well as the national government, which were both complicit in sustaining slavery.

He remarks upon the hypocrisy of those who opposed this violence: *I know that the mass of my countrymen think that the only righteous use that can be made of Sharp's rifles and revolvers is to fight duels with them, when we are insulted by other nations, or to hunt Indians, or shoot fugitive slaves with them, or the like. I think that for once the Sharp's rifles and the revolvers were employed in a righteous cause. The tools were in the hands of one that could use them.*

John Brown was hanged on December 2nd 1859. A year later, the Civil War was upon us. What they hanged John Brown for, had become the daily activity of a million men, who were celebrated as heroes.

shooting the abortionist

What put me in mind of John Brown was the shooting of abortionist David Gunn by Michael Griffin, in Pensacola Florida, on Wednesday March 10th 1993. I have felt for some time that a civil war over abortion was in the works. Griffin's act, like that of John Brown, foreshadows a larger conflict. They may soon dispose of him, as they did of John Brown, but they will not soon dispose of the question of abortion. They cannot suppress the great moral passion that is growing in the hearts of millions of people.

Actually the comparison is not fair to Michael Griffin. John Brown's violent acts were in furtherance of an improbable plan that might eventually have benefited the slaves, had it succeeded. Griffin had no plan beyond stopping the killer and stopping that morning's killings. And he did succeed.

a question of sanity

How similar the responses were to John Brown's act, as described by Thoreau, and to that of Michael Griffin! The man is instantly judged to be insane, solely on the basis of his action. Why? Because he killed someone? Men kill indiscriminately in war without being judged insane--they are heroes! But the killing of a killer, to stop him from further killing, is insane.

The "insanity" is that he did what the average man would never do. He didn't wait for the government to tell him who to kill, and he didn't put on the proper uniform. The insanity is that he laid down his life without being forced to do it. He obviously faces the death penalty or life in prison for what he did, and for not doing it from ambush and then running away afterwards.

The insanity is that 1) he acted as if he actually believed that abortion is murder; 2) he acted as if it were his personal responsibility to do something effective to stop it; 3) he is abandoning his own life to save the lives of those unborn babies; 4) he did not run nor hide but stood behind what he did. By not running, he took full responsibility for his own action. He prevented the blame from falling on others. That is just the opposite spirit from all those who insist upon anonymity, who wish to strike a blow without exposing themselves to the risk of taking a blow.

If this is madness, then is it *sanity* which describes most pro life Christians? 1) we say that abortion is murder but we never act like we believe it 2) we look to the government or to **somebody else--not me** to do something effective to stop it 3) we make a token sacrifice of time and money, and then try to use the issue to further a career. 4) we cast an anonymous ballot.

While the establishment pro lifers were wringing their hands over the unjustified tarnishing of their tame tabby image, serious anti-abortion activists reacted quite differently. The most gentle Christian lady that I know said that, when Michael Griffin comes before the Real Judge, it will be said in his favor that he prevented the killing of the unborn babies by what he did. **People who actively try to save babies from abortion find it hard to condemn what Michael Griffin did, even if they are unable to applaud him.**

The response of the establishment pro lifers reveals several things about them: They do not really feel that abortion is murder, regardless of how often they have said the words. They feel no real horror at abortion and they feel no urgent necessity to stop it. They are horrified at the killing of a "doctor." They have entirely lost sight of what this "doctor" was just about to do. It has no horror for them and they feel no elation that it was prevented. Their reaction shows what they do care about: **their image;** their public relations. They are only horrified at being associated with someone who would "kill a doctor." That is because their careers and their flow of contributions and their organizational respectability matter very much to them. The babies being killed don't matter very much to them.

the law and self defense

The most common argument against Griffin is that he was wrong because he took the law into his own hands. But even those who sincerely and foolishly believe in law and order recognize the right to defend ourselves and to defend others. Griffin didn't execute a retired abortionist, he shot one that was minutes away from killing another batch of babies.

The *subway vigilante*, Bernard Getz was finally acquitted on the basis that he was only defending his own life. In fact, defending your own life hardly makes you a *vigilante* except by some statist notion that we must surrender all rights to the police, even when they are quite incapable of giving us the protection that is the only valid basis of that surrender.

But if Getz was justified in using a revolver to defend his own life, regardless of what the law said, was not Griffin justified in using a revolver to save the lives of others--the babies that "doctor" Gunn was about to kill? Do you have the right to defend yourself, and no right to defend others? Actually you have more right to defend others, you have an obligation even.

If a maniac is attacking some children with a knife, and you have a revolver, do you call the police and wait for them to arrive? Griffin had no such option anyway. The police would have helped the maniac to get on with his work of child-killing!

the equality of murder

The formula hit upon by most pro life spokesmen is that they oppose the murder of "doctor" David Gunn just as they oppose the murder of unborn babies. But they haven't begun to think that through.

The most obvious difference is this: the unborn child is entirely innocent. She has done nothing to deserve execution. But "doctor" Gunn was guilty of terrible crimes. In fact he was a **serial killer**, who showed no remorse, who did it for money.

So it would be bad enough if the state treated these "murders" equally. Instead, the state treats the killing of an innocent baby as an innocent and legal act. The state even pays to have it done! Then it treats the timely apprehension of the red-handed "doctor" as a criminal act! The state does this, which is to say, we are doing this, if we go along with the state.

Another essential difference is that the "murder" of David Gunn, if it was one, is being rapidly punished by the state. We don't need to worry about it. They will prosecute it to the fullest extent of the law. The man who "murdered the doctor" will pay for it with his life or with life in prison.

Meanwhile, your other murderers, the men who murder the babies, will pay . . . NOTHING! Will be paid \$2000 an hour for doing it! Will be encouraged by the state to go on murdering! Their training in how to do this killing will be paid for by the state, that is, by us!

You know the whereabouts of the man who killed the abortionist, so you call the police. And they turn out in force to capture him. You know the whereabouts of the man who has been killing the babies by abortion, so you call the police. And they, stimulated by what they take as a threat, turn out in force to protect this baby-killer so that he may proceed with his killing of babies.

So if you truthfully oppose the murder of the babies as you oppose the murder of the abortionist, then you also see that there is no equivalence in the two situations, that one is being taken care of and the other is totally out of control. If both are murders, then something has to be done so that the murder of the babies is treated as murder. And you see that the state won't do it. That the state is in complicity with these murders—that you are in complicity with them. So you further see that there is no possibility of justice being applied to these killer doctors unless it is done by someone else.

That is where Michael Griffin's mandate came from, for taking the law into his own hands. There is a natural justice in what he did which is conspicuously missing from the so-called "justice" system.

People fool themselves that their servile submission to the raw force of the law shows their respect for justice. It shows something else entirely. If you were serious about calling abortion murder, you wouldn't find it so easy to condemn a man who prevented these murders, as the state would not. He acted out what you pretend to believe: abortion is murder. If that is true, then **the abortionist deserves to be dealt with as a murderer. If the state will no longer prevent murder, then it becomes our responsibility to prevent murder.** When the state condones these murders, then the

state has become a co-conspirator. And all those who are complicit with it have the blood upon their hands also.

Are you content to let the state punish the one murder while it encourages the other murders? If you aren't content with this, and you flatly reject Michael Griffin's answer, then what is your answer? The one "murderer" recognized his moral obligation to stop the murders of the babies. What obligation have you recognized except the public relations mandate to find some formula of words that lets you avoid the real moral situation that faces us?

killer or hero?

Suppose that a security guard at the abortion clinic had spotted Michael Griffin just in the nick of time and had shot him before he was able to shoot the abortionist. Would you rush to condemn the security guard as a murderer, because you oppose all killing? There are a good many people in the pro life establishment who would instead attend the dinner at which the security guard is given a hero's medal for saving the life of "doctor" Gunn.

What they are showing is their bedrock belief in "law and order." They wish to assure everyone that they will do nothing to stop abortion outside the confines of the two party political system. Conformity to the state is the first principle of their actual ethics as opposed to the Christian ethics which they pretend to believe. They hasten to assure everyone that they will talk about abortion but they have no wish to fight about it. Sooner than do that, they will go along with it. They needn't have told us. It was already obvious. Their real horror is the prospect of the fight for which they have no stomach.

It isn't the violence of Griffin's act that horrifies them, it is the illegality of it. They have no real horror of violence, including the violence of abortion, so long as it is legal. So they will go along with abortion forever so long as it is the law. What they think of as their morality is built upon the firm foundation of cowardice and conformity.

Michael Griffin is more right than those who were in such frantic haste to disassociate themselves from him. His actions are more moral than theirs and truer to the principles that they pretend to believe. Griffin's action was honorable compared to the inaction of those who pretend to oppose abortion but who never take any serious action to prevent it.

The maniac with the knife is after the children. So the pro life organization sends out a mailing: ***children are being killed! WRITE A CHECK!*** With the checks in the bank, they will some day get elected to the legislature. Then, some year, they will maneuver through a bill that will make it very, very inconvenient for this maniac to continue to kill children. There will be a ***significant statistical drop!*** And you, thanks to your check, will have done it!

These people wouldn't even dream of personally trying to stop the maniac. They will call the police and then be indignant that the police didn't arrive in time to save the children. Since they can't call the police on the abortionist, they wait patiently for the day when they can.

morality versus civility

People think they were shocked by the shooting of David Gunn because they hate killing. But they deceive themselves as to what their real feelings are. If they hated killing, they would hate abortion with a great passion, which would drive them to do something to stop that killing; which would give them no rest. Where is the evidence of this passion, except in the hearts of a few? And one of those few is Michael Griffin, the man who shot "doctor" Gunn.

What shocks people is not that someone was killed. Someone is killed every day at that abortuary and they are not shocked by it. They are shocked by the breach of civility, the breakdown in manners. They think church decorum is morality. It is unseemly to shout at the abortion customers. Heavens! Do you have to get emotional, just because a baby is being killed? They believe that the abortion debate must be kept within the limits of courteous argument according to Robert's rules of order. We must maintain civility.

But civility is only the veneer of civilization. A civilization which butchers babies has lapsed into barbarism and the veneer must soon crack. War means cursing and shouting and the bayonet in the belly. But this kind of obvious violence is begotten by the hidden violence of abortion. To continue debating the murder of the children within the confines of Robert's rules of order is to betray the unborn. It is to acquiesce in their murder, regardless of how many speeches we make to the contrary.

the christian nonconformist

The Christians of Germany could somehow reconcile themselves to everything that Hitler did. But they were horrified at the attempt to assassinate Hitler. **That's Murder!** Doing away with the Jews, well, that is a social policy that I don't really agree with, but what can I do? Since it is the law, it must be right. Even if it isn't, it can't be up to me to do differently from everyone else.

His fellow citizens were horrified by what Franz Jaggerstatter did--he refused to serve in Hitler's army and he was executed for his refusal. How can this be a Christian thing to do when all the other Christians of Germany did just the opposite? If this was the Christian thing to do, why did the Christian clergy of Germany counsel the opposite course?

The real horror for these false Christians is the spectacle of a man who does not conform to the crowd, who does not surrender his conscience to the state. He horrifies them because his action shines a light into the dark and cozy corner of their cowardice and their conformity. By showing what a true Christian does, he shows them up as false Christians.

They are Christians only if the state allows them to be and only if the rest of the nation goes along with it. They have no morality that would enable them to stand alone, without the support

of the crowd. They have no morality that would ever induce them to defy the power of the state. That is why they are horrified at anyone who does do it.

They are no more capable of shooting an abortionist than they are of standing out there alone in public with a picket sign, than they are of faithfully wearing a conspicuous pro life badge. They shudder at the idea of standing out from the crowd in opposition to it. They shudder at the idea of doing anything which puts them in jeopardy of the law, whether the action be violent or nonviolent. But they will go along with every kind of violence if the crowd does, if the state commands it.

The people who sound like Christian pacifists in respect to this isolated shooting of an abortionist have an entirely different set of principles which they bring out when they consider war and capital punishment. They are ready and eager to use the violence of the law against their opponents if they can. They easily justify killing when it is done under government auspices. The editor who now argues against Griffin on the basis that the Sermon on the Mount forbids any taking of human life is the same that defended the last war. Those who will not allow the taking of a life by abortion for any reason at all can think up 101 good reasons for taking a life in war. Is this Christian ethics?

Let us take the strict moral standard that we rightly apply to abortion and apply it to war: Question: how many innocent children may be killed before a just war turns into an unjust war? Answer: **Not even one!** Question: how many wars have been fought in which no innocent children were killed? Answer: Not even one!

Griffin's act compared to war

Most killing in war is senseless, people get in the way of all that firepower. Compared to past wars, the most recent one was restrained and humane, but in the Gulf War and its predictable aftermath, thousands of innocent people have been killed while Saddam Hussein continues alive and well. But Michael Griffin killed only the abortionist and he thus ended the criminal career of a *serial killer*. He also preserved the lives, at least temporarily, of a dozen babies scheduled for execution that morning.

The Gulf War killed thousands of innocent people for the sake of cheap gas. It pretended to destroy Mr. Evil and then let him continue with his killings. Michael Griffin actually did what the Gulf War pretended to do--he stopped Mr. Evil from killing any more innocent people. In the process of doing it, he killed not one innocent bystander. By any common sense reckoning, Michael Griffin's action was moral as the Gulf War was not.

Griffin's act compared to capital punishment

The killing of abortionist David Gunn is, on the face of it, a moral act, as capital punishment is not. The serial killer, locked up in the penitentiary, has been prevented from further killing. Why kill him now? Why not give him time to repent?

Isn't a life spent in prison, with his own unpleasant self for constant company, punishment enough?

But abortionist David Gunn was not locked up on death row like Ted Bundy or Jeffry Dahmer. He was still at large. In fact, he was just preparing to kill again. He was only minutes away from killing another batch of babies when Griffin shot him. An execution which prevents murders--real and certain and rapidly impending murders--is surely more justified than one that only punishes past murders, or that is justified by some possibility of future murders. Bundy might possibly have escaped to kill again. But Gunn **had escaped** and he **was killing again** at the time he was stopped. So Michael Griffin stopped a career criminal in mid-career by the only means available to him.

The serial killer has a half-mad compulsion that lessens his guilt. He kills because he is driven to do it. David Gunn had no such excuse. He had a very commonplace motive: he wanted to make another million dollars before he quit. He killed because he could make \$2000 an hour doing abortions, because it was legal, because everyone called him "DOCTOR." He was a "doctor" who had abandoned the practice of medicine to become a hired hit man specializing in defenceless babies. On the record of his life, his character compares unfavorably with that of Ted Bundy or that of Jeffry Dahmer. Neither one ever killed a baby. Their half-mad compulsions give them some claim on our moral sympathy. The abortionist has no such claim.

killing a killer

The way we view this event is determined by the vocabulary we have been taught to use. If David Gunn was a "Doctor" offering "medical services" then his shooting was, as one newspaper described it, *the murder of a Florida physician*.

But, if abortion is murder, then Gunn is a murderer and we have, at the worst, the murder of a murderer. But it wasn't as if he had been shot by a rival abortionist, the way one mobster kills another. The man who shot him had no such motive. When you add in the fact that Gunn was minutes away from committing a new round of abortions, which, realistically, could be prevented in no other way, his slaying appears in an entirely different light.

Or do we decide it on the basis that the law says: 1) abortion is not murder 2) therefore, an abortionist is a Doctor

and a Physician, not a baby-killer or a murderer 3) killing him to stop him from delivering further "medical services" is: a. murder b. interfering with medical services c. acting in restraint of trade, and therefore illegal, and therefore immoral?

How much respect do we give to man made laws that are without moral foundation? None at all, if we do not want to wind up saluting Hitler again and carrying out his orders like all the Christians of Germany once did, with a very few heroic exceptions. A bad law is the work of the devil, and we serve the devil when we obey it. Those German Christians were the servants of the devil and it is to their account that we must lay the guilt of mass murder, not to the account of the one who gave the orders. Later, they all said that they were only his flunkys, but the truth is that he was their flunkey--he led them where they wanted to go. Adolph Hitler did not personally kill the Jews. The German Christians did kill millions of Jews at his orders. That is what immoral subservience to the law does to you.

legal executions / moral executions

In a recent trial in New York State, the judge agreed with the pro life defendants that the fetus is a human being. But he still refused to acquit them. Killing the unborn baby by abortion was defined by this judge as a *legal execution*.

But if abortion is morally murder than "doctor" David Gunn was a murderer, whatever the law says. So the shooting of "doctor" David Gunn was a *moral execution*, even if an illegal one. Actually, it can hardly be called an execution when the killing was done to prevent murder rather than just to punish murder. Michael Griffin did not take on the usual role of the state in punishing a murderer. Rather, he stopped murders that the state would do nothing to stop.

So all the mitigating or aggravating circumstances push us to decide that what David Gunn did for a living was murder, whatever the law says, and that his slaying by Michael Griffin was not murder, whatever the law says.

Yes, all right, killing is not the way to stop killing. But what is then? We are stuck with the fact that Michael Griffin did stop the killing of the babies scheduled to die that morning. He put this abortionist out of business forever. David Gunn will kill no more babies. To reject the way Griffin did it, we must have some counter fact. We must present the evidence that we are as

passionate about stopping abortion as he was. Because otherwise, for all our talk and busy work, we are his moral inferiors. And when people finally get serious about stopping abortion, it is his example, not ours, that everyone must follow.

Griffin's example

We have to **get serious** about stopping abortion as Michael Griffin was serious. We have to **take personal responsibility** for stopping abortion as Michael Griffin took personal responsibility for stopping abortion. We must **come out of hiding** and put our names and our faces behind our actions, as Michael Griffin put his name and his face behind his action. We must **lay down our lives** to stop abortion as Michael Griffin has laid down his life to stop abortion. We must have a moral equivalent to war, or else we will have war.

Look at one aspect of Michael Griffin's action that stands in stark contrast to most of the pro life movement. Look all around you at the ambitious people who are using (or trying to use) the pro life movement to launch their careers. Contrast that with this man who has abandoned his life and his career in order to stop abortion. That is why his action lays a moral obligation upon all of us, either to follow his example or to find something to do which is the moral and spiritual equivalent.

It isn't enough to say *I can't condemn him*. What does that mean? Do you therefore applaud him? Will you be the next one to do what he did? Or do you just mean to encourage others in a vague way, which lets you escape the responsibility?

It is true that we cannot accept what he did as setting the example we must follow. I say that, knowing that we may very well follow it in the end, as they once followed John Brown's shade into the battle over slavery. Those who denounced what he did, who never would have had the courage to do it, wound up doing it all the same, when the state ordered them to do it.

We will follow his example, because it is better to go to war than to continue to tolerate abortion.

We will be forced to go to war, because our present position is far less moral than a war. Because the violence of a war is preferable to the intolerable violence of abortion. It is better to shoot adults who are at least partly guilty, than to continue beating up on babies.

That is why people are shocked by what Michael Griffin did. His action is a handwriting on the wall which foretells our future. That future is almost inevitable because A. we **have to get serious** about stopping abortion, as the politicians, the careerists and the lobbyists can never be serious B. the only way of getting serious, that most of us believe in, is war.

We have three choices: 1) nonviolent direct action; 2) war; 3) the status quo. And we must prefer nonviolent direct action to war. But it is also true that we must prefer war to the status quo.

Nonviolent direct action fails because it requires more courage than most people have. What takes more courage: to go forward into battle of your own free will, or to be herded forward with a gun at your back? Most people will not fight until they are made to fight. That is why we end up in wars.

Michael Griffin's action was half Christian. It accurately follows the half Christian ethics of the society he grew up in. He has been raised to believe that God's will is most effectively done by a good man with a gun, As have most Christians. So what excuse do they have for not following his example?

But few will follow his example, any more than they followed John Brown's example. The next man will kill from ambush and avoid capture. Then we all must take the blame for his action. The one after that will direct someone else to do it as the commander does in war. Then a handful of volunteers will be replaced by an army of conscripts. John Brown was a self-motivated man, a man of personal courage and religious vision. The average Civil War soldier went forward into battle because he was a conscript and they shot him if he didn't.

the drift into war

We get pushed into war because there is no other way to make most people do anything. They never will take responsibility until they are made to take it. So this giant coercive apparatus is necessary to compensate for our collective dereliction of duty. Had the Christians of Germany lived as Christians, Hitler's army would never have crossed the border and the first Jew would not have been killed.

The war becomes inevitable, not because of the gross immorality of abortion, but because of all the false Christians who will not now do what they can to stop abortion. Because they will not fight in a voluntary and nonviolent way, they will be forced to fight in a violent way. The Civil War was caused, not by slavery, but by the failure of 99 % of the Christians to do anything effective to oppose slavery, during all the years of peace when they could have done something.

War is better than what we have now. What we have now is a daily war against unborn babies while the rest of America goes shopping. The affluent American life style is purchased by the daily shedding of innocent blood. And, with a few honorable exceptions, nominally Christian, nominally pro life America does nothing to prevent these murders except that which is compatible with cowardice, with comfort and convenience, with pursuing your career.

War by contrast would have some nobility to it. The nobility is less in the reality of war than in the sham pretenses of war, the "show" that is put on. But this show generates real passions, passions that are appropriate to the spectacle of babies being killed. The fact of this passion in Michael Griffin is what shames the rest of us.

is terror effective?

Some people are not sorry at what Griffin did, because it puts fear into the abortionist. It will cause some of them to quit. It will discourage others from taking their places.

But how long will the scare last unless others follow up on what Griffin did? How many will pay the price that he is paying? Instead, if they do it at all, they will hit and run. Running will be uppermost in their minds, and clumsy and stupid violence will be the result. Look at the terrorism of the IRA. Little boys killed and horses maimed. Shoppers targeted at random.

In the late 1960's, some of the black militant gangs declared a policy of shooting the drug dealers to try and rid the black part of town of the drug addiction that destroys the lives of so many black people. But some of the black militant gangs became involved in drug-dealing. So they were shooting drug dealers to eliminate their rivals. Today there are more shootings than ever and more drugs than ever. Drug-dealing is a risky occupation,

but there is no shortage of people willing to risk it for the money it pays.

It will be the same with abortion. If they run out of "doctors," they will use non-doctors. Killing the abortionist creates a job opening but it doesn't kill *the spirit of abortion*. To destroy this evil spirit, we have to cast it out of our own lives.

Is terror effective? No war was ever won by terror and sabotage alone. It accompanies war, but it is not the way that a war can be won. So those that advocate it must answer all the questions they haven't even considered yet. Do we mean to fight a war? How and when will we form a government capable of carrying on a successful war effort? Where is the political support to come from to sustain this government? How will we enforce conscription or raise an army without it? A few acts of terrorism will only provoke and justify serious repression. Hitler used the incident of the Reichstag fire to attack his opponents and consolidate his power.

And once you have started down this road, there is no going back. You must succeed or fail by the measure of success in war. Are we to use guns and expect that the other side won't? They have more money for guns than we do. They may not fight themselves, but there are always soldiers for hire, and they have billions of dollars. That is how they win elections and war is the same sort of contest in which money is the most important weapon.

People somehow believe that the good guys always win the war. Joe Stalin won the war, so Joe Stalin was a good guy. People whose knowledge of history comes from comic books have a childish faith in the efficacy of violence.

Violence has a much higher failure rate than condoms. It is far less reliable. Condoms fail 20% of the time. Violence fails at least 50% of the time. There is always one loser for every winner. That is the 50% failure rate. The loser is usually the one with the highest ideals and the least money. The winner is usually the one with the lowest principles and the most money. The failure rate is actually much higher than 50%, because, quite often, both sides lose. Iran and Iraq fought a war for eight years that ended in a stalemate. What they have to show for this vast national expenditure is 1 million graves where all their

young men are buried. In the long run, the real failure rate of violence is more like 100% *All* those that take the sword, perish by it--so says our friend.

Once you are locked into settling it by violence, there is no going back. It is an entirely different kind of struggle. Only young men of military age are relevant to the success of it. The rest give money. They give 100 times what they ever gave to the nonviolent effort, because they are made to give it.

Griffin's bad example

Michael Griffin sets us an example that we cannot follow. That is why it is a bad example. It is at once too hard and too easy. It is too hard: he throws away his own life. He seriously harms the life of his own family. If they don't execute him, he will spend his life in prison. Either way, he is as good as dead to his family. How many others can follow such an example?

It is too easy. One action, one minute of time, and his job is done. He is a soldier who fights one 30 second battle. We already have too many people for whom one dramatic action is the beginning and the end of their work to save the babies.

Recently an abortuary in Milwaukee closed. It closed because of relentless steady pressure by those who went out there to witness against it and drive its business away. One woman picketed there three times a week for 8 years. Unlike Michael Griffin, what she did is not considered worthy of a news story. Here in Denver, two of the Planned Parenthood abortionists have quit coming finally after we have picketed them for 4 years, five days a week, because we picketed their offices also. The state just passed a special ordinance aimed at our picket lines-- a left-handed tribute from the abortion industry and its political allies.

Is this inefficient? Is this the slow way to do it? The main reason it has been so slow and inefficient is that only a handful of us have been out there with anything like consistency. Not 1% of the pro lifers here have made anything like a sustained and serious commitment to doing this work. Or any other work worthy of the name.

Actually, it is remarkable what we have accomplished with a dedicated handful of people. If 10% of the so-called pro lifers had done as much, we would have won by now!

But there is the same problem with Griffin's work. If we can't get people to give two hours, once a week, how many of them will give up their lives as Michael Griffin has?

I won't brag on my own commitment, except to shame others into making the commitment that they only pretend to make. But the fact is that I do 20 times what the average so-called pro-lifer does. Yet it is still only a part of what I could and should do, and of what all of us would do if we were serious about it, if we gave it half the effort we would give to a war. In short, far from having exhausted the potential of nonviolent direct action, we have only scratched the surface. We have only toyed with it.

Foolish people talk about the past 20 years as if there had been a serious and sustained pro life effort. The exact opposite is the truth. Bureaucrats shuffling papers; politicians pursuing office; pro life leaders milking the movement with unscrupulous fund raising; endless speeches in lieu of any kind of effective action. Desultory participation in nonviolent direct action except for a handful of dedicated people. That is the reality of the last 20 years.

If all these people who won't make a once a week commitment to the picket line are now going to shoot an abortionist and give up their own lives in order to do it, then I will retire from the picket line. With this kind of total commitment, who needs my commitment? But what I see instead is that people will "support" Griffin as they vicariously "support" other pro life activity and use that as the cover for continuing to do nothing themselves.

moral and effective

If what Michael Griffin did was moral and effective in stopping abortion, then we are bound to applaud what he did and encourage others to do the same. Was it moral and effective? Those questions are tied together in the ethics of violence. If violence is not effective it cannot be moral. It is not moral to use your shotgun against the invading army. You kill one soldier to no purpose and provoke the massacre of your whole neighborhood.

The maniac with a knife is attacking the children in your neighborhood. The police are no where to be seen. You have a gun. You shoot the maniac and save the children. A week later, the children are bused to the zoo and attacked by another maniac. You aren't there to stop it, so they are killed.

What you find out, is that the maniac was actually a hired killer. That the parents of the children hired him to get rid of their unwanted children. When you thwarted them, they took the children to a place where you couldn't interfere.

That is the trouble with killing the abortionist. You have not gotten at the root of the conspiracy to murder the children. The children you have saved from abortion today are re-scheduled for abortion next week, because there is the same child-killing conspiracy of parents, police and society at large.

You have shot the butcher, but you haven't shot the people who brought the baby to the butcher shop, who will pay to have him butchered. Have you somehow negated their will to kill their own baby? I have seen people walk away from the abortuary one day and come back the next because the same evil will was there and the same pressures were there that pushed them to abortion in the first place. When people have once gotten that far on the road to murder, it is not so easy to make them turn back again. When you physically prevent the butchery without touching the will to kill of the parents, all you have done is force them to find another butcher.

Is the abortionist the worst person involved? When society, including establishment pro life society, calls him "Doctor," when people pay him half a million a year to kill their babies for them? Should he care more for the baby than her own parents, who want her killed? Yes, he kills babies, that is the kind of person he is. What kind of persons are they who kill their own tiny sons and daughters, who pay someone to do it? What kind of persons are those who tolerate and ignore the killing of babies?

You haven't shot the Judge who uses his power to facilitate baby-killing. His judicial career depends upon the pro-abortion wing of the Democratic Party. His prosperity depends upon the abortion industry just like the actual abortionist.

You haven't shot the Pastor who tacitly condones abortion by never speaking out against it. His position, his salary, depends upon not offending all those in his congregation that have

committed abortions. He is not morally different from the abortionist who does the actual baby killing. The difference is that he gets paid less, through no fault of his own.

You haven't done anything at all about those sitting in the pews, who have killed their own babies and who still justify it. They have not admitted the truth of what they did, to God or to themselves. They want to feel right about their relationship with God. They don't want to be reminded of the child sacrifice they engaged in to secure their own prosperity. So they and their pastors have created the First Church of Christian Abortion, which caters to Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists and all the rest. Bill Clinton belongs to one of these churches. His wife belongs to another. But those churches were founded long before the Clintons came along.

You haven't shot the "Christians" who vote for the pro choice politicians, because they don't care about the babies being butchered. If you are going to use a gun to stop this evil, you will need a lot of ammunition. A one time shooting turns out to be no more effective than all the other one time acts and gestures that are offered as a poor substitute for a sustained commitment. You have only made the abortionist the scapegoat for the actions and inactions of many people.

the scapegoat

The scapegoat was an ordinary goat to which was transferred all the sins of the Jewish people. (Leviticus 16.21) Then the goat was driven out into the wilderness to die, so that the evil of the nation might be gotten rid of. We still practice this old sham ritual when we transfer all the evil of a thing to one person. We pour out righteous wrath upon the killer of babies. Then we offer a sentimental tolerance to all the Christian ladies and gentlemen who pay him to kill their babies. He is an inhuman monster. They are deceived and misguided. More to be pitied than censured.

We let ourselves off in the same way. We focus on the evil action of this one man. But the real killer of babies is the evil passivity of Christians. How can this one evil man kill so many? Because we let him do it. Because for so many years we were out shopping instead of being there to confront him and his customers with what they were doing. Because we still have not made a serious commitment to stop the killing.

All the murders that were committed by the German Christians are blamed on the one man who headed up the government. Logically then, killing him is the answer. But violence never does cut the root of evil. Hitler re-appears as Joe Stalin. As Mao Tse Tung. As Pol Pot. You kill the evil man but you cannot kill the evil spirit. You don't deal with the root of the problem: that evil spirit infects all of us, not just the man at the top.

the spirit of abortion

The spirit of abortion grows from the love of money. It grows because we don't care about others. We de-humanize them so as to justify the way we waste their lives, actively or passively. It is justified by the basic belief of most Christians that violence is the only effective answer to violence.

What motivates the abortionist? It is a safe bet that a man who makes half a million dollars a year performing abortions is possessed by that *love of money*, which Paul said was *the root of all evil*. But is it only the abortionist that provides a home for this evil spirit that we call the *love of money*? Do we destroy it when we shoot him?

This same *love of money* is the major reason why people resort to abortion. Raising a child by the American standard costs something like \$300,000. If the woman has to quit her career in order to raise the child, it means an enormous loss of income. Add up what her salary comes to over a working life time, and what you see is that the unwanted baby is worth a million dollars to a modern American couple. By investing \$300 in an abortion they can reap a million dollar profit.

Let us understand this young couple. To fulfill the American Dream that they have been taught to believe in as an integral part of their American Christian faith, they have to avoid having a baby. It is a matter of life and death for them, or a matter of the Death of the American Lifestyle. How can they live without a nice big house, a nice new car and all the rest of it? And it has become harder and harder to get, because everyone has to have it. They have been raised in your house and they don't know any other way to live. So she has to work. So they have to avoid having a baby. Their friends understand it. Their pastor understands it. You understand it too, if you are honest.

Where else do you find this *love of money*? You can hear it preached every day by the TV evangelists. It is what millions of American Christians want to hear. It is the keystone of their faith--Jesus is my winning lottery ticket. Jesus will bless my

investments. You can see it practiced in the lives of your Christian friends. You don't have to look that far--you can see it practiced in your own life!

Women must have careers because we can't pass up the chance to double the family income. That is now an article of the Christian creed in all the churches, whether they read it out loud in church or not.

Isn't it obvious that we will never cut that root of abortion which is rightly called the *love of money* until we first cut it out of our own lives? When you remove the dollar sign from your own eye, you will see better how to remove it from the eyes of those who buy and sell abortion.

wasting their lives

People who participate in abortion resolutely refuse to admit that the fetus is a baby, or a child, or a person. In order to justify abortion, it is necessary to insist that the fetus is not really a human being like you or me. It is "two tablespoons of fluid" or "fetal tissue" or something sub-human.

That is one example of a very common mental defense which allows us to go along with the waste of human life. Most Christian pro lifers (so-called) thought the Gulf War was wonderful. God's power was shown by the fact that only 200 people were killed. That is, only 200 Americans were killed. The 200,000 Iraqi soldiers who were killed didn't quite count as casualties. We ignore the humanity of our enemy, we de-humanize him, or we just brush aside the reality of his life and death, just as they brush aside the reality of the life and death of the baby who is killed by abortion.

We do the same in respect to all those whose lives are put on the trash heap by the poverty that we create by our pursuit of wealth. We refuse to see the connection between our luxuries and their lack of necessities. We believe, contrary to common sense and all the evidence, that the economy is a righteous economy that rewards honest work and punishes sloth. We include the American economy in our false religion that centers upon the American nation.

Abortion goes on because Christians ignore it. They refuse to care about it. They don't want to know about it and the

politicians, including the "pro-life" politicians, oblige them. They don't want to know what the Chinese did in Tibet either. They don't know want to know about the bone piles in Uganda. Their Christian religion is a fantasy that lets them escape from the realities of the world they live in, that helps them evade any moral responsibility for the wholesale waste of human life in which they are accomplices.

violence is the answer

The basic premise which justifies abortion is that violence is the only real answer, the only effective cure for some of the basic evils of life. Like war, it is an evil which prevents a worse evil. And Christian pro lifers find it very hard to effectively argue against that premise, because, in any other context, that is what they also believe. They believe violence is the answer to violence. That evil cancels evil.

Jesus Christ said that we must not return evil for evil. The sophistry of the Christian church has given us 101 ways to get around that teaching. Returning evil for evil is the heart of the old law. It is the basic principle of the law and order that Christians have substituted for the teachings of Jesus.

The violence of rape can only be erased by the violence of abortion. You don't believe it? But you believe in that principle in respect to every other relation in life. When Christians preach and practice violence in every other way, their rejection of the violence of abortion isn't so convincing.

To kill this ***spirit of abortion***, we must first kill it in our own lives. We must kill it in the Christian churches. That is the only way we can find the spiritual power to stop abortion.

the moral balance

We do not any longer have the choice between war and peace. There can never be a stable peace while the violence of baby-killing continues. America is polluted with the blood of innocent babies. That blood is a swelling sea that will drown us. Our civilization will go down to ruin like the Aztecs did and for the same reason--it is built upon human sacrifice.

There is a moral balance in the world. The further it is pushed one way, the harder it comes back the other way. Fools never see it coming. But in the midst of their mockery it comes

back upon them. Some day, those dismembered bodies will be delivered to the front door steps of all those who think they got rid of that baby.

People had the illusion that they could go on forever practicing slavery. That they could build a society upon this gross evil and injustice. They and their children and their grandchildren have paid the price, and double and triple the price, for the lives of all those slaves that they bought and sold. So will we pay the price for abortion.

We don't have the choice between war and peace. The war has already started. The war against the unborn has long been underway, and we can no longer run away from it. There is no further place to run.

We do still have the choice between war as Jesus waged war, and war as worldly men wage war. But we won't have it much longer. Unless we at once make a serious declaration of spiritual war against all those responsible for the baby-killing--that is, against our fellow Americans and especially against our fellow "Christians"--we will inevitably slide into the conventional kind of war.

the other way

There is that other way. But it is a way that few ever follow. It is hard to believe that they will follow it this time.

The aspects of Michael Griffin's action that are least likely to be imitated are those that are most Christian. Taking personal responsibility for the moral condition of his society. Putting his life on the line. Doing what he did openly and fearlessly without deception or evasion.

Why did he turn himself in? Why didn't he do it so as to avoid arrest and imprisonment? If you believe in being the good guy with the gun, why stop with one notch on your gun? Why not avoid capture and keep on with it?

Does he believe in the law enough so that he feels obligated to accept its punishment for what he did? Is it the example of what Jesus did, when he refused to hide or run? Does he believe in laying down his life?

laying down your life

Jesus Christ never killed anyone. That is an obvious fact about his life, that Christians have taught themselves to ignore. But he did lay down his life, like a soldier in battle.

It is that belief in the spiritual power of laying down your life that is so basic to Christian belief and so conspicuously missing from false Christianity. If you don't believe in martyrdom, then you do not believe in Jesus Christ, Saint Stephen, Saint Paul, Saint Peter. You don't believe in what they did and what they taught. To the world it is foolishness. To the false Christian it is foolishness. They believe in the success you get by killing the other fellow.

A martyr is a witness. It means someone who actually stakes his life as the wager which proves the truth of what he says. That personal witness by courageous speech and action is the essential characteristic of a Christian. You are one if you do it. You aren't one if you don't.

It is certain that some of us will die for this cause. But meantime we must live for it. You can lay down your life a day at a time. You can work at stopping abortion day after day, patiently and tirelessly. That is what most of us are called to do. God doesn't want us to throw our lives away in one grand gesture. He wants us to live them out in His Service.

That doesn't mean busy work, the sham commitment that is carried on to justify the fund raising. It means serving the pro life movement in a dedicated and self-sacrificing way, not using the pro life movement to serve your ambitions.

personal responsibility

Jesus took personal responsibility for the moral condition of the society he lived in. He didn't appeal to the emperor for a new set of laws. He appealed to all of his hearers as individuals to put on a new nature. You must begin to live differently from the past. You must be born again into a new life. You must take the moral law into your own hands. Morality must be engraved on our hearts, not written by legislators who rewrite it whenever the political wind changes.

He called upon them to accept personal responsibility just as He did. What is characteristic of us, is our refusal to accept

personal responsibility for the moral condition of our society. It is due to sinister forces beyond our control. The plots of the Trilateral Commission and the militant homosexuals are to blame. It cannot be that we Christians are to blame that our society is not Christian. Don't we say the right words at least once a week? Don't we send in the check regularly?

The abnegation of responsibility is typical of the false Christian. I am not responsible for the moral condition of society. Only the government can change it. Only the political party can change the government. Ultimately, this personal irresponsibility creates Hitler.

The moral condition of society now depends only upon the government, especially the national government, and only upon the one man at the top of the government. Every time you criticize that man for the moral condition of society, you add to his power because you lay down the principle that he is responsible and you are not. All the evil that is done is his doing. The rest of us are not to blame because none of us have any serious responsibility.

Only Hitler is guilty. Millions are murdered because of the evil will of one man. That is, because all the other men no longer have a will, have resigned their wills to his. All the Christians of Germany somehow disappeared. No moral agent was left but Hitler. All the others were morally an extension of him, they were his servants. They were spiritually joined to him instead of to Jesus Christ. They did his will. They shared his spirit. And now we are on the same road. Most American Christians long ago disappeared. They belong to the church of the chameleon, the church which has become morally invisible by its conformity to the world around it.

If we do not now take personal responsibility for stopping abortion, as we have not in the past, we are going down that same old road all the way to the end. Those are really the only alternatives we have.

openness

Like other Americans, Christian pro lifers are mentally saturated with trash entertainment; with the lying history of our wars; with the tales of detectives and spies in which success comes to those who are sneakier and more secretive than their opponents. Their ideas about how to fight the battle come from

trash television, not from the life and teaching of Jesus Christ and the actions of his followers as they are described in the New Testament.

There is a Christian way of doing battle with evil that is entirely contrary to the way the world would tell us to fight. It demands openness and honesty, the fearlessness that is born from the Spirit of Truth. You see it in the way that the disciples throw open the doors and confront the Passover crowd after the Holy Spirit comes upon them.

The Spirit of God within us is love and courage. Love casts out hatred and courage casts out fear. We see it in the acts of Jesus Christ who shows us what it means to *love your enemies* and to face them without fear.

Saint Peter and Saint Paul show us the same spirit. They go forth to battle for the Kingdom of God and they rely upon spiritual weapons. It is as if the bravest hero of fiction were to discard his sword and then walk into battle without it. Jesus has taken the one sword away from him and given him another in its place, the same sword that He used.

Jesus as a warrior

Jesus was a fighter, not a politician or a lobbyist. He wasn't someone who tried to get along with everybody, who never raised his voice. In fact he declared war on the evil of the society that he lived in. He says as much in Matthew 10.34-38:

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

But what kind of a war is this? Does he really want mothers and daughters to fight each other with swords? That is what half-Christians who pick half-verses out of the bible would make of it, but it obviously means something different.

In fact, the spiritual war over abortion must be fought from house to house. It must be fought out between mother and daughter, between father and son. If we were only up to fighting and winning that war, we wouldn't need to fight any other. The next time your relatives invite you over, wear a 3 inch **ABORTION KILLS CHILDREN** badge. If they don't invite you back, you have

established the right relationship with them. Wear that same badge to work. If they fire you for doing it, then you have the opportunity to find a job that lets you bear witness to the truth. You will have deserted the ranks of false Christians who spend their lives conforming to the world for the sake of a pay check instead of serving the Lord in all sincerity and truth. You will have enlisted as a soldier in the army of Jesus Christ, instead of being an arm chair patriot who supports the battle from a safe distance.

Are these violent measures? They are nonviolent measures which begin a spiritual war for the soul of America. They are heroic measures which attack the root of the evil as violence never can.

the sword of truth

The sword that Jesus Christ wields is described in Revelations 2.16 as *the sword of my mouth* (cf rev 1.16, 2.12, 19.15, 19.21., Isaiah 11.4) And what it is, is the power of the truth, the Spirit of Truth. (John 14.17) And He makes it clear that we are to imitate Him, and follow Him--not just admire Him from a safe distance. We are to take up that Sword of Truth that He has given us.

That sword of truth that Jesus relied upon wasn't a matter of sermons only. It was the witness of his life and death that manifested the truth of his words. They never understood Him or believed Him until he laid down his life to seal the truth of what he had said.

The power of truth requires something more than being factually correct. If the Truth really does possess your mind, then it creates the sincere passion of the spirit that drives your feet to walk forward into the battle.

People in the pro life movement keep asking *why don't they believe us?* when we say that abortion is murder. But the answer is simple: you don't believe it yourself! You are saying the words but where is the evidence that you believe your own words? **You can convince people of something that is false just because you really believe it yourself.** A salesman can unload all sorts of useless merchandise if he can put on the sincerity of an actor. The converse is that you won't convince people of what is true if you don't seem to believe it yourself, if your actions--your lack of actions--believe your words.

But when you do believe it, when you put your life on the line to manifest the faith you have in your heart, then it generates

that Power of Truth and Love that is an irresistible force. It is the spirit of abortion, not the abortionist, that we need to kill. It is the sword of Jesus Christ that will enable us to do it.

Terry Sullivan

Afterword: January 2009

Although I still think my basic arguments in *John Brown's Shadow* are valid in respect to violence and nonviolence--the necessity of *a moral equivalent of war* as William James once wrote--I came to regret that I had given any countenance at all to those who bomb abortuaries or shoot abortionists. Simple maxims are best for a large miscellaneous movement. I came to see that an unequivocal insistence upon a strict nonviolent discipline was necessary. And that view is reflected in my later writings on this subject, especially bulletin # 8 *Hypothetical Morality*.

Because I do not pay much attention to the television, I belatedly became aware of a secondary problem. In addition to the few who carried out such attacks, there were many who publicly *supported* such actions--who used that *support* as their ticket to 15 minutes of fame in the national media which was eager to smear the whole pro life action movement by giving these people the spotlight.

Paul Hill

Shortly after I mailed out *John Brown's Shadow*, I received a response from Reverend Paul Hill of Pensacola Florida. In a letter dated July 7th 1993, he said: *I heartily agree with elements of your analysis with the exception of your pacifism*. He went on to argue the righteousness of vigilante violence aimed at the abortion industry on the basis of several Old Testament episodes. And he argued that *The Bible is a unified inspired book without any true contradictions*. That pushed me to write a response which eventually became *The New Covenant versus the Old Covenant*--also called *The Two Covenants*.

It has been typical of secular Christians since the time of Augustine that they believe in war. Like Augustine, they justify it by the kind of bible abuse which erases the line between the books of the Old Covenant and the books of the New Covenant. *The Church of the Empire*, which I wrote several years later, is an attempt at a history of what happened after the *traditors* betrayed the Christian Church and joined the Empire in the 4th century. It shows how they used the books of the Old Covenant to justify war, wealth and slavery and to thereby negate the teaching of the early church. And they still do it.

I was not aware that Paul Hill and Reverend Michael Bray had gotten themselves on national TV talk shows because of their willingness to publicly defend the righteousness of using violence against the abortion industry. As I documented in bulletin # 11, *The Media Murders the Pro Life Movement*, this kind of *support* was encouraged by the media until it became an epidemic.

The *supporters of Defensive Action* used it as an issue in their bid to take control of Operation Rescue in May 1994. And pushed me to defend the pledge of nonviolent discipline that was basic to Operation Rescue and the Rescue movement generally.

When Paul Hill lost the spotlight which he had been given just for *supporting* what Michael Griffin did, he reclaimed it by shooting an abortionist himself in Pensacola Florida on July 19 1994. His interview with Connie Chung inspired John Salvi to shoot up a couple of abortuaries and ask for an interview with Barbara Walters.

The issue has been quiet for a while but I know that it has not been settled. If and when the so-called *Christians* of America get serious about stopping abortion, the question of carnal versus spiritual warfare is certain to re-appear. The issue is not really violence versus nonviolent direct action so much as it is doing what you can versus pretending to do something and using that pretence for personal and organizational gain. The advocates of violence are not serious about doing something no more than the

political pro lifers are serious. What became of all those 1960s rebels who despised nonviolent direct action and called for *revolution* ? They sold out the first chance they got and wound up in the bureaucracy. That was their real agenda. After posturing for the media.

The legacy of the late 1960s is a style of ersatz revolution and limited violence in which the rebels throw rocks while the police fire tear gas. It is strange how many knothheads are attracted to it. It allows people to pretend that they are serious about fighting. They are only serious about being seen on television.

If Christians were serious about Bearing Witness to the Truth out on the sidewalk, it would have a major impact on abortion. It does now when only a hand full of serious Christians do it. *Taking it to the streets* either means that you are going to over throw the government or that you got your annual parade permit. Taking it to the sidewalk every day of the week means that you follow the example of Jesus in Bearing Witness. That you rely upon the power of the Spirit of Truth and Love and Courage.

There is a right way for Christians to oppose the moral evil of the empire. Whether you call it nonviolent direct action or *The Spiritual Warfare of Jesus Christ*--as in the article I have written--it is the one and only path that real Christians must follow.