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Paul J. Hill, convicted of killing an abortionist and his security guard in Pensacola, Florida, has advanced the following rationale for his action: "Whatever force is legitimate in defending a born child is legitimate in defending an unborn child." For some who believe that the moral status of the unborn is the same as that of the born, Hill's axiom is persuasive. We asked a number of people identified with the pro-life cause to respond briefly to the justification put forth by Mr. Hill for the use of lethal force against those who perform abortions.

Helen M. Alvare

There is a starting point for responding to Mr. Hill's rationale that is dramatically more important than investigating theories of justifiable homicide. It is the restatement of the overriding aim of the pro-life movement: to instill in individuals and in society as a whole a respect for the dignity of *each* human life. An important corollary to this arises in light of the present societal turn to violence: the pro-life movement also exists to point the nation toward problem-solving that, in means and ends, respects every human being involved. It does this to witness to the real possibilities for peaceful and humane behavior as against a pervasive pro-choice philosophy that accepts the destruction of human life as a legitimate response to problems.

And for those who remain curious about the intricacies of justifiable homicide theories? One can, under Christian principles, act to defend another's life; one may not intend to kill.

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Hadley Arkes

This is one of those melancholy cases in which we would need the equivalent of a Leo Strauss emergency box: break the glass, pull the lever, and quickly summon to our side a writer schooled in the art of covert teaching or "writing between the lines." Even with the most delicate hand, we run the risk of fostering vast moral hazards-and creating perils for many innocent, earnest people-if we are willing to set into print a truthful discussion of this issue. For the answer should be jarringly plain if we simply take seriously the understanding that is anchored firmly among the opponents of abortion: namely, that the child in the womb cannot be anything other than a human life from its first moments; that a human life may not be taken except for the most compelling justification; and that the justification can never be proportioned, in its gravity, to the height, or the social weight, of the victim. If a person understood that innocent human lives were being destroyed in abortion clinics, without the need even to render a justification, what kinds of things, after all, might we expect him to do? Would the media, for instance, have been filled as

they have in this case with reports of "religious zealots" if a band of Jews had killed guards and executioners on their way to work in Auschwitz? Would we have heard stories of the killing of innocent workers, who were merely carrying out orders, and pursuing a policy that was fully "lawful" under the laws of the Third Reich?

Of Mr. Hill's psychic balance, I cannot speak. What we can attribute to him however is this: He understood that the practitioner entering the clinic was willing to destroy innocent human lives, even for the most trivial reason-indeed, even without the need to give a reason. That enterprise had become his vocation, and that purpose was borne with him every time he entered the building. Mr. Hill did not engage in killing as his office work. He was moved to an awful, rare act, and he focused his lethal assault on a person who was about to engage directly, and deliberately, in the destruction of an innocent life. Unless we dismantle moral reasoning altogether, or remove the gradations that are critical to moral judgment, it should be evident that these two acts of killing cannot stand on the same moral plane.

But at this moment, the morality of the case is at odds with the law, and that must make a grievous difference. The members of the public who have now absorbed the premises of the law will not see even the rudiments of a justification in Mr. Hill's act. For them, the act cannot appear to be anything other than an act of lawless killing. Any endorsement of the act is bound to be misunderstood then as an endorsement-nay, even the tendering of a franchise-for lawless killing. Of course, the state of mind of the public looking on cannot supply the ground of our moral judgment. But writers and teachers, who help to shape the public discourse, cannot be indifferent to the ways in which they are likely to be misunderstood in the current cast of public opinion. From the lesson book of Plato's *Crito* we must remind ourselves that there are concerns of prudence at the highest level for paying a decent regard even to the unimproved "opinions" of the public; and there are weighty moral reasons for preserving the willingness to respect even bad laws.

Here, the badness runs deep, and the deeper strain has been set forth for us in these pages by Russell Hittinger: The Supreme Court has now established, in the case of abortion, nothing less than a private right to use violence, for any private reason, without the need, that is, to render any public reason. And now the rest of us are obliged to counsel the Paul Hills of the world that they may not make that same claim to the private use of violence, even when they are seeking not merely a private but a public end: the protection of innocent strangers. That the arrangement is not symmetrical is not to state the most damnable thing about it, or the degree to which it makes of us accomplices in a vicious project. For if we begin to express, even in part, what is morally dubious in this structure, we run the risk of sweeping away the inhibitions of prudence from many earnest people. We court the peril of propelling them to further acts of violence. Of course, the case of Paul Hill could be used, with a legal design, to pose a challenge to the very premises of *Roe v. Wade*. But even that act of high purpose, attended by a legal defense fund, could beget in turn other acts of affirmation and martyrdom. And so we bite our lips and hold back-and by my own account I may have already said more than one should say without the arts of indirection. But our political men and women deceive themselves if they think that this issue can be quietened simply by being displaced to the periphery of our politics.

They have not grasped quite yet that this issue can corrupt even parts of our law that do not seem connected to the issue of abortion; and it can be counted on, reliably, to generate a poison for our civic life that will not be abating.

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Francis Canavan

It must be said that the abortionists assassinated in Florida deserve no special sympathy, and certainly no admiration. A frenetic columnist in a New York newspaper called them "the martyred Dr. David Gunn" and "brave Dr. Britton." In fact they were neither martyrs nor heroes but men engaged in the dirty and evil business of killing children in their mothers' wombs.

Courtesy of the U.S. Supreme Court, our legal system has involved itself in a contradiction. It punishes as murder taking the life of a born child, but not only does not punish, but protects as the exercise of a constitutional right, killing the child before birth, if that is what the child's mother wants. One understands why people of strong emotions and unstable minds can become so enraged by this that they take the law into their own hands and execute the executioner.

Nonetheless, they are not justified, either morally or legally, in assuming this authority. There is no universal moral obligation to prevent all evil. Still less does anyone have the moral authority to prevent evil by any and all means that he or his associates consider necessary.

Nor can any legal system accept the right of individuals in their private capacity to make such decisions. Revolution is sometimes justified, as our Declaration of Independence explains at some length, but it can never be a legal or constitutional right. Revolutionary actions, such as killing persons for their crimes (however real the crimes may be), strike at the roots of the order on which the life, liberty, and property of all us depend, and therefore the law cannot tolerate them.

If the law did tolerate them, it would let loose not only those who want to stop abortionists from plying their bloody trade, but animal rights activists, gay-bashers and gay activists, environmentalists who object to cutting down trees and those who are fed up with environmentalists, not to mention the other extremists that our liberal society produces in such profusion.

Finally, killing abortion doctors and bombing their clinics does no good to the anti-abortion cause even from a purely pragmatic point of view. Very few babies' lives are saved by such actions. Instead, efforts to do the most basic thing necessary, namely, to persuade the American public to face what the courts and their own elected officials have done by legalizing abortion on demand, are set back immeasurably. The resort to violence hands the pro-abortion lobby and its allies in the media a perfect excuse for

refusing to look at the violence done daily to the unborn and to focus instead on the violence done to abortionists. Like it or not, the pro-life cause is of necessity a moral cause whose success depends on persuasion and can only be harmed by acts that horrify the public. I wish to God that some pro-life zealots would come to understand that.

Francis Canavan, S.J., is Professor of Political Science Emeritus at Fordham University.

Jean Garton

The argument used by Paul Hill rationalizes the exchange of force for persuasion. What he cannot achieve by reason, he feels entitled to take by force, and in so doing demonstrates that it is possible to be anti-abortion but not pro-life.

It is easy to understand the frustration of those who use physical intervention to defend unborn children. Some have received inordinately harsh treatment and penalties for their actions. Yet to accept the principle that sincere convictions justify breaking the law is destructive of our form of government and serves to blunt the Christian witness.

A danger in the rationale advanced by Paul Hill to correct the injustice of abortion is that disrespect for the law often creates further injustice. Anarchy does not serve justice.

We who are pro-life grieve the killing of over thirty million children by legal abortion, but our grief cannot compare to that of the God who created them, who knows them before birth, and who loves them beyond human capabilities. Yet, for some reason, He allows the sin of abortion (and all sin) to continue. But one day He will draw history to a close and then he, the Lord, will settle all accounts.

In the meantime, as citizens living under a democratic government, we are free to debate the law, protest the law, and seek to change the law. We are not free to take the law into our own hands-to become "justice vigilantes."

Because "our struggle is not against flesh and blood" (Ephesians 6), violence is too weak a weapon against the evil of abortion. The Word is always more powerful than the sword, even when the "sword" is a gun, a bomb, or any other lethal weapon.

Jean Garton is cofounder and President of Lutherans for Life, which has over three hundred chapters in the U.S.

Robert P. George

I am personally opposed to killing abortionists. However, inasmuch as my personal opposition to this practice is rooted in a sectarian (Catholic) religious belief in the sanctity of human life, I am unwilling to impose it on others who may, as a matter of conscience, take a different view. Of course, I am entirely in favor of policies aimed at removing the root causes of violence against abortionists. Indeed, I would go so far as to support mandatory one-week waiting periods, and even nonjudgmental counseling, for people who are contemplating the choice of killing an abortionist. I believe in policies

that reduce the urgent need some people feel to kill abortionists while, at the same time, respecting the rights of conscience of my fellow citizens who believe that the killing of abortionists is sometimes a tragic necessity-not a good, but a lesser evil. In short, I am moderately pro-choice.

Robert P. George is Professor of Politics at Princeton University and author, most recently, of *Making Men Moral: Civil Liberties and Public Morality*.

Nat Hentoff

Cardinal Bernardin has it right. To be consistently pro-life-in ethics and action-one has to be against capital punishment and war and all other forms of violence, including murder. The killing of an abortionist makes one the mirror image of the abortionist.

I am not an absolute pacifist. If the only way to defend one of my children would be by force, I would do that-and be inconsistent. But that is not an ideological act of violence. Ideological acts of violence ultimately lead to more and more murders. And in this case, the killings have weakened the pro-life movement, thereby resulting in the state giving more support to the abortion clinic-increasing the number of abortions.

Nat Hentoff is a columnist for the Village Voice.

Richard D. Land

Can one consistently hold-as millions of Americans do-that abortion is the taking of innocent human life *and* that it is wrong to murder abortion doctors? All but an infinitesimal number of individuals say "yes." But it is not enough merely to state such an opinion; one must be able cogently to defend it against the "logic of death" espoused by persons such as David Trosch. One of the peripheral tragedies of the recent eruption of lethal violence against abortionists has been the well-meaning, but sometimes overly simplistic, response by some pro-life Christians.

Since 1973, the United States Supreme Court has interpreted the Constitution to create the right for a woman to choose to secure the services of a physician who is paid to "terminate her pregnancy"-that is, deliberately to end the life of the developing baby in her womb. This contrived juridical doctrine has resulted in the wanton destruction of over thirty million human lives. Abortion on demand rightly raises the hackles of pro-life Christians and multitudes of others. But does the situation justify a lethal response?

For non-pacifist Christians, the exercise of deadly force is proscribed by clear and definitive principles. According to both civil law and divine moral law, private citizens are permitted to use lethal force against another human being only if this occurs as an unintended effect of the act of defending oneself or another against an assailant's unjust attack. Private citizens are not allowed to *intend* to kill another human being and are not allowed to engage in *premeditated* acts of deadly force in order to accomplish what they intend. The premeditated use of deadly force-as in the cases of capital punishment and just war-rightly belongs to legitimate governments (Romans 13:1-4).

Furthermore, acts of violent civil disobedience (in addition to being oxymoronic) would be justifiable only when a government has completely lost its legitimacy by making unjust laws and precluding opportunities to protest or change those laws. While the aftermath of *Roe v. Wade* inspires moral outrage, opportunities for democratic protest and legal reform still remain. Should circumstances arise in which governments prohibit occasions for reform, Christians, for the sake of conscience, may be forced to consider other measures. Our goal must be reform, not revolution. For example, many Christians felt compelled during the 1850s to violate fugitive slave laws by participating in the Underground Railroad, which illegally assisted slaves in escaping to freedom. That was nonviolent civil disobedience. On the other hand, John Brown and his supporters fomented slave insurrection and rebellion against the state by lethal force. Such acts are beyond the prerogative of *individuals*, Christian or not.

Pro-life Americans must take the moral high ground and vigorously oppose vigilante violence against abortion doctors or anyone else. We must tirelessly provide alternatives to abortion, engage the legal system, and affirm the overwhelming majority of physicians who refuse to perform abortions. So long as American democracy remains a legitimate form of government, with provisions for redress, reform, and nonviolent protest, we must remain "wise as serpents, harmless as doves."

(A comprehensive treatment of these themes is contained in "The Struggle Against Abortion: Why the Use of Lethal Force is Not Morally Justifiable," a statement of conscience drafted by a Christian Life Commission consultation held September 17-18, 1994. Copies are available from the Christian Life Commission, 901 Commerce Street, Suite 550, Nashville, Tennessee 37203.)

Richard D. Land is Executive Director-Treasurer of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

Roger Cardinal Mahony

Paul Hill's rationale is intrinsically flawed since it fails the traditional and multifaceted just war criteria for the application of deadly force. Violent force, if it is ever to be legitimate, must be a last resort of self-defense and must be subject to the requirements of public order. Mr. Hill's position is utterly individualistic and does not acknowledge the need to respect the common good that life is to be protected according to the scrutiny of the law. Murder as a tactic in the fight against abortion is inherently contradictory.

While Mr. Hill's frustration is certainly understandable, expressing moral outrage by vigilante acts of terrorism discredits the pro-life movement. Moreover, these tactics allow pro-abortion advocates to acquire additional public sympathy for their position. Consequently, Mr. Hill's position is bad morality and bad politics.

In the consistent pro-life ethic, means and ends must be intrinsically coherent and must meet the test of objective goodness. The old Latin adage is still pertinent, *bonum ex integra causa malum ex quocumque defectu* (an action must be judged good according to

its entire causality, and if it is defective in any of its particulars, it is morally flawed). No matter how reprehensible the actions of physicians who perform abortions are, taking their lives is not the answer to the violence of abortion. Sadly, as a human species we have a long way to go in appropriating the lesson that violence only begets further violence.

Roger Cardinal Mahony is Archbishop of Los Angeles.

Frederica Mathewes-Green

Paul Hill's thesis has sometimes been expanded into "the big what-if," the scenario often used to challenge pacifists. What if you had to defend your own children from a criminal? Wouldn't deadly force be justified then?

Anyone finds such a prospect deeply distressing. But the very impact of this image hinders us from realizing that shooting an abortionist fails the analogy in three important ways.

First, you are not defending, you are attacking. You are lying in the bushes training your sights on an unsuspecting stranger, shooting Dr. Gunn in the back, spraying bullets at Dr. Britton while he's trapped in his truck. It isn't even a fair face-to-face fight. You are adding more violence to the situation, not reducing it, spilling more blood on ground already soaked red.

Second, it is not your own child; someone else's flesh encompasses that child, and we cannot protect that child without reaching its mother. The woman who hires the abortionist drives the whole machine, and picking the doctors off one by one won't stop her. Unless we reach her with help and hope, she'll just offer her money to someone else—and there will always be a taker. As long as abortion is legal, you won't be able to save babies without saving their mothers first.

Third, the doctor is not a "criminal," except in the courts of Heaven. Here in the U.S., he is an honored professional offering a legal service for which there is ample financial demand. If you shoot him, upstanding citizens will be horrified and find someone else to replace him. Because the abortionist's work is legal, not criminal, shooting him is something society at large will not support. It is futile. If we want to waste our time on empty gestures, let's choose those that don't involve killing someone.

A just war demands more than a just cause; among other criteria, it demands that there be reasonable hope of success, that noncombatants be protected, that violence be a last resort. Shooting abortionists fails in all these ways and more. There are many reasons why twenty years of frustration, ridicule, and persecution should have pro-life tempers running high. There are more reasons for us to swallow our pride, turn the other cheek, and humbly save babies the only way we can—by showing ourselves the loving servants of their hurting mothers.

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Bernard N. Nathanson

By invoking the use of lethal force to protect the unborn, Paul Hill breached conventional moral standards in certain critical respects.

If Hill had caught Dr. Britton in the act of commencing an abortion (which is, after all a lethal assault on a human being-I am one of those who draws no moral distinction between the born and the unborn), then he would have been correct in interposing his body between Dr. Britton and the unborn, and if necessary defending the unborn with the use of lethal force if Britton was determined to proceed with his assault. But such was not the case. Hill acted violently, not in a directly intercessory manner, but in a vastly larger capacity, i.e., as a dispenser of justice in a sociopolitical system in which various other doors to legitimate protest and change were still open to him: the abortion conflict continues to be waged in the courts, in the legislative bodies in this country-even in the streets-and he could have availed himself of these opportunities without the primary resort to lethal force.

This was not so in the case of John Brown, who led the ill-fated foray against the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry in 1859. It was Brown's dream to arm the slaves and lead a slave insurrection throughout the antebellum South. It is true that the biblically inspired Brown used as his guiding text "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins," but with the *Dred Scott* decision a fait accompli, and with the inhumane Fugitive Slave Act in force, Brown felt strongly that all legitimate means of protest had been closed to him, and he was thus forced to act as prosecutor, judge, jury, and hangman. (His biblical text proved prophetic: ten of his twenty-two man party-including two of his sons-died in that attack, and he himself was hanged six months later.)

The same may be said of the two Czechs who bombed Reinhard Heydrich's car in May 1942. The Nazi Heydrich was known as "The Genius of the Final Solution," and under the Nazi suzerainty there were no legitimate avenues open for sociopolitical protest. Thus, Jan Kubis and Josef Gabeik (two non-Jewish Czechs) took it upon themselves-with the aid of the RAF which parachuted them into Europe-to act as protectors of the European Jews and simultaneously as dispensers of justice (Heydrich died of his wounds six days after the bombing)-legitimately.

But this is America, and for Hill to position himself as prosecutor, judge, jury, and hangman in this time and place was not a morally sound posture. No single human is entitled to wear *that* divine mantle now, here.

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John Cardinal O'Connor

The direct killing of the innocent is a moral species of murder. Some who oppose murder argue that the abortionist is really a "serial killer" of innocent babies. Indeed, a killer is one who acts, neither out of defense nor compassion, and not pro bono, but one who is paid to kill a moral innocent. Such people argue, further, that deadly force is justifiable against this "medical hit-man" because it will prevent him (or her) from killing more moral innocents.

This assumes many things that are not true.

First, this line of argument assumes that one can try to kill a potential killer to prevent more killing. But received Christian teaching repudiates that direct intent to kill. Justifiable self-defense applies only to that killing that is not directly intended, i.e., a result that is a secondary effect. For a good Christian explanation of legitimate self-defense, please see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (## 2263-2265).

Second, the justifiable defense argues that the guilt of a known intentional killing (of the abortionist) can be outweighed by preventing another, but as yet unknown, evil. But this offends the cardinal biblical principle that a good end does not justify an evil means (Romans 3:8). This kind of consequentialist argument is thoroughly repudiated in *Veritatis Splendor* (71-83).

Third, shooting the abortionist is not the same as killing in defense of home or family because the latter can be an incidental, unintended, secondary effect, whereas the shooting of the abortionist (according to reports) was intended, premeditated, and not an accident at all.

Further, those who kill on their own authority advance what all pro-life people oppose. When lethal force is used against the abortionist, is not the clinic guard free, and the police officer duty-bound, to repel that attack with force, even lethal force? Where does this spiral end? How is it limited?

Surely, we are all as tired of abortion as we are tired of murder. But we must fight murder without conforming to it nor condoning it; it makes no Christian sense to try to justify murder to limit murder. Long ago, Gandhi warned us what happens when we try to have the end justify the means-the *means* becomes an *end*. Let us attend to God's revelation: "Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good" (Romans 12:21).

Comparisons with Nazi Germany and Dr. Mengele do not enlighten but distract us here. The United States of America today is not Nazi Germany. We are a nation of law, even if not all our laws are just ones (e.g., legal abortion). We do elect our Legislators and Chief Executive: they appoint our Federal Judiciary. Christians (and all other citizens) are free to participate in that process-and they should participate actively and intelligently.

No Christian, however well-intentioned, has the moral right to declare himself the sole detective, district attorney, judge, jury, and supreme court in our democratic society and on his own authority set aside the natural law and the Ten Commandments, allegedly to advance the fifth of those Ten Commandments. For the first three hundred years of Christian history, the Christians were on the wrong side of unjust laws. Yet, they were convinced and taught us that it is better to suffer evil than to cause evil. "Know this, my dear brothers, . . . the wrath of man does not accomplish the righteousness of God" (James 1:19-20). That was infallibly true when written and is just as true today.

John Cardinal O'Connor is Archbishop of New York.

Ralph E. Reed, Jr.

When David Gunn and Paul Hill killed abortion doctors in Pensacola, Florida, they did more damage to the pro-life cause than many of the proponents of abortion have in recent years. To kill in the name of defending life is hypocrisy, pure and simple. When we allow the violence of abortion to overcome our weapons of mercy and grace, we fall to the level of the abortionist. In a sermon delivered in November 1956 in Montgomery, Alabama, Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Always be sure that you struggle with Christian methods and Christian weapons. Never succumb to the temptation of becoming bitter. As you press on for justice, be sure to move with dignity and discipline, using only the weapons of love."

Martin Luther King overcame the violence of segregation and the injustice of Jim Crow through nonviolence and through Christian methods. Those who advocated violence against white segregationists were wrong. Those who advocate violence against abortionists today are wrong. In seeking to promote and defend the sanctity of innocent human life, we must allow mercy to overcome bitterness, justice to overcome hatred, and nonviolence to overcome violence. How we conduct ourselves will ultimately be as important as the principles for which we stand. Pro-life leaders must be vigilant and consistent in denouncing violence as a tactic for their movement.

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Ann Scheidler

Christians have struggled for centuries with the issue of if and when killing a human being is justified. Christian society moved from a position of absolute refusal to defend oneself even from fatal attack to the writings of Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa Theologiae* in the fourteenth century, which remain the standard for Western law with regard to the use of force.

The first criterion for the use of force is: *The force used to prohibit harm to an individual must be the least amount of force reasonably necessary to protect oneself or another.* Shooting an abortionist is not the least amount of force necessary to prevent the killing of unborn children. A whole array of tactics could prevent an abortionist from getting to the business of killing children.

Stopping an act of aggression in defense of oneself or another must be with the moral certitude that harm will be inflicted upon that individual if force is not used. Since we cannot know for certain what is in the heart and mind of the abortionist on any given day as he goes into the abortuary, we cannot prove that harm will be done to an individual. Each of the abortionists who have testified at the Pro-Life Action League's "Meet the Abortion Providers" conferences is someone who walked into his or her abortion clinic one day for the last time-to clear out his desk and quit. It is important to remember also that the provider is not the principal threat to the baby's life. He is the hired killer. The mother is the imminent aggressor, and she is frequently under pressure from a boyfriend, a husband, or a parent. She is still free to go to another abortionist if the first one is unavailable. The challenge is to help the pregnant woman recognize the value of her own child and to help her cope with the factors that are leading her to an abortion.

The person preventing the harm to an individual cannot intend to inflict mortal injury on the aggressor. Since the Christian has a scriptural mandate to love his enemies, when intervening for the life of oneself or another, the Christian cannot intend to kill even if that is the result.

We in the pro-life movement have the obligation to seek remedies to the grievous injustice of abortion. But we may not fight evil with evil or inflict moral injury to attain our goals. We are called upon to be loving examples of the peaceful, nonviolent resolution of injustice. We are not the ultimate judges of the actions of the abortionist. Our job is to educate him on the value of life and the grave evil of his actions, to pray for him and provide him the opportunities and incentive to quit the abortion business. We leave to God the awesome responsibility of Judge.

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Terry Schlossberg

Paul Hill's philosophy is one of anarchy. It opposes the role of government expounded in the religious tradition into which he was received. Hill lost his ministerial credentials in one Presbyterian body in 1992; he was excommunicated by another in 1993 for advocating killing abortionists as justifiable homicide.

Hill is correct to assume that efforts to protect unborn children ought to be consistent with those to protect the born. But he is in deadly error to assume that individuals, in place of civil government, bear responsibility to take up the sword, so to speak, in defense of the innocent. Hill joined the ranks of the guilty and separated himself from biblical teaching when he chose to advocate killing abortionists and to become their executioner. The biblical and confessional tradition assigns to the civil government the role of keeping order, maintaining justice, protecting the innocent, and "draw[ing] the sword," when necessary, "against all malefactors, seditious persons, thieves, murderers . . . and all those whom God has commanded [it] to punish and even to execute" (Second Helvetic Confession). John Calvin taught that even evil government is to be preferred

over anarchy. He argued that "[I]t is better to live under the most savage tyrant than without any government at all" (Commentary on Daniel 4).

The Supreme Court and the current Administration have frustrated the proper role of government and prevented the protection of the unborn by just and legal means. But Hill's philosophy abandons the effort to restore government's proper role and, instead, usurps it. Those who hold his view are not adhering to God's higher law. They put themselves above all law. The effect of their view is to undermine government and promote a situation that leads inevitably to serious disorder in society.

In giving a free hand to abortionists, the government has failed to restrain evil. But Christians and other American citizens cannot overcome this evil by undermining the role of government. Those who take that course can expect only to bring judgment on themselves even as those who take the lives of the innocent are under judgment.

We should not lose our sense of shock and abhorrence at the systematic and regular killing of the unborn simply because it is a daily occurrence in American life. Neither should we forget the slippery slope that is already claiming the lives of other weak and vulnerable persons. Responding to a rise in abortions, the Presbyterian Church in 1869 spoke out against it as a "crime against God and against nature." That assembly went on to exhort pastors to end their silence and tolerance of the practice, and "endeavor by all *proper* means to stay the floods of impurity and cruelty" (emphasis added).

As St. Paul wrote: "For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments . . .," not people (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). "To do no harm," and to pray for those who do, is the heart of the movement that springs from a desire to protect and care for all our neighbors in the human community.

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Ronald J. Sider and Keith J. Pavlischek

Despite the apolitical appearance of Paul Hill's defense, this was more than a simple act of homicide. It was, in fact, a revolutionary act, a direct assault on the very legitimacy of the American regime and the rule of law. While we believe permissive abortion laws are a grave injustice, abortionists are protected and (regrettably) their actions are legitimated by these laws. Hill's pithy enthymeme is removed from the broader context of biblical revelation and traditional Christian moral reflection on the use of force in defiance of political authority.

First, biblical revelation on the prima facie legitimacy of political authorities should give us pause. The apostolic admonition, "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution" (1 Peter 2:13), was written to Christians in Asia Minor who were suffering unjust persecution at the hand of an oppressive government. This, coupled with the apostle Paul's warning, "He who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed" (Romans 13:2), at the very least places the burden of proof upon those who would

advocate the use of violence in defiance of public authority. The burden of proof for such an action clearly rests with Hill and those who would defend his actions, not with those of us who condemn them.

Second, regarding traditional Christian moral reflection on the use of force: pacifists and just war advocates will disagree on whether Christians may ever participate in a "justifiable revolution." Those of us who are Christian pacifists will insist that opposition to an unjust regime may only take the form of *nonviolent* civil disobedience. Those of us who embrace the just war tradition believe that armed opposition against tyrannical rulers who, in Calvin's words, "violently fall upon and assault the common folk" is, at times, a legitimate moral option. It would thus seem that Hill's challenge poses a greater problem for the pro-life just warrior than the pro-life pacifist. But not by much.

If we subject Paul Hill's defense of his actions to criteria required for a "justifiable revolution" (analogous to the *jus ad bellum* criteria of a justifiable war), it fails to stand up under even cursory examination. Granting the ultimate justice of the pro-life cause, no reasonable person could claim that all the just war criteria are met: (1) Given the opposition to such actions by the pro-life movement, and more broadly the lack of wide popular support for such actions, it hardly has any reasonable chance for success and, most likely, will be counterproductive. (2) When one factors in the possibility that this will undermine respect for the rule of law, there is no sense of due proportion between the evil effects of employing violent means and the good to be achieved (proportionality). (3) All nonviolent means have not been exhausted (last resort). And finally, (4) the act was not issued from legitimate authority.

It may seem that the criterion of legitimate authority is contradictory when considering the revolutionary use of force against an unjust regime. But even "justifiable revolutions" must make some attempt to meet this criterion. Calvin's defense of revolution rested on the legitimacy of "lower magistrates." It was they, not the "private citizen," who were to withstand "the fierce licentiousness of kings." At a very minimum, Christians who resort to violence must be able to justify their actions within a community that has wide and popular support. That Paul Hill had been excommunicated from his church is particularly relevant in this regard. He cannot appeal to anything analogous to Calvin's "lower magistrates" and therefore cannot evade Calvin's and the Christian tradition's opposition to private revolutionary action. There lies the critical distinction between the Christian just warrior and the terrorist or anarchist.

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Tragically and ironically, the murder of abortionists illustrates a point that the right-to-life movement has tried to make for years: namely, that privately authorized lethal violence is lethal for democracy. Abortion kills innocent human beings. It also has the potential to kill the civil society that makes democratic self-governance under the rule of law possible. Just as democracy is rendered impossible when states assert powers and

legitimize "rights" that are somehow "beyond" the reach of the moral law, democracy becomes tenuous to the point of disappearance when individual citizens assert a right to lethal violence for the ends of personal convenience-or as an expression of personal conviction. Many molders of public opinion in America seem to understand this in the case of the murder of abortionists. They might ponder the principle (and the public impact of its persistent violation) a bit more carefully in the case of abortion on demand.

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