

CHAPTER 37

VIOLENCE — OR A PROTECTIVE RING?

The only sure answer to stop violence against abortion facilities and their providers would be to eliminate its basic cause, that is, to stop killing babies inside. Since that isn't going to happen in the near future, it is important to closely examine such violence.

How does abortion relate to violence in American society? During a powerful speech at the February 1994 National Prayer Breakfast, Mother Teresa of Calcutta said: "The greatest destroyer of peace today is abortion, because it is a war against the child . . . And if we accept that a mother can kill even her own child, how can we tell other people not to kill one another?"

We believe that sidewalk counselors have been a "protective ring" around these facilities, and that legislative and judicial actions that have drastically limited and even eliminated such "protective rings" have allowed violence to escalate.

CONDEMN VIOLENCE

Your authors have seldom been a part of sidewalk counseling, but have been anything but disinterested observers. My own (Dr. W's) position has been unequivocal condemnation of violence against the bricks and the persons in the abortion industry. I have held no quarter for those who kill babies, but have consistently stated that violence on the outside will never solve the violence inside. Also, while harboring the deepest respect and admiration for those heroic souls who have sat-in, I have had real reservations about some of their actions because of the negative public image it has created for the pro-life movement.

THE BEGINNING

This being said, let us trace a bit of history. Back in the 1970s, the practice of picketing in front of an abortion chamber began. It spread from location to location, and then from Saturdays only (the heavy "kill days") to multiple days in the week. By the '80s, sidewalk counseling, as it came to be more properly called, was a common practice throughout the U.S.

In the early '80s, fire-bombing reared its head. Using the bully pulpit I had as president of National Right to Life during that time, I would look directly into the lens and say, "If any of you are thinking of fire-bombing an abortion place, please don't. You will hurt the pro-life movement. You think you may save some babies. For a few days, in some cases, you might, although those women may still go elsewhere. What you will do is turn public opinion against our movement and delay the day when we can finally stop the killing completely.

PEOPLE OF PEACE

"Remember, we are people of peace. Our basic ethic is to stop violence, the violence that daily kills 4,000 unborn babies. If we adopt *their* evil ethic, vio-

lence, we gut our own. Remaining peaceful is the only way we will win the minds and hearts of people.”

Others were saying much the same, and that message slowly got through. Into the late '80s, fire-bombing became much less frequent. We must remember that such fire-bombing was always done at night, directed only against bricks, never against persons.

SIT-INS

Then came the sit-ins. The participants were peaceful, nonviolent and prayerful, adopting the tactics of Ghandi and Dr. Martin Luther King. The physical beatings, jailing and punishment taken by the participants from police, was clear witness to the deep dedication of those involved.

Is it pure coincidence, in the late 1980s when the sit-ins were at their peak, that fire-bombings sank to their lowest levels? Is it a coincidence that by the middle '90s, with rescues beaten back by the courts, that such violent episodes had increased again.

These peaceful sit-ins, however, were publicized by the national media as violent events, exactly the opposite of what they actually were. A local peaceful sit-in, reported in the paper, often had a picture of a burned-out abortion mill (from a thousand miles away) printed along-side of it.

SUPPRESSION

The abortion industry cried loudly in protest. Legislatures and judges listened, and the anti-sit-in juggernaut began to move. Jailing became more frequent. Court-orders set boundaries. The high court ruled the RICO bill could be used. The U.S. Congress passed the Freedom of Access to Clinics Act (FACE), making sit-ins a federal felony. The result, to a significant extent, was to remove the “protective ring” of sidewalk counselors that had been in front of those entrances.

WHY THE ESCALATION?

The question is, why the escalation? A moment's reflection is relevant. There are about 1,200 abortion facilities in the U.S. Abortion has been legal nationwide since 1973. Sidewalk counselors have witnessed in front of these kill centers constantly during these years. There are intense emotional gut issues often involved in the abortion decision, and there are 4,000 abortions daily. How often could not a reaction to "her killing my baby" have caused a rejected, unstable boyfriend or husband to literally go crazy over the frustration, loss and anger generated and result in retaliation?

But, incredibly, 44 million abortions, over all these years, at 1,200 locations have resulted in — (tragically) — *only* five fatal retaliations. These have included three abortionists and two auxiliary personnel. This is a minuscule number considering the depth and power of the emotions generated, and considering that we are looking back at hundreds of millions of man and woman protest days. Truly, the news that ought to be publicized is not that five adults have been killed, but that there have been *only* five.

UNBELIEVABLY PEACEFUL

The analogy with the Black Panthers is worth recalling. Dr. Martin Luther King adopted Gandhi's method. He insisted that the civil rights sit-ins and demonstrations be peaceful. His supporters complied, except for the Black Panthers. This small group sought the same goal — civil rights — but employed violent means. They killed people. But there is a crucial difference today. Then the media nearly unanimously supported King's efforts. The Black Panthers were reported as a tiny extremist group not representative of the civil rights movement.

In sharp contrast, the media today is almost unanimously opposed to the civil rights of the unborn. Also

in sharp contrast, today's violent extremists have been held up as typical of the pro-life movement rather than the aberrant, atypical, sick exceptions that they so obviously are.

WHO DID IT?

It is an obvious fact that almost all alleged assailants have been mentally unstable and are not members of, nor representative of, the pro-life movement. Responsible leaders of the pro-life movement have unanimously and unequivocally condemned such violence. These assailants may be anti-abortion, but they are not pro-life.

SIDEWALK COUNSELORS PROTECT

It is clear that this vital function of sidewalk counseling has not been generally recognized. Yes, pro-lifers are there as pro-life witnesses. Yes, they are there to save babies. Yes, they are there to help women, before and after the abortion. But they are also there to prevent violence. Their presence has been a "protective ring." These peaceful, prayerful people have undoubtedly prevented hundreds, probably even thousands of episodes of violence.

INFLAMMATORY RHETORIC?

And what of the abortion industry's charges that our "inflammatory rhetoric" is precipitating these new events? This is unmitigated nonsense. It is not because we verbally accuse them of "killing babies" that these tragedies have occurred. No, it is because they **are** brutally killing babies. Our people are just telling the truth. The pro-abortion goal here is obvious. They want to prevent us from informing people of the true nature of their "business." Pro-lifers should see through this immediately.

WHO IS VIOLENT?

The real, ongoing violence is occurring inside the

doors of the abortion chambers. Killing of innocent babies is the ultimate violence, and it occurs 4,000 times every day in the United States.

WHO PICKETS?

Men, but mostly women, boys and girls, young and old of every race and religion. They are heroes and heroines. They volunteer their time. They walk in the rain and snow. They endure insults and sometimes assaults from the guards that the abortion proprietors hire, and they take it — all in hope of saving one tiny life, in the hope of preventing the physical and psychological damage to one woman.

And that is their reward. They sidewalk-counsel and picket peacefully. When a woman goes through their line to enter, they will offer her literature and help. In a quiet voice, they will say, “Please don’t kill your baby. We’ll help you in any way you need. Won’t you let us?”

But I’ve heard that the picketers threaten and sometimes physically abuse the women.

In fact, it is the abortion chamber people who frequently do such things. Pro-life picketers have been spit on, pushed, cursed, threatened, ridiculed, hit, etc. All they do is turn the other cheek.

There is an entire book available that details the violence perpetrated by pro-abortion people against pro-lifers. It details and documents hundreds and hundreds of such episodes. But not a word of this has been reported by the media.

The Abortion Crime Report, Submitted to the Gov.,
Atty. Gen., and Legislature of California,
CA Rt. to Life, July, 2001 (925-944-5351)

The only unwise thing that we’ve heard occasionally has been shouting by picketers. This is unwise and probably hasn’t saved many babies.

Do you mean the picketers give information the women wouldn't get otherwise?

Yes. A good example is the fact that a heartbeat can be heard seven or eight weeks after conception on an office ultrasonic stethoscope. Is this an important bit of information? Should a pregnant mother know it?

In a series of 327 women at the University of Szeged, Hungary, mothers who wanted abortions were allowed to listen to the "fetal heartbeat." After hearing it, 16% refused abortion.

F. Sontag, Third Internat'l Congress of Psychosomatic Medicine,
OB-GYN, London, 1971

CONCLUSION

Could it be that the judicial, legislative and abortion industry's "solution" to sidewalk counseling and other peaceful protest, such as sit-ins, has been counter-productive? Could it be that the violence that still occasionally occurs is, in considerable measure, a result of the suppression of peaceful, prayerful protest outside of abortion facilities? Could it be that if that "protective ring" was still there, that most of these rare, tragically unbalanced, unstable, atypical individuals would have been "caught," counseled, cooled off, steered away, prevented from doing what they planned?

Jack Kennedy's words back then are worth remembering. "If peaceful protest is made illegal, violent protest will become inevitable."

SOLUTION

The only sure answer to the occasional violence against abortion facilities and their providers is to eliminate its basic cause, that is, to stop the violence inside, the violence of killing babies.

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