

If Paul Hill used lethal force to protect preborn children from being murdered, then according to the teachings of the Larger Catechism, he did not violate the Sixth Commandment. His actions were lawful endeavors.

MURDERER OR MARTYR?

Since abortion is lethal force, the Paul Hill acted honorably and justly in using lethal force to protect his preborn neighbors from violence. Not only did he NOT break the Sixth Commandment, he actually KEPT the Sixth Commandment by faithfully performing his duty to protect and defend the innocent.

Paul Hill recognized that the proclamation of the Word of God is the only hope of ending abortion. But the message proclaimed must be the full counsel of God; a message which includes the defensive duties of the Sixth commandment. He writes:

“The most powerful and effective weapon in the world with which to fight the lethal force of abortion, and every other evil in the world, is the particular aspect of God’s word that exposes and opposes this evil; in this case, the moral duty to resist lethal force with force. To this end, we must buy truth at all cost and sell it at none. Though the entire world may deny and dash itself against the defensive duties of the Moral Law, this aspect of God’s word abides forever and will prevail against all opposition.”

“May God help you to protect the unborn as you would want to be protected.”

-- Last words of Paul Hill

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Paul Hill: Murderer or Martyr?

Evaluating the actions of Paul Hill in the light of the teachings of the Westminster Larger Catechism on the Sixth Commandment.

(An apologetic on the defensive duties of the Sixth Commandment)
by Rev. George Wilson

VI. Thou Shall Not Murder

Why should we care what the Westminster Larger Catechism teaches about the Sixth Commandment? Isn't it only important to Presbyterians and other reformed Christians?

The Westminster Larger Catechism represents, in its most fully developed form, the Protestant understanding of Scripture. Further, if we want to understand what our founding fathers believed about the Sixth Commandment, it is essential to study the Westminster Larger Catechism. (In England, the American Revolution was called the Presbyterian Rebellion as over 90% of the American officers were Presbyterian pastors or elders.) But most importantly, Paul Hill referred repeatedly to the Westminster Larger Catechism and its teaching on the moral duties required by the Sixth Commandment. If we want to critically examine Paul Hill's actions, it is essential that we do so in light of the teachings of the Westminster Larger Catechism.

Here are a few pertinent excerpts from the Larger Catechism:

Q. 99. What rules are to be observed for the right understanding of the Ten Commandments?

Of the list of eight rules, we will look at the three most relevant to our discussion.

That as, where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden; and where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is required.

First we notice that where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded. Thus, when the Sixth Commandment forbids murder, it also requires us to protect our neighbors from being murdered.

That, under one sin or duty, all of the same kind are forbidden or commanded; together with all the causes, means, occasions, and appearances thereof, and provocations thereunto.

Secondly we notice that when God commands us to perform a duty, He also requires us to use the means necessary to perform the duty. God does not command us to do something, and then forbid the means necessary to accomplish our duty. If, under the Sixth Commandment, we have a duty to protect and defend the innocent, we have the duty to use the means necessary to do so.

That, what God forbids is at no time to be done, and what he commands is always our duty.

Finally, we note that the Commandment are eternal and immutable. Man-made laws cannot change God's requirements. If a civil government forbids us to do what God requires, we must obey God rather than man.

Q. 135. What are the duties required in the Sixth Commandment?

A. The duties required in the Sixth Commandment are: all careful studies and lawful endeavors, to preserve the life of ourselves and others, by resisting all thoughts and purposes, subduing all passions, and avoiding all occasions, temptations, and practices, which tend to the unjust taking away of the life of any; by just defense thereof against violence; ... comforting and succoring the distressed, and protecting and defending the innocent.

As with each of the commandments, the Larger Catechism deals first with what the Sixth Commandment requires of us. Even if we never murder or even hurt anyone, we still violate the Sixth Commandment if we fail to provide "a just defense" against violence to our neighbors. Our duty is to "protect and defend the innocent."

But you may say that the duties require only all "lawful endeavors" to protect the innocent. Since our civil government forbids us to use force to protect our preborn neighbors, wouldn't it be wrong to do so?

When the Larger Catechism refers to "lawful endeavors," it speaks of "lawful" under the Law of God, not the civil government. Earlier we saw that the commandments were eternal and immutable. Our duties under the Sixth Commandment do not change or vary under the ever-changing standards of civil government.

Next we will see that under the Sixth Commandment, even lethal force is lawful if used in just defense of another.

Q. 136. What are the sins forbidden in the Sixth Commandment?

A. The sins forbidden in the Sixth Commandment are: all taking away the life of ourselves, or of others, except in case of public justice, lawful war, or necessary defense; ... and whatsoever else tends to the destruction of the life of any.

There are three situations in which the Sixth commandment allows the use of lethal force: public justice, lawful war, or necessary defense. Both public justice and lawful war involve the civil magistrate, and both are irrelevant in evaluating the actions of Paul Hill, who claimed only that he acted to protect the lives of children about to be murdered.