

Can killing an abortionist be morally justified?

Those who claim that it is raise a very valid point: “We believe in the use of deadly force to stop a killer, therefore, if we truly believe the unborn child is a person, then it follows that we must support the right to use deadly force to protect them. Otherwise, what are we saying about their personal worth?”

Those who claim that it isn't, usually present the following arguments.

1) “This will hurt the pro-life movement. The ultimate goal is to win the hearts and minds of the people, who will certainly be turned away if killing abortionists is something pro-life groups approve of.” Though the public relations concern is a valid one, it is basically is an argument about strategy, not ethics.

2) “Death is never the solution. We are pro-life. To be pro-life means that we oppose death. How can we use death to accomplish our goal?” This argument sounds good, but lacks a consistency that we see in the Scriptures. In order to stop the advancement of evil – as in killing of innocent people – evil men were put to death: Ahab, Jezebel, Haman, Athaliah, Goliath, Korah, Semacherib, and more. So it seems that death could be a solution after all. Keep in mind, that we are talking about a fallen world.

3) “We are to love our enemies, not kill them.” This is more of an emotional appeal, and it too lacks real substance. It's a nice slogan for a bumper sticker, but not very valuable to settle the question. One can't love an evil oppressor at the expense of hating (as in refusing to help) his innocent victim. Please do not – in the name of Christian love – smile and wish the child molester a good day as he grabs my grandson in the park. The question here is not “**if** we will love” but “**how** we will love.”

None of these arguments addressed what I consider to be the pivotal point – *if an unborn child is human, as we claim, then why can't they enjoy the same level of protection we allow for all other humans?*

MY POSITION

I cannot dispute the argument that if we believe in the use of deadly force to stop a killer, then we must support the right to use deadly force to protect unborn babies. To deny them equal protection is to deny them equal personhood. And so I conclude that it is morally justified to use deadly force to protect an unborn child.

But it does not necessarily follow that one is morally justified to use deadly force to stop an abortionist. And that is where most people make the mistake. They jump from one conclusion to the next without giving it a second thought. *Using deadly force to protect an unborn baby is not the same thing as using deadly force to stop an abortionist.*

These are 2 different statements. And that difference must be highlighted and exposed – for it is a big one – it sheds a lot of light on the question at hand. Killing an abortionist fails to meet two critical conditions that are necessary for the act to be regarded as justifiable.

1) The first is this: Love forbids using more force than what is reasonably necessary. If I can stop an evil aggressor in any other way than by killing him, then I have a moral obligation to do so, within reason. Using deadly force to stop an abortion provider is an **excessive** use of force because there are other options besides the one of taking his life.

For instance – *for the sake of the argument* – the abortionist could be kidnapped. Or disabled. His hands could be injured or damaged in a way that would prevent him from killing babies. As grisly as that sounds, it is a better option than taking his life.

Better yet, since we have a higher obligation to people than things (even to evil people), destroying the equipment used in the abortion would basically produce the same result (at least temporarily), or even destroying the building itself.

The point is, taking a human life is the last resort, and there are other alternatives here. Use the least level of aggression necessary. Therefore, deadly force can't be justified in this case because it is excessive.

2) But there is more. The previous point alone should make the case, but killing an abortionist also fails to meet a second condition that is essential for the act to be regarded as justifiable. Not only is it excessive, but it is also **ineffective**. You cannot justify killing someone unless there is some reasonable expectation that the victim is going to be saved.

The person who is in control of the baby's fate is not the abortionist; he is simply a hired hit-man (so to speak). The key person here is the mother (or in some cases, the father of the child – or even the parents of the mother). But regardless of who all is involved in the decision, if she is absolutely determined to kill the baby, the baby will be killed.

Shooting an abortionist, or for that matter, kidnapping him, cutting off his fingers, or blowing up his clinic or other similar aggressive physical acts can't be justified since there is no reasonable expectation that such acts will save any baby. The mother will just go elsewhere for the abortion.

And so, how does one stop the mother? Shoot her? *The baby dies*. Perhaps an argument could be made for kidnapping her, then holding her in captivity until she gives birth, then taking the baby, then letting her go. But you certainly can't justify killing anyone, or even causing anyone permanent physical damage.

So, though philosophically, we could say that one is morally justified to use deadly force to protect an unborn child, we would also have to say that there is no feasible situation where that can actually be applied. ***How will any killing of any person save any unborn child?***

So basically, we are left with the same tactic that we have been employing for 35 years – since the mother is the key, we need to employ all these different ways of trying to persuade her and those trying to influence her (and trying to persuade all who could one day be involved in an abortion decision).

Education. Sidewalk counseling. Masses of people standing in front of the clinic. Prayer and fasting. TV commercials. Crisis pregnancy centers. Billboards. Laws that prevent or severely restrict abortion are also effective tools of persuasion. And so forth. But a pregnant mom isn't going to be persuaded to give life to her baby because someone guns down an abortionist.

So, it comes down to this: The use of deadly force cannot be justified if there are other options available. Likewise, it can not be justified unless there is a reasonable expectation of actually saving the victim. Shooting an abortionist in order to save a baby fails both conditions.

– Wendell Brane