unborn had made no appreciable reduction in the number of abortions, and that Paul's own considerable sacrifices had made little apparent difference at the clinic(s) where he picketed and counseled, 5) that "pop-tart injunctions" and harsh judicial treatment, culminating in the purely political FACE legislation had given the pro-life community a strong sense of futility, 6) that Paul's own treatment at the hands of local law enforcement left him personally with his own sense of futility, and finally, 7) that the logic of "if you treat a born person this way, you ought to treat an unborn person the same way" is not only strong, but seems to be a corollary of the most fundamental pro-life tenet — that the unborn child is a person, and seems to lead to a legitimization of he use of lethal force in the defense of the unborn (although as many of us have come to see, there are complexities of morality here which these simpler arguments do not address). All these mitigations need to be considered in deciding what is an appropriate penalty for Paul's shooting of Dr. Britton and his bodyguard. The Christian who speaks in favor of the death penalty makes the same error Paul Hill made—of dangerously oversimplifying the situation, and wrongly condemning a man to death.

What should be our attitude toward Paul? 1) That he did wrong, 2) that his doing of wrong was very strongly mitigated by circumstances, 3) that the death penalty is so far from being just in its application to him, that no Christian ought to support it for even a moment.

If called upon to speak primarily to other citizens of the United States, I believe one ought to add: 4) that no one ought to make a statement concerning his actions until they have studied *all the issues* carefully, 5) that Paul's guilt is less than that of the abortionist he killed, 6) that Paul's guilt is essentially less than, but from the standpoint of mitigation, approximately equivalent to that of each of the thirty-six million women who have been primary co-conspirators in the murder of their own children.

If called upon to make a statement primarily to Christians I believe it might be good to add to these six observations this: 7) that Paul's lethal action is to be viewed with greater concern by the church primarily because he is a Christian and we have far greater grace to act wisely than do abortionists or the mothers who seek to have their children killed by them.

No, indeed, we ought neither to do nor promote more violence at the abortion clinics. But violence takes place primarily in hearts—and those who wish to crush the bruised reed called Paul Hill, to stone this man taken in the act of murder, ought to consider the violence in their own hearts as they fling their words of judgment. Our Lord is not in the business of breaking bruised reeds — therefore it is not our business, either. In at least one incident we know of He said to a capital criminal, "Neither do I condemn you—go and sin no more." ■

James Trott is active in Guardians For Life, a Philadelphia-based rescue group. He is a Presbyterian minister and the father of six children.

Swenson's Slam

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