

was better for babies to continue dying, than that the anti-abortion movement should bear the stigma of having a body count of its own.

To many, the condemnation of Griffin by pro-lifers of stature was a victory on the part of the abortion lobby. It was the pinch of incense necessary to truly validate the legitimacy of abortion. By saying that Michael Griffin had "sinned," Christians were implying that the abortionist (even as a murderer of unborn children) had a higher degree of value to his life than did a developing *in utero* child.

Several of those who objected to the strong condemnation of Griffin and his act to save even "one baby," eventually signed on to a statement in his defense. The declaration drawn up by a Pensacola Presbyterian would hammer home the now twenty-year-old message of the pro-life movement, that children in the womb are fully human and deserving of the same right to life—and protection—that is afforded the born. Ultimately, the statement asked for the acquittal of Michael Griffin.¹

Less than six months later the furor over force to stop abortion had reached a standstill. Anti-abortion movement leaders had come to a polite and quiet compromise. There were those who argued that the shooting was morally justifiable and those who publicly condemned it, but any real commitment to a position was postponed. After all, it was the only *abortionist* casualty in over twenty years of legal abortion. Michael Griffin was seen as an aberration in the right-to-life movement even by those who commended him for forcefully protecting unborn children.

Then, on August 19, 1993, just when it appeared that the anti-abortion movement might resume picketing and protesting as usual, an Oregon woman traveled all the way to Wichita, Kansas to shoot notorious third-trimester abortionist George Tiller. Rachelle ("Shelley") Shannon fired five shots through the window of a Travelall vehicle to wound Tiller in both arms. After the shooting she ran from the scene but was arrested while dutifully returning her rental car.

On July 29, 1994, just under a year after Shelley Shannon wounded George Tiller, ordained Presbyterian minister Paul Hill—author of the statement endorsing Griffin's acquittal and a similar statement on Shelley

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

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

Shannon's behalf—let buckshot fly, *again in Pensacola*, into the bodies of John Britton and James Barrett. Britton was an abortionist about to "go to work," and Barrett was his gun-toting bodyguard.

Barrett's wife, June, was wounded in one of her arms by the first round of shotgun fire. Her husband was killed immediately, and Mrs. Barrett, now bleeding, crouched down to the floor of the pick-up truck in which they were riding. At the same time she heard abortionist Britton asking for the whereabouts of a gun. Only seconds later he too was slain in a second round of shotgun fire.

In the wake of these three events,² Christians are called to critically examine the use of force, even potentially lethal force, to stop acts of abortion. In light of Scriptural injunctives such as "Thou shalt not kill," (Exod. 20:13) how is it that any Christian could accord these acts of "violence" merit as "righteous," and "Godly?" By saying that Michael Griffin, Shelley Shannon, and Paul Hill were justified in their actions, are we in reality condoning murder?

Self-defense/defense of others

First, it is imperative to understand the defensive nature of the actions taken by Griffin, Shannon, and Hill. A defensive action is one aimed at *preventing* a wrong which is going to be committed rather than punishing for a wrong already done.

All three abortionists (David Gunn, George Tiller, and John Britton) are known killers in the Biblical sense, and all three were scheduled to kill again. The actions taken, we argue, amounted to nothing more than providing a defense for innocent people—the unborn—who were going to be killed by an unjust aggressor. The temptation is to see this as a more complex issue; an act of hatred, revolution, vengeance, judicial punishment (which the mother would rightfully be accorded also), etc., when, in fact, it is incredibly simple. *There were children who were going to be killed, and someone came to their defense to try and prevent their deaths.*

Immediately after the shooting of David Gunn in March of 1993,

2. Another incident outside the confines of the United States occurred on Tuesday, November 8, 1994 when Canadian abortionist Garson Romalis was shot by an unknown assailant. It was assumed to be an anti-abortionist who wounded him in an effort to keep the killer of *in-utero* children away from his "work."