



**BAPTIST PRESS**

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**Abortion Issue Looms Large  
In Rising Religious Fight**

By W. Barry Garrett

WASHINGTON (BP)--Conflicting convictions clashed on Capitol Hill here in a controversy created by Supreme Court rulings of January 22, 1973, on the problem of abortion.

The Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights held a press conference and announced an extensive 1976 "plan for action" to support the court's decision and to oppose anti-abortion legislation and proposed constitutional amendments.

Meanwhile, the "Right-to-Life" people sponsored their third annual march for life with a rally at Lafayette Park, across the street from the White House, and with a march to the U. S. Capitol for an afternoon of "lobbying in the halls of Congress." Their objective is to nullify the Supreme Court decision and to make abortion illegal in the United States.

The Supreme Court ruled that a state law that prohibited abortion except on medical advice to save the life of the mother is a violation of the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment which protects "the right to privacy, including a woman's qualified right to terminate her pregnancy."

The court then outlined an abortion regulation formula for laws that recognize a woman's right to an abortion and at the same time provide for the state's interest in the health of the mother and the potential human life in an unborn fetus. This formula encompasses three stages as follows:

1. During the first three months of pregnancy the decision to have an abortion must be left to the woman and the medical judgment of her physician;
2. The same right to an abortion continues through the second three months of pregnancy, but in this period the interest of the state emerges in the form of a concern for the health of the mother. Hence, a state may, if it chooses, "regulate the abortion procedure" in ways related to the mother's health; and
3. In the last three months of pregnancy, the fetus develops "the potentiality of human life," that is, it may have the ability to remain alive apart from the mother's body. Therefore, the state may regulate or even prohibit abortion, except where necessary to preserve the health or life of the mother.

Since the 1973 decisions, the lines have been drawn sharply on the subject of abortion. The anti-abortion groups, spearheaded by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, have launched an all-out campaign to reverse the Supreme Court's decision by a constitutional amendment prohibiting abortion or by other legislative processes.

On the other hand, a large number of leading churchmen formed the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights. It is the contention of this coalition that "the religious liberty of everyone would be seriously threatened if the state enacts into law one particular moral viewpoint not shared by substantial sections of the religious community."

At its Nov. 17-20, 1975, meeting the Catholic Bishops Conference unanimously adopted "the pastoral plan for pro-life activities." The plan was prepared by a committee under the chairmanship of Terence Cardinal Cooke of New York.

It has a threefold thrust: 1. An intensive public information effort to set forth the issues in abortion as seen by the "pro-life" people; 2. A pastoral effort addressed to the specific needs of women with problems related to pregnancy; and 3. A national effort to change public policy on abortion through legislative, judicial and administrative actions.

The plan is to organize "pro-life" groups in congressional districts, apply pressures on congressmen and other public officials, and to support only candidates who are pledged to work toward the abolition of abortion.

At its press conference, the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights announced its 1976 plan for action in an effort to counteract the national political movement by the Catholic bishops.

Bishop James Armstrong, president of the Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Church, challenged the Catholic bishops and their plan to overturn the Supreme Court decision legalizing abortions. "Their plans threaten the First Amendment guarantees of the freedom of religion. Each religious faith in this pluralistic society has the right to practice and teach its own particular beliefs, and we do not argue with the right of the Catholic hierarchy to do so," he said. "But the rights of other denominations which do not share Catholic doctrine on abortion would be abrogated if one particular religious viewpoint is enacted into law.

"We are committed to our own deeply held religious beliefs on the matter of abortion and also to those cherished freedoms which permit us to hold them. Today we make a pledge to protect them," Bishop Armstrong stated.

The 1976 effort will be to increase the number of state coalitions for abortion rights, to conduct an education campaign on the importance of preserving freedom of choice, and to demonstrate how citizens can take action on the abortion rights issue.

James A. Christison, associate general secretary of the American Baptist Churches (ABC) in the USA, at the press conference, quoted an unprecedented statement adopted by the general board of his denomination and directed at the Catholic bishops. The ABC board said:

"We acknowledge the legal right of all individuals and groups, both religious and secular, to seek the enactment of laws which reflect the values they hold to be necessary to the exercise of their freedom and on behalf of the common welfare. However, we believe that the present national effort of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the U.S.A. to coerce the conscience and personal freedom of our citizens through the power of public law in matters of human production constitutes a serious threat to that moral and religious liberty so highly prized by Baptists and so long protected for all people under the nation's policy of the separation of church and state."

Other spokesmen at the coalition press conference included Helen I. Barnhill, chairperson of the executive council of the United Church of Christ; Rabbi Balfour Brickner, director of the department of inter-religious affairs of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations; Esther R. Landa, president of the National Council of Jewish Women; Mary Pardee, president of the United Presbyterian Women of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA; and Robert Nelson West, president of the Unitarian-Universalist denomination.

In a press release of the "March for Life," the pro-life forces described the Supreme Court decisions on abortion as "infamous." They charged that "three years of slaughtering pre-born human beings are driving the American social, political, and legal systems toward a death syndrome."

The release rebuked some of the people associated with the right-to-life movement who "are showing a halting tendency to compromise toward a state's right approach." It declared, "this is totally unacceptable to the true right-to-life defenders. This approach is not a compromise, but is openly inviting that the killing go on under the guise of a limp state's rights amendment and no-teeth legislation."

The "March for Life" literature also attacked President Gerald R. Ford and the Congress for supporting "massacre unlimited," as it calls abortion.

Nellie J. Gray, chairman of the "March for Life," deplored the fact that President Ford refused to meet with the right-to-life people on January 22. She charged that "President Ford refuses to be concerned" about the "killing of pre-born children and about using tax dollars for the barbaric deeds."

In an open letter to members of the 94th Congress, Miss Gray demanded that members of Congress re-examine their position on abortion legislation. She called on Congress to support a "human life amendment" to the constitution and to "cut off funds for abortion and other disparagement of human beings."

The right-to-life people have made it clear that they intend to make anti-abortion an issue in the up-coming congressional and presidential campaigns.

Paynter Sentenced  
To Four-year Term

BENTON, Ill. (BP)--James A. Paynter, 34, former business manager of the Illinois Baptist Children's Home in Carmi, entered a plea of guilty here in the U.S. district court, and was sentenced to four years in prison by U.S. Judge William G. Juergens of Chester.

Paynter pled guilty to a one-count indictment by the FBI for interstate transportation of stolen property.

After Paynter suddenly disappeared on August 31, 1974, it was discovered that he had deposited two checks from estates totaling \$4,000 and \$32,721, which had been intended for the children's home, in fictitious accounts in Evansville, Ind., banks.

In turn, Paynter reportedly used funds from the Evansville accounts on August 30, 1974, to make a large payment on a home to move to the Springfield offices of the Illinois Baptist State Association to assume responsibility for data processing and bookkeeping of all the association's funds.

Court personnel told the Illinois Baptist that Paynter was taken immediately to the county jail of either Williamson or St. Clair counties. He will be assigned to a federal penitentiary.

Any decision regarding parole is in the hands of the U. S. Board of Parole.

Paynter still faces three indictments returned by the White County grand jury, where the children's home is located. A court spokesman said that plea bargaining is in effect on those charges, but that no decision has been reached.

Last June, the U.S. Fidelity and Guaranty Company reimbursed the Illinois Baptist State Association \$87,325, which partially covered the embezzlement. An audit of the children's home records, made after Paynter disappeared, revealed \$103,753 in funds missing between January 1, 1972, and August 31, 1974. The audit did not cover any records prior to January 1, 1972. Paynter became business manager of the home in 1967.

Leon Talley, social services director for the home, said it is his understanding that Mr. and Mrs. Paynter have been living in Monroe, La., where he has been managing a Pizza Hut. Talley also said it is his understanding the Paynters had joined a Presbyterian church in Monroe.

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'Baptist Hour' Observes  
Its 35th Birthday

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FORT WORTH (BP)--As 1976 moves the country into its Bicentennial year, "The Baptist Hour," the flagship program of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, observes an anniversary of its own.

It's 35--ancient by radio standards.

The January anniversary date was observed quietly. Herschel H. Hobbs, "Baptist Hour" speaker, instead noted the nation's Bicentennial. He is preaching a series of sermons with the theme, "One Nation, Under God."

"The Baptist Hour" became a reality in 1941 when M. E. Dodd, pastor of First Baptist Church, Shreveport, stepped to the microphone and talked about "Christ and the Human Crisis."

That first series of sermons was aired on an ABC network of 17 stations in 11 states. It is the only one of the Radio and Television Commission programs ever heard regularly on a national network. Later experience indicated that Commission programs were better syndicated and aired on individual stations which made public service time available for them.

Today, "The Baptist Hour" is on 357 stations in 50 states and several countries abroad.

Hobbs, retired pastor of First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, has been "Baptist Hour" speaker since 1958. "A past president of the Southern Baptist Convention, Hobbs is noted for his ability to put everyday issues into spiritual perspective," a commission spokesman said.

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Inspirational music, a hallmark of "Baptist Hour" broadcasts, is provided by The Centurymen a men's chorus of 100 ministers of music created by the Radio and Television Commission for that purpose. The program is produced for the commission by Stan Knowles.

"The Baptist Hour's' popularity is due perhaps to the fact that it does not propose that listeners join the Baptist denomination," the spokesman said. "Rather, Hobbs reminds listeners that God has a better way for their lives--in the church of their own choice."

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Illinois Church Ordains  
Two Women Deacons

Baptist Press  
1/23/76

CHAMPAIGN, ILL. (BP)--The Temple Baptist Church here has ordained six new deacons, including two women.

It is believed to be the first instance of a Southern Baptist church in Illinois ordaining women as deacons, although there have been such ordinations in other states, especially in recent years.

Although ordination of women as deacons is becoming more common, the percentage of Southern Baptist churches doing so is small. No records are available on how many women serve as deacons in the 34,734 Southern Baptist churches, although it is believed that about 21 women have been ordained as ministers--all in non-pastoral roles.

"Temple Church studied this issue seriously for some time, and it clearly reflects the concensus of the congregation," said Mark C. Fowler of Nashville, Tenn., former pastor of the church who returned for the service. "In fact, when the by-law admitting women as eligible candidates was voted on, there were no negative votes cast--which even surprised me!"

Mrs. Tom (Watha) Anderson, a housewife, said her acceptance of ordination certainly does not mean she is plugging for women's lib. "I'm not a women's libber," she told the Illinois Baptist, "and that certainly wasn't my motive in accepting ordination. I see this as just one more way to serve God."

"I had no apprehension," said Mrs. Dan (Cheryl) Rascoe, "and from the time the church first started talking about it, I felt I would like to serve sometime. But I was floored when they elected me, for I felt there were older and more experienced members who were more qualified." She has been a member at Temple for about 5½ years.

"I didn't expect the service to be such an experience but when they opened it up to the entire congregation and let everyone who wished to come around and share in the laying on of hands, it really impressed me," she said.

Mrs. Anderson, who grew up in Arkansas, has been a Southern Baptist for 18 years. She was formerly a Presbyterian. Her husband teaches at the University of Illinois, and her father-in-law, Cecil C. Anderson, is a Southern Baptist pastor in Maryland.

Mrs. Anderson said she had reservations when her name first appeared on the list of eligible candidates. "Gee, I need to get my name off that list was my first thought. But something kept nagging me that I had to come to grips with myself and be prepared to give an answer in case I was elected. So I decided to leave my name on. But first I called Mom and Dad and talked with a lot of friends, as well as my father-in-law."

She added that she had mixed emotions at first, but did a lot of praying, and now feels very good about her decision.

Mrs. Rascoe is a part-time piano teacher at Parkland Junior College. Her husband is a graduate assistant in physics, working on his doctorate at the University of Illinois.

"I've been a Southern Baptist all my life," Mrs. Rascoe said, "and grew up in Dallas, Texas, where I was a member of the Lake Side Baptist Church. Dan is also a Texan, from San Antonio."

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