

# Associated Baptist Press

Editor: Greg Warner  
Associate Editor: Bob Allen  
Phone: (904) 262-6626  
Fax: (904) 262-7745

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## In this issue:

- Violent protest of abortion hurts pro-life effort, experts say
- Violence aimed at abortionists unjustified, Baptist ethicists say
- Politics, protest not only ways to fight abortion, experts say
- One child in four lives in single-parent home
- Senate confirms Breyer for Supreme Court post
- Fellowship receipts still growing, but at slower rate than early years

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## **Violent protest of abortion hurts pro-life effort, experts say**

By Bob Allen

(ABP) -- Paul Hill, the former Presbyterian minister charged with the July 29 murders of a doctor and his escort outside a Pensacola, Fla., abortion clinic, represents a violent fringe that is dragging down the entire anti-abortion movement, say three pro-life Southern Baptists.

"It is my personal belief that the pro-life movement has been very heavily harmed by those who claim to be pro-life but do not even affirm by their actions the sanctity of human life," said Paul Jones, executive director of the Christian Action Commission of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

Jones said he knows "a number of persons" who privately embrace a pro-life position but reject the contemporary pro-life movement because they "have lumped the person who would kill in the name of being pro-life with those who would simply work for legislation or would take a stand against abortion in some public arena."

Each time there has been a publicized killing or wounding by an abortion protestor, "it has made our task more difficult," Jones said. "People don't want to be identified with such inconsistent, radical, un-Christian attitudes and actions."

"What was done in Pensacola is wrong both morally and tactically," said David Gushee, professor of Christian ethics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. "It hurts the cause of those who are committed to changing where we are in this country related to abortion."

"When you engage in violence, random acts of terror, and so on, you lose public sympathy," Gushee said. The American civil-rights movement in the 1960s faced a similar situation when its proponents were divided over the nonviolent protest advocated by Martin Luther King and the more radical approach of Malcolm X and the Black Panthers who were willing to employ violence, Gushee said.

"In our society, if a movement for social change wants to have any hope for making change, it has to be the kind of nonviolent, peaceful movement that is in touch with basic American values," Gushee said.

Sylvia Boothe, coordinator for alternatives to abortion ministries for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta, said the willingness of some pro-lifers to resort to murder "doesn't help our cause at all."

"A lot of people put everybody in the same category," Boothe said. "We feel like we're unjustly judged. We certainly don't condone it in any way, shape or form."

"I've made it a practice of praying for abortionists," she added, "and I've known about a dozen of them who have come out of that industry."

While backlash to events like the Pensacola shootings turn some against the pro-life movement, "there are just as many people that are gaining understanding," Boothe said. "What the ministry at the Home Mission Board is trying to do in long-term, positive ministry is not condemn and not judge but try to be helpful to those in crisis pregnancy."

Boothe said she has no quarrel with other pro-lifers who emphasize "rescue" tactics like picketing abortion clinics. She said the main goals of groups like Operation Rescue are to draw public attention to abortion and tie up the legal system through civil disobedience.

It is unfair, she said, to lump people like Paul Hill with the whole "rescue" crowd. "It's been difficult for them. Just by their emphasis, they've had people drawn to them that are very much not in accord with what they believe," she said.

Incidents like the Pensacola shootings actually create public sympathy for pro-life forces, allowing them to portray the gunned-down doctor and his escorts as martyrs, Gushee said.

Americans in the middle on abortion -- who are uncomfortable with abortion on demand but undecided about what to do about it -- "are driven into the arms of the pro-choice movement by an action like this," he said. "Americans as a whole do not embrace terrorism, shootings and the like, so this does not help the cause."

Those advocating violence comprise only a small number of Americans opposed to abortion, Gushee said, "but those who make the loudest noise get the most attention."

"Extreme positions of all types seem to be magnified and sensationalized in our media culture," he said. "I would say the pro-life movement has to do better in making a clear statement as to what people who are uncomfortable with abortion on demand ought to do and can do to express their outrage."

Jones said pro-life leaders are owning up to the realization they must define themselves. In the past, the mainstream pro-life movement has allowed others to define it -- the media, its opponents and its radical fringe, he said.

"As long as we can use the simplistic concept of lumping everybody into two camps, you find yourself being put into groupings you have no sympathy with."

"We cannot allow the people who take lives to be called pro-life. The first thing we're going to have to do is redefine some of the arguments," Jones said. "If you're pro-life you are pro-life. That means in no circumstance do you participate in the taking of human life."

"Pro-life means the advocacy of the sanctity of all human life and not trying to manipulate the language to make the killing of an individual a pro-life act," Jones said.

The advocacy of violence has further polarized a pro-life movement that has been fragmenting over the last decade, said Jones. "There used to be pretty well one expression of the pro-life movement," he said. However, beginning in the mid-1980s the camp began to divide over questions about allowing abortions in cases of rape and incest.

Some pro-lifers began to view limiting legal abortions to those exceptions, which would eliminate the vast majority of abortions performed in America, as "a point of beginning" that is worth supporting, Jones said.

Others, however, more absolutist in their convictions, maintained there should be a ban on all abortions and in some cases refused to work with any other pro-life groups willing to accept anything less than an outright ban.

"I think in a real sense since the middle-to-latter 1980s, there has been a division in the pro-life community, but I sense the same thing in the pro-abortion community," Jones said.

The more moderate voices for allowing abortions are using language like "especially in the cases of incest and rape," Jones said, in opposition to the "small radicalized group the media turns to most often."

"You don't have two monolithic groups anymore. It is more splintered."

A few days before his interview, Gushee's wife lost the unborn child they were expecting. He said he agreed to speak with ABP because he believes the issue is important and his experience relevant.

"This past week my wife and I suffered a stillbirth," Gushee said. "Our child had died in-utero at 17 weeks. I had always known that legalized abortion on demand was morally abhorrent, but this past week I held in my hands a 17-week-old fetus. And I looked at this child. This child was beautiful. This child was human. A human life that had been cut off in some tragic way we don't understand. I wish that every person in this country could have the chance to know how valuable the unborn life is and how human the unborn life is."

Gushee said as he held the infant he realized that all over America pregnancies were being terminated purposely.

"This is a moral tragedy and our society is wrong to permit it," Gushee said. But the response advocated by him and his wife "is not to take up arms and kill the people" who perform abortions, but "to do things that keep these things from taking place," such as "working with women in a crisis who feel they have no alternative" to abortion.

-30-

## **Violence aimed at abortionists unjustified, Baptist ethicists say**

By Bob Allen

(ABP) -- The rationalization offered by the accused killer of an abortion doctor and his escort -- that it is justifiable to take the life of an abortionist in order to save lives of the unborn -- just doesn't wash, according to three Southern Baptist ethicists interviewed by Associated Baptist Press.

While most pro-life organizations quickly condemned the July 29 murders of the doctor, John Bayard Britton, 69, and James Barrett, 74, a volunteer escorting the doctor to work at the Ladies Center in Pensacola, Fla., some fringe groups argue that lethal force is sometimes legitimate to combat abortion.

The argument has just enough internal logic to sound appealing, said David Gushee, professor of Christian ethics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

"Christian people are morally obligated to try to prevent the taking of human life, and I believe abortion is the taking of human life," said Gushee. "Then the question is what means are either obligatory or permissible in pursuing that end."

"In a society where legal channels exist for legal change, we are responsible to use the legal system," Gushee said. Pro-life advocates are also free to "nurture individuals of such character that abortion is not an option for them" and to establish communities that support them, an area in which, he said, "we are doing pitifully little."

The recent Pensacola shooting of an abortion doctor was the second in that city. David Gunn was killed by an abortion protester at another Pensacola clinic in March 1993. Paul Hill, a former Presbyterian minister who afterward wrote a 14-page essay defending the 1993 shooting as morally right, is charged with the July 29 murders.

The logic used by Hill and others to defend the shootings borrows from the "just war" theory developed in the fourth century by the theologian St. Augustine. Just war acknowledges that in a sinful world, force sometimes must be used to resist violence. However, Gushee said, the recent incident in Pensacola and the 1993 murder of Dr. David Gunn also in Pensacola do not meet just war criteria.

"In just war (theory) the use of force is always the very last resort, and it must also be authorized by legitimate authority," said Gushee.

"I believe in this case the use of force does not meet the last-resort criteria, given the number of things that are not being done by those who are pro-life, and it also does not meet the legitimate authority criteria. There is no

legitimate authority that can be appealed to here."

Not only does society at large reject violence to prevent abortion, but even the pro-life movement is divided on the question, Gushee said. "That may be the most significant court of appeal here, and there is no consensus in that group, let alone the general population."

Paul Jones, executive director of the Christian Action Committee of the Mississippi Baptist Convention, agrees the shootings have no legitimate ethical grounds.

"The first thing I would do is to look at the example of Jesus Christ," said Jones. "Jesus had many opportunities, in a very militaristic, dictatorial society which did not value human life and took it almost randomly, to call upon his followers to strike out, life for life. He did not do that."

"In the life of Jesus Christ, I don't think you could argue for the position Paul Hill takes. If we are to model our lives after that of our master, we don't need the syllogistic arguments of those who would explain away murder."

Gushee said it is particularly difficult to justify violence in a cause that supposedly advocates that all human life is sacred. The anti-abortion movement contends that abortion cheapens human life. To employ "random acts of violence and murder" in defense of the cause "dramatically undermines" its claim, he said.

Robert Parham of the Baptist Center for Ethics in Nashville, Tenn., said the escalation in violence in the anti-abortion movement is "a direct result of the high voltage rhetoric by religious leaders who talk about the 'slaughter of the unborn' and call abortion 'murder.' "

Parham said "a growing segment of the anti-abortion community" is moving beyond just-war thinking into "a holy war mentality" that "justifies violence as the God-ordained way to purge evil in the world."

He quoted David Trosch, a Catholic priest who lives 30 miles from Pensacola, who said last year, "If 100 doctors need to die to save over 1 million babies a year, I see that as a fair trade."

Such thinking errs because it "pridefully assumes to know definitively the will of God" rather than considering moral decisions in humility and prayerful hearts. It also "ignores the biblical mandate to seek the welfare of neighbor," he said, and "blindly justifies evil means ... to accomplish moral ends."

"Christian ethics teaches that taking a life to save a life is morally wrong," Parham said.

He said "the only way to be proactive on the abortion issue is to teach values and have programs that prevent unwanted pregnancies from occurring."

Some pro-life groups seek to justify violence by comparing abortion in America to the Jewish Holocaust during World War II. Gushee, who said he is a student of the Holocaust, pointed out that most of the rescuers in the Holocaust acted "concretely to save life rather than take life."

Most rescuers, unless attacked, did not shoot Nazis, but worked to save Jews, he said. He suggested that people who want to make a difference in abortion should do so "by staffing crisis pregnancy centers, by adopting children, by preventing unwanted pregnancies, things that really save lives."

"This (violence) doesn't save lives. It takes the lives of doctors and those who happen to be in the vicinity," Gushee said.

Richard Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, did not respond to an invitation to be interviewed.

-30-

## **Politics, protest not only ways to fight abortion, experts say**

By Bob Allen

(ABP) -- A rise in violent protest against abortion is fueled by frustration from political setbacks since the

election of a pro-choice president, observers say. But some say the pro-life movement has depended too much on the kindness of politicians in the past.

"I don't think once abortion becomes a political issue that any person who has the aspirations of national office and much less the presidency is going to make and be able to keep the commitments any one group of people would hope for," said Paul Jones of the Mississippi Baptist Convention's Christian Action Council. "Anytime we try to energize a movement by calling upon political friendship, it is misguided."

David Gushee, ethics professor at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., said pro-lifers should not give up on political processes, but there are ways other than protest and politics to fight abortion.

"If you feel that your efforts to work through the political process are being frustrated, the first step in a democracy is to try to be more effective in working through the political process," Gushee said. "You don't give up hope because of whoever is in the White House. If you're in this for the long haul, you do what you can."

He said the mainstream pro-life movement must be "unequivocal in condemning" acts like the shootings of a doctor and his escort outside a Pensacola, Fla., abortion clinic. But it also needs to do more to "provide places where people can channel their moral outrage on this question" in hands-on, concrete ways, like abstinence-based sex-education programs that reduce unwanted pregnancies and crisis-pregnancy centers which offer alternatives to abortion.

"I think that quietly Christians and others that are opposed to abortion are doing these type things in their communities," Gushee said. "I think these concrete things that are being done ought to be highlighted."

Pro-lifers also must work to convert others to their point of view, Gushee said. "From the Christian point of view, you continue to patiently and lovingly lay out an ethic for the sanctity of human life. You teach it, preach it and you live it."

"As skillfully as you can, you try to win hearts and minds. You try to talk about the dignity of every life, its intrinsic worth."

"I think the pro-choice movement still has -- and rightfully -- a guilty conscience with all that is happening to these unborn children. And I think America as a whole has a guilty conscience. Despite this guilty conscience, abortions continue because people are not convinced there are alternatives that are better."

"I think the role of the church and the pro-life movement are to show people there are alternatives," Gushee said.

Sylvia Boothe is coordinator for alternatives to abortion ministries for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta. She offers consultation to Baptist churches, associations and state conventions on how to set up crisis-pregnancy centers and other abortion alternative ministries.

"Ministry -- that's where I'm really comfortable in being," she said, "trying to represent Christ in the midst of a crisis in our nation. It's one thing to say 'no' to abortion; it's another thing to say 'I'm here to walk through this (pregnancy) with you.'"

The Home Mission Board got into the business of promoting alternatives to abortion in response to a motion at the 1984 Southern Baptist Convention, Boothe said. She was hired as the first national coordinator for the ministry in 1988.

Meanwhile in recent years, the Baptist Sunday School Board has included an annual sanctity of human life lesson in Sunday school materials and initiated a successful sexual abstinence campaign, True Love Waits, and the SBC Christian Life Commission has taken a keen interest in monitoring pro-life concerns in Congress and the courts, Boothe pointed out.

The recent emphasis on abortion reverses years of neglect by denominational leadership, she said. "Our attitude for so many years was 'just try to leave it alone.' I believe what has happened in the convention has started at the grass-roots level. I believe the lay people just demanded the leadership do something."

"I do believe the pro-life people are getting stronger and are more committed to seeing that something is done," Boothe said. "I think they are not only willing but are looking to accomplish that through the proper channels."

## **One child in four lives in single-parent home**

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- One in four American children is growing up in a single-parent home, and that parent is almost as likely to be never-married as divorced, according to a recent Census Bureau report.

About 18 million children -- 27 percent of America's kids -- live in a home with only one parent, twice as many as in 1970, according to Arlene Saluter, author of *Marital Status and Living Arrangements*, a March 1993 study for the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Part of that increase is because more unmarried women are giving birth, said Saluter. Of children living with just one parent, almost as many live with a parent who has never married (35 percent) as those whose parents are divorced (37 percent).

While most single-parent families are headed by mothers (87 percent), the number of fathers in single-parent roles increased from 9 percent of the total in 1970 to 13 percent in 1993.

More than 3 million children under 18 live with their grandparent(s). African-American children are more likely to live with a grandparent (12 percent) than either Hispanic (6 percent) or white (4 percent) children.

Two factors in the increase of single-parent homes are an increase in the number of divorces and the fact that more adults are delaying a first marriage, the study reported.

There are 42.3 million never-married adults in America, twice as many as in 1970, and they account for the largest share of the unmarried, which also increased, from 37.5 million in 1970 to 72.6 million in 1993.

The number of married persons, meanwhile, also increased, but less than unmarrieds, from 95 million to 114.5 million.

The number of unmarried couples living together was 3.5 million in 1993, more than seven times the 523,000 unmarried-couple households in 1970.

The number of persons who live alone doubled to 23.6 million, representing one in every eight adults.

Robert Parham of the Baptist Center for Ethics, a Nashville, Tenn.,-based think tank, said the trend indicates that American culture has abandoned the value of responsibility.

He blamed the problem on young men who father children but do not stick around to parent them, on politicians who decry single parenthood but under-fund programs that help children, on media that glorify sex without portraying its consequences, and advertisers which use sex to sell.

"Reducing the percentage of children growing up in single-parent families requires that our culture advance both values of personal and social responsibility," Parham said.

-- By Bob Allen

## **Senate confirms Breyer for Supreme Court post**

By Larry Chesser

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Judge Stephen Breyer's views of the First Amendment drew strong bipartisan support as the U.S. Senate voted overwhelmingly July 29 to confirm him as the 108th justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Breyer, chief judge of the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, won confirmation by a 87-9 vote.

During Senate Judiciary Committee hearings, Breyer endorsed a wall of separation between church and state, embracing the principle of governmental neutrality toward religion.

While there were exceptions among the nine senators who voted against him, Breyer's record and testimony on First Amendment issues earned praise from lawmakers across the political spectrum.

Breyer "adopts a pragmatic, not an ideological, approach" to church-state issues, declared Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah, ranking Republican member of the Judiciary Committee.

Hatch praised Breyer for understanding "the strong protections that Congress intended to give religious liberty" under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act -- a 1993 measure that requires government to show a compelling reason to justify a substantial restriction on religious practice.

The conservative Hatch also commended Breyer's views on how much separation between church and state is required by the First Amendment's ban on governmental establishment of religion.

"Judge Breyer rejects the extreme secularist view that the establishment clause mandates an absolute wall of separation between church and state," Hatch said. "Judge Breyer instead recognizes that there are 'vast areas' where religious institutions can neutrally receive benefits from government."

Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., said Breyer is "respectful of the religious traditions of the American people and committed to ensuring that all Americans remain free to follow their conscience, free from government interference."

Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., told Senate colleagues he shares Breyer's view "about the necessity for, and desirability of, a reasonably constructed wall to separate church and state."

Leahy said Breyer justified that position by arguing that governmental neutrality is the best way to ensure that "members of each religion [will] be able to practice that religion freely, to be able to pass their religion on to their children."

During confirmation hearings, Breyer was questioned about his 1989 appeals-court ruling that a Baptist school's free-exercise rights were not violated by requiring its secular curriculum to be approved by local school district officials.

Several senators who spoke before the confirmation vote found encouragement in Breyer's response to the panel.

Breyer told the committee that nothing is more important to individuals and families than religious principles and the right to pass on those principles and beliefs to their children.

"Judge Breyer made it clear that he has no bias against home or religious schooling," said Sen. Strom Thurmond, R-S.C.

Not all senators were satisfied with Breyer's church-state views nor his record on abortion rights. He drew criticism in these areas from two senators who voted against confirmation.

Breyer's committee testimony "places him on the liberal side of the constitutional debate regarding the separation of church and state," said Sen. Robert Smith, R-N.H. "I believe that he is likely to vote to uphold the Supreme Court's precedents banning prayer in the public schools and even at public school graduation ceremonies."

Sen. Trent Lott, R-Miss., said Breyer's ruling in the religious school case turns the Supreme Court's precedents concerning religious freedom on their heads.

Lott also said Breyer is "not in tune" with parents who favor required parental notification before an abortion is performed on a minor. Lott and Smith criticized Breyer's vote to strike down the Reagan and Bush administrations' ban on abortion counseling at federally supported clinics.

Overall, though, Breyer drew widespread approval as a centrist consensus builder.

"Liberals and conservatives alike recognized the merit of Judge Breyer's careful, balanced approach to his job," said Majority Leader George Mitchell, D-Maine.

Breyer, who has served in all three branches of government, was appointed to the federal bench by President Carter in 1980. He was nominated by President Clinton to replace retired Justice Harry Blackmun.

-30-

### **Fellowship receipts still growing, but at slower rate than early years**

ATLANTA (ABP) -- The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship took in slightly more than \$6 million in the first half of 1994, 8 percent more than same period last year.

That rate of growth compares with a 72 percent increase reported after six months last year. The figures may indicate a leveling off in the rapid growth experienced by the Fellowship in its first three years.

The Fellowship was formed in 1990 by moderates unhappy with the conservative tilt of the 15 million-member Southern Baptist Convention. It allowed moderates to support alternatives to SBC missions and ministry programs or to send money to selected SBC agencies, bypassing official denominational channels.

Of the \$6,151,493 contributed to the Fellowship so far in 1994, 69 percent was earmarked for the Fellowship's own ministries. Another 16.3 percent was sent to SBC agencies and 7.2 percent to state conventions. Fellowship-endorsed ministries received 7.5 percent.

It is too early to gauge the impact of the SBC's vote in June ordering its agencies to refuse funds channeled through the Fellowship, said Gary Skeen, coordinator of financial and administrative services for the Atlanta-based Fellowship.

Most churches he has heard from since the SBC vote have indicated they plan to switch their Fellowship gifts from a plan that includes support for the SBC to the "Vision 2000" plan, which supports only Fellowship-endorsed ventures. However, most churches which have supported the other plans have not yet contacted him, he added.

Skeen said CBF officials project receipts for the entire year to fall short of the \$12.5 million in the 1994 budget, since the Fellowship can no longer handle funds earmarked for SBC causes.

However, they expect the Fellowship's own ventures and those it helps support to grow fatter. All the money taken in by the Fellowship this year -- except the \$1.9 million already forwarded to SBC causes -- will remain with the Fellowship.

Last year the Fellowship sent \$2.7 million to the SBC out of the \$11.2 million it received.

-30-

-- By Bob Allen and Greg Warner

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