

SOMETIMES IT SEEMS WE HAVE MADE NO ADVANCEMENTS AT ALL

An AP story carried today in my local paper (Champaign, Illinois *News-Gazette*, January 28, 2007) about the kidnappings of the two young boys in Missouri offered yet another opportunity for appreciation of early experience, and it was missed. Speaking of the alleged kidnapper and sexual perpetrator, Michael Devlin, the article mentioned that curiosity about Devlin's behavior and background has been running high, but concludes that it is incomprehensible. A neighbor is quoted: "You'd have to be a really good shrink to know what caused this."

While finally acknowledging that Devlin was adopted, the article concludes that this is irrelevant, since his adoptive family were devoted, well-educated people who gave him everything he needed. And then the clincher, confirming for all readers the innocuousness of early experience: "Adopted as an infant, Devlin knew no other family than the one James and Joyce Devlin carefully nurtured in this middle-American, progressive community."

My goodness. Where did they think this child WAS before he came to live with them ("as an infant"--no more careful definition of terms given)? Can no one imagine that he actually had a LIFE before coming to live with his wonderful adoptive family? Can no one conceive that he might have been influenced by his experiences in that prenatal and perinatal life? Can we not appreciate the totality of this man's life, as we search for a way to understand his hunger for young boys, and for creating little families with them?

- Michael Trout, 1/28/07