Strategy for the Future: The pro-life exception or "by any means necessary"

by Cathy Ramey

The *use-of-force*, how much and in what circumstances, to save or protect life is a burning issue on the minds of many these days. It certainly has been on mine, and was even before Michael Griffin waved a gun in the face of those who practice abortion. I'm one of those insensitive brutes who believe in capital punishment and sport a bumper sticker that says "Execute: Murderers/Abortionists" in the hope that my care will exude a sense of justice that will cause a killer to question his security (temporal and eternal).

Weeks before David Gunn's eternity was settled outside of a Pensacola mill, after mulling the issue of force over on my own and failing to find an answer satisfactory to both me and the Church institution that says abortion is murder, but then decries getting into the trenches to fight it, I approached a pastor. If I had consciously plotted out my course, my hope was to be non-threatening, casual. I certainly didn't want to alarm him with the idea that I was oiling up a .38 and setting my scope on one of our local killers. While I had frequently thought about wanting his input, when the opportunity to approach him finally arrived, I was sauntering out the door after a Bible study.

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We had just had a mild confrontation on what sounded like his belief that all of our warfare, as individual believers, is to be carried out in the spiritual realm (Eph. 6) under the new covenant introduced through Christ. That new covenant theory that disenfranchises the physical world we live in is reminiscent of medieval monks who sought to get closer to God by isolating themselves from the world. The monastery has been replaced with the prayer closet, and in my mind there seemed to be no common-ground to close the conversation on.

Anyway, looking for a quick change of subject, anything to soften our parting, I found myself asking, "So what do you think about snuffing abortionists?" I dangled the "snuff" word in front of him in the same offhand manner that Planned Parenthood titters over "terminating the pregnancy." I knew I was dealing with a sensitive audience.

It's funny how we all play the same semantic games.

Anyway, his response might have been predictable, but I was shocked. Suddenly we no longer had eye contact and his jaw line was firm as he stated, "I don't want to talk about that." I pressed on a bit more, sure that debate was possible at some level, only to be shut out again and left wondering, *if I had brought up a desire to commit suicide (self-snuffing), would that too have been something I would be left to wade through on my own?*

After the death of Gunn, I brought up the issue of force again on two or three occasions, and never really got much beyond the question; but watching the gymnastics of avoidance during those initial conversations was worth the effort. There was the expected rejection of force because it would "result in anarchy" — never mind that anarchy has been upon us since the day our highest court said we could kill babies — and there was the ever-noble use of the Scripture to "turn the other cheek," (Not your own, silly! The child's!).

"What if your son was being attacked and the only way to protect him and save his life was through the use of lethal force?" I asked. "Would you use lethal force to protect your son?" "That's a hypothetical situation," he answered back. "I won't deal in hypothetical situations."

The answer was the same when I posed the question of a father calling and asking — even threatening — about the degree to which he would go since his girlfriend refused to relent in her plan to have their child killed. It too, repeated assurances to convince him of something that any pro-life office knows well; it isn't hypothetical. There are fathers out there who believe deeply in the responsibility to protect their children, even unborn ones. There are fathers out there who have seriously contemplated what Michael Griffin has done. There are fathers out there who know the local killers routine better than the pro-life activists do, because revenge is all they think about for awhile after their child has died.

In what were for me tense moments of debate, I discovered something about the pro-life movement's own schizophrenia over physical force. It's easy to criticize Christian leaders for playing games to avoid issues, but after a bit of digging, it was plain that God was exposing more than the frailty of a pastor. His strike-and-dodge technique was something I had used myself on many occasions when I hoped that prevailing over child-killing was possible with a minimum of cost. The extensive use of force was a theoretical problem that I wasn't required to face as long as intervention was occurring routinely on a peaceful level.

My willingness to settle for "at least some of the babies being saved" through non-forceful measures — *rather than risk to save them all through "any means necessary"* — now sounds sadly like the life-boat ('allow exceptions in order to salvage the few') mentality that is so outrageously flawed. Pretending that some babies lives are more salvageable than others has done nothing but persuade the opposition that we really don't believe abortion kills *real* children. My few who were worth saving, primarily because I could do so at a risk level that I've found tolerable, are no different than the conveniently "wanted" children that abortion enthusiasts refer to on their "Pro-Child/Pro-Choice" bumper stickers.

What was fascinating about our conversations — and something like looking at myself and my pro-life activist friends in a mirror — was what I perceived to be the refusal to debate any position other than the one he could personally handle. It was the "I'm not willing to risk that much for a child, so it must be wrong for anyone to risk that much for a child" response. You're familiar with it. It's been the theme song of the pro-life movement. It's been our shield whenever the media has raised the issue of "violence". Instead of remembering that the real violence is what is happening to completely defenseless babies behind the walls of the so-called "clinic", pro-life spokespersons have apologized for what may be an honest use of force and ducked behind the ill-thought-out rhetoric of being part of a "peaceful, non-violent movement."

Being part of a peaceful, non-violent move toward saving babies is really, at present, all the further that most pro-lifers are willing to go. Apart from a profound revelation from God, it may be all the further I will go. But my own limit based on *how far I feel I can go* does not answer the crucial questions surrounding whether-or-not there is a reasonable use of force which can be employed — as Christians — to protect the life of a vulnerable person. Afraid that the answer might imply a responsibility to risk more than we feel we can tolerate has closed the door to dialogue even within the ranks of those who fight most fervently now for the unborn. Fear has caused more than a few of us — pro-life leader or pastor — to stand on rhetoric rather than Scripture.

In the end, it may well be that Scripture would lead us away from a use of force such as that employed by Griffin. If leaders are convinced that this is so, the debate should prove to be no threat for them. If it is not so, and there is a legitimate use of force available to the believer in order to save a life, then to refuse to allow the Scriptures to be clearly articulated is akin to parceling out the Word in Crystal Cathedral fashion. It is only there for our personal edification, comfort, and convenience; and is no more effective at speaking to a pain-wracked and sin-sick world than the prosperity gospel is in famine ridden Somalia. ■

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