

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

*Pleading for a complete return to Christianity
as it was in the beginning.*

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A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL READERS

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* **THE MERCIES OF GOD RECALLED AND TRUST EXPRESSED** *
* "But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: the steadfast love *
* of the Lord never ceases, His mercies never come to an end; they are *
* new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness. 'The LORD is my portion' *
* says my soul, 'therefore I will hope in Him'." (Lamentations 3:21-24) *

GOD BLESS THY YEAR:
THY COMING IN, THY GOING OUT,
THY REST, THY TRAVELLING ABOUT,
THE ROUGH, THE SMOOTH,
THE BRIGHT, THE DREAR:
GOD BLESS THY YEAR.

LEST WE FORGET

THE human memory is a most marvellous human facility, although we generally take it much for granted. The ability to store facts and figures in a well trained human memory-bank makes the modern computer look like a kiddie's toy abacus. None of us has any real conception of the full extent of the utterly vast quantities of information pigeon-holed in the filing-cabinets of the mind and it is only when we are called upon to draw upon the inner recesses of the memory that we are astounded as to what is readily there. I'm no anatomist but I suppose it must be true to say that all the information accrued in the memory in a lifetime is stored in a very small part of the brain (whether the size of a pea or a walnut I'm not sure), but the fact is staggering just the same. Quite apart from old age when the memory fails us because of the hardening of the arteries, etc., the memory can, and is, manipulated by forces other than purely those of a physiological nature and we find that, from day to day, we remember only what we want to remember and, where possible, conveniently forget the things we want to forget.

'Memory' seems, therefore, to be conditioned by conscience, prejudice, manner of life, and personal circumstances. Certain types and classes in this world have 'long' memories and old scores are never healed e.g. Palestine and Belfast at present. In some families feuds with other families are kept alive and passed on to succeeding generations. On the other hand, one hears it said at funerals that, "Time is a great healer" the apparent meaning being that time is the arch-enemy of the memory and that, in time, memories will fade and grief for the departed loved-ones will be more easy to bear. If time erodes the memory then that, sometimes, is a good thing if there are things we want to forget. There may be the odd exception but surely it must be the experience of most of us that there are things we have said and done of which we are not particularly proud and which we are trying to forget in a way rather like Paul's words in Phil. 3:13 "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before. I press toward the mark..." We do not have anything like full control over our memories, however, if indeed we have any control at all, and painful memories have a nasty habit of coming to mind at unexpected moments.

The real and by far the most serious flaw in the human memory is, however, its tendency to fail us. It fails us only in a manner of speaking however, for there is nothing inherently wrong with the brain's memory mechanism. Rather it is a question of the owner of the memory imposing his personal preferences upon what he is prepared to remember. For instance, if we want to, we can readily remember something which happened to us fifty years ago (if we are old enough) and also, if we want to, we can forget something which occurred only five days ago. In the busy cut-and-throat of modern living we mentally classify things, all the time, into those we must remember, those we will try and remember and those things we will forget immediately. All kinds of objects testify to the frailty of the human memory – the calendar; the desk diary; the telephone directory; the statues to great men and women, and the historical monuments we see all around us; the days which are set aside each year for special remembrances. Our memories are, generally, so short that we need all kinds of reminders, and sometimes we are so engrossed in the busy lives we lead that we require to be called aside and reminded of things we ought to remember. God certainly recognised the limitations of the average human memory and has employed all manner of methods of stirring and activating it. The rainbow is seen in the day to remind us of the flood and assure us that God will never again destroy the world by water. The origin of the sabbath day is set forth in Gen. 2:1-3. Later on when God gave the law of Moses to Israel, He saw fit to make the sabbath day a magnificent reminder to them (see Ex. 20:8-11). It was a sign between God and Israel and one of the principle reasons for the failure of the Jewish nation was that they 'forgot' to observe the sabbath day and to keep it holy. There were other special days such as the Passover feast day. The function of these was one of remembrance, as was the setting up of the twelve stones, brought from Jordan, and set up in Gilgai to remind all and sundry of the fact that God had brought His people through the Jordan on dry land, and the Red Sea on dry land. However, in spite of all these measures the Jews forgot their Benefactor and went in pursuit of the worship of other gods. Man has not changed and God is as forgotten today as He was then.

When Joseph interpreted the dream of the chief butler and gave him the good tidings of his coming release from prison he implored the butler thus, "But think on me when it shall be well with thee and shew kindness, I pray thee unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house..." (Gen. 40:14). The chief butler was duly released from prison and restored to his former post but did he remember Joseph? – "Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forget him". Very often we, like the butler, so soon forget the good deeds done to us by our brethren and fellow men. This is especially true if we prosper. In like manner we so easily forget the goodness of God to us and forget that He is the source of all our benefits. This is also especially so if we prosper. As we prosper we begin to feel the feeling of all 'self-made men' and reckon that we can succeed quite independently of God. In Deut. 5 and 6 God exhorts His people to a remembrance of certain things and specifically warns them that, as they prosper, they shall be inclined to forget Him – "And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which He swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, and houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees,

which thou plantest not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage" (Deut. 6:10-12). In these times of general and relative material prosperity it is very easy for us to forget God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Thus God has provided us with the most magnificent reminder of all – 'the Lord's Supper'. Jesus said, 'This do in remembrance of me' thus denoting the purpose of our gathering on the first day of the week. This institution has been referred to as the love-drenched reminder that God is not willing that any should perish; that man should not only have life but have it more abundantly. The Lord's Supper is the final reminder that God is; that Jesus died for our sins, (the just for the unjust); and that through the observance of the feast we can perchance engage our minds upon the tokens left us – the bread and the wine – and remember the death of our Lord until He comes again. Let us try not to be forgetful of God and all His benefits, especially the blessings in His Son, and our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Nor e'er Gethsemane forget,
But there thy conflict see:
Thine agony and blood-like sweat,
And so remember thee

'Let us forsake not the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is'. EDITOR

CORRESPONDENCE CLASSES

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES or THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Chapters 6 and 7

- 1 Has the office filled by the seven any place in present day Church organisation?
- 2 If men may be appointed to such an office what would be their qualifications?
- 3 What were the charges brought against Stephen?
- 4 Stephen points out that the worship of God had not always been confined to the Temple. Cite his proofs.
- 5 He charges them with having always resisted God's purpose. Give the instances to which he refers.
- 6 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God'. What is peculiar in this statement?
- 7 'Out of the city'. What law were they careful to observe although engaged in committing a shameful murder.
- 8 Witnesses cast the first stones. Quote Old Testament for this practice.

Answers, which should be written on one side of the paper only, should be returned to E. Jess, 34 Charles Street, Penicuik.

TALKS ON THE TABERNACLE

No. 7 – The Most Holy Place.

THE Most Holy Place, Holiest of All, was a cube, measuring fifteen feet each way. Of the Heavenly City it is written: 'the city lieth four-square, and the length is as large as the breadth ... the length, and the breadth, and the height of it are equal' (Rev. 21:16).

Unlike the Jewish high priest, our High Priest 'entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us' (Heb. 9:26).

The Shekinah, the glory of God, was the only light in the most holy place; and of the heavenly city, it is written: the 'city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof' (Rev. 21:23).

The Veil

The most holy place was separated from the holy place by a beautiful veil, or curtain, through which the high priest entered once every year. When Jesus died on the Cross, 'the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom'. Rent by Divine hands from the top. This signified that the way to approach God was no longer through the Old Covenant priests and sacrifices, but 'by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh' (Heb. 10:19-20). Under the Old Covenant the way into the Holiest was only open for one. Now it is open for all. 'Whosoever will may come'.

A look inside

After 'the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all: which had the golden censar [altar of incense, RV margin], and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant: and over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat: of which we cannot now speak particularly' (Heb. 9:3-5). We can well appropriate that last cause.

The Ark of the Covenant

This was an oblong chest overlaid with gold. When, because of Israel's sins, that sacred ark was captured by the Philistines, Ichabod (the glory has departed) was written large over the nation. David, desiring to revive and restore the true worship of Jehovah, attempted to bring the ark back to Jerusalem. Because he consulted men instead of the Divine law book, his first attempt was a tragic failure. But when 'the children of the Levites bare the ark upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of the Lord', the ark was safely lodged in Jerusalem (1 Chron. 13:15).

The golden pot with manna inside. This told of the heaven-sent bread by which their lives were sustained during that long wilderness march. It was a type of Jesus, the living Bread, on whom we feed now, but a richer, fuller feast is theirs who pass beyond the veil. 'To him that over-cometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna'. Then, 'they shall hunger no more ... for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them' (Rev. 3:17; 7:16-17).

'Aaron's rod that budded'. There were jealous and ambitious folks in those days, as now, who could not bear to see others occupying positions of prominence. They said to Moses and Aaron, 'Ye take too much upon you'. Soon the earth opened and swallowed these complainers. Then the Lord told Moses to take twelve rods and write every man's name upon his rod, 'and lay them up in the tabernacle, and it shall come to pass. that the man's rod whom I shall choose shall blossom'. On the morrow the rod of Aaron, from the House of Levi, was budded, 'and brought forth buds ... blossoms ... and almonds'. This was 'to be kept for a token against the rebels' (Numbers 17).

The claims of our High Priest were challenged; religious leaders called Him a blasphemer, and crucified Him as such. Like a dead dry rod. His body was laid in the sepulchre; but on the appointed day, He rose in glorious life and fruitfulness. He was 'declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead'.

The tables 'of the covenant'. God's standard of righteousness, tested by which all come short, all are brought in guilty before God. The law given through Moses taught man his sinfulness, and helplessness.

'Not the labour of my hands
Can fulfill the law's demands:
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone,
Thou must save and Thou alone''.

'The mercy-seat'. Between a holy and just God, and an accusing law, was the lid of the ark, the mercy-seat, or propitiation. John wrote: 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation [covering] for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world' (1 John 2:1-2). "What the law could not do

in that it was weak through the flesh [‘it acted through frail humanity’, Weymouth], God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness [requirement] of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit’ (Rom. 8:3-4). We are covered, accepted in Him. Believers are ‘baptised into Jesus Christ into his death’. ‘There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus’ (Rom. 6:3; 8:1).

The cherubins of glory, shadowing the mercy-seat, seeming to look with wonder and adoration at God’s wondrous scheme to deal with man’s sin. In heaven angelic hosts proclaim, ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing’ (Rev. 5:11-12).

“Worthy the Lamb that died”, they cry,

“To be exalted thus”;

“Worthy the Lamb”, our lips reply,

“For He was slain for us”.

We hope (D.V.) to conclude this series with a talk on the Day of Atonement.

W. CROSTHWAITE

ASK

Take my will, and make it Thine;

It shall be no longer mine.

Take my heart – it is Thine own;

It shall be Thy royal throne.

“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” Ephesians 3:20.

ASK WHAT DO I ASK?ASK WHAT DO I ASK? ASK WHAT DO I ASK?

We continue our meditation of the marvellous spirit filled message, given to us by this bond-slave of the Lord Jesus, the apostle Paul. How simple yet profound, are the wonderful truths, in God’s most precious word. Writing to his Son in the faith, Timothy, the Apostle exhorts him to “Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”. 2 Timothy 3:14-17. “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” Psalm 119:18.

ASK WHAT DO I ASK?

ASK ACCORDING TO GOD’S WILL.

“Jesu saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work”

“I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me” John 5:30. [John 4:34

‘For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me’ John 6:38

‘Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” Luke 22:42

“Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me), to do thy will, O God”.

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Matthew 7:21.

“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him” 1 John 5:14-15.

“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” Matthew 6:9-10.

One writer has said that: “All true prayer is virtually the outbreathing of the desires of God”. Westcott said “The answer to prayer is given not as a reward for meritorious action, but because the prayer rightly understood coincides with God’s will. May I quote C. H. Spurgeon: “We may, moreover, have a motive at the bottom of our desire which is not Christ-like, a selfish motive,

which forgets God's glory and caters only for our own ease and comfort. Now although we may ask for things which are for our profit, yet still we must never let our profit interfere in any way with the glory of God. There must be mingled with acceptable prayer the holy salt of submission to the divine will. I like Luther's saying, "Lord, I will have my will of thee at this time". 'What!' say you. Like such an expression as that?" I do, because of the next clause, which was. "I will have my will for I know that my will is thy will". That is well spoken, Luther; but without the last words it would have been wicked presumption". Hudson Taylor also gives us much food for thought in the following quotation "I used to ask God if He would come and help me; then I asked God if I might help Him; then I ended by asking God to do His work through me".

ASK ACCORDING TO GOD'S WILL ASKIFAND.....ABIDING IN CHRIST

It is well to remember that all spiritual blessings are conditional. Jesus said: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he pureth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. AS the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. IF YE ABIDE IN ME, AND MY WORDS ABIDE IN YOU, YE SHALL ASK WHAT YE WILL, AND IT SHALL BE DONE UNTO YOU. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" John 15:1-8.

ASK WE ASK WE RECEIVE BECAUSE AND DO

"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. AND WHATSOEVER WE ASK, WE RECEIVE OF HIM, BECAUSE WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS, AND DO THOSE THINGS THAT ARE PLEASING IN HIS SIGHT. And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the man of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us" 1 John 3:18-24.

ASK ASK THE FATHER IN MY NAME

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. AND WHATSOEVER YE SHALL ASK IN MY NAME, THAT WILL I DO, THAT THE FATHER MAY BE GLORIFIED IN THE SON, IF YE SHALL ASK ANY THING IN MY NAME, I WILL DO IT" John 14:12-14

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever YE SHALL ASK OF THE FATHER IN MY NAME, HE MAY GIVE IT YOU. These things I command you, that ye love one another" John 15:14-17.

"And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ASK THE FATHER IN MY NAME, HE WILL GIVE IT YOU, Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full..... At that day ye shall ASK IN MY NAME: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you:" John 16:23,24,26.

ASK WHAT DO I ASK?

ASK ACCORDING TO GOD'S WILL ABIDING IN CHRIST IN THE NAME

"There is always something over, when we trust our gracious Lord; Every cup He fills o'er-floweth; His great rivers all are broad; Nothing narrow, nothing stinted ever issues from His store; To His own He gives full measure, running over evermore".

God Willing, we shall continue with our theme ASK ... WHAT DO I ASK? next month.
May the Lord's richest blessing be your portion.

LEONARD MORGAN

ORIGIN OF DENOMINATIONS

Institution	Place	Date	Founder
Adventism	Massachusetts	1831	William Miller
American Baptist	Providence, R. I.	1639	Roger Williams
Apostolic Faith Mission	United States	1900	Group
Assembly of God	Hot Springs, Ark.	1914	Group
Baptist Church	London, England	1607	John Smyth
Brethren (Dunkards)	Schwarzenau, Germ.	1708	Hochmann & Mack
Brethren in Christ	United States	1820	Group
Catholic Apostolic Church	England	1830	Group
Christadelphians	United States	1844	John Thomas. M.D.
Christian Church	Midway, Kentucky	1859	Group
Christian Science	Boston, Mass.	1879	Mary Baker Eddy
Church of England	England	1535	King Henry VIII
Church of God	Monroe Co., Tenn.	1886	Group
Church of God	United States	1880	D. S. Warner
Church of God, Holiness	Atlanta, Georgia	1914	K. H. Burrus
Church of Living God	Wrightsville, Ark.	1889	William Christian
Congregational Church	Massachusetts	1684	Group
Cumberland Presbyterian	Dickson Co., Tenn.	1810	Group
Dutch Reformed Church	Holland	1560	Group
Evangelical Church	Pennsylvania	1803	Jacob Albright
Evangelical and Reformed	Cleveland, Ohio	1934	Group
Foursquare Gospel	Los Angeles, Calif.	1917	Aimee S. McPherson
Freewill Baptist	New Durham, N. C.	1780	Benjamin Randall
Full Gospel Church	Goldsboro, N. C.	1935	R. H. Askew
Holiness Church	Chicago, Illinois	1907	Howard Hoople
House of David	Michigan	1903	Group
Independent Holiness	Van Alstyne, Texas	1900	C. B. Jernigan
Jehovah's Witnesses	Pennsylvania	1874	Charles T. Russell
Lutheran Church	Augsburg, Germany	1530	Martin Luther
Mennonite Church	Zurich, Switzerland	1525	Group
Methodist Church	London, England	1729	John Wesley
Methodist Episcopal	Baltimore, Maryland	1874	Group
Mormon Church	Seneca, N. Y.	1830	Joseph Smith
Mormans (Reorganised)	Wisconsin	1852	Joseph Smith II
Moravian Church	Kunwald, Bohemia	1457	Group
Nazarene Church	Los Angeles, Calif.	1895	P. F. Bresec
New Apostolic Church	Hamburg, Germany	1862	Preuss
Pentecostal Holiness	Anderson, S. Car.	1898	Group
Pilgrim Holiness Church	Cincinnati, Ohio	1897	Group
Plymouth Brethren	Dublin, Ireland	1829	Group
Presbyterian Church	Switzerland	1535	John Calvin
Primitive Baptist	North Carolina	1765	Group
Quakers	England	1650	George Fox
Roman Catholic	Rome, Italy	606	Boniface III
Salvation Army	London, England	1865	William Booth
Seventh-Day Adventism	Massachusetts	1846	Ellen G. White
Spiritualist Church	United States	1848	Andrew J. Davis
Theosophical Society	New York City	1875	Helena Blavatsky
The Unity School	Kansas City, Mo.	1889	Charles Fillmore
Unitarians	Poland	16th C.	C. Faustus, Socinus.
Universalist Church	New Jersey	1770	John Murray
Greek Orthodox Church	Greece	1053	Group

JESUS THE FIRSTBORN

UNDER Hebrew law the first-born was the eldest son of a father, irrespective of which of the man's wives was the mother. Under the religious law of the Jews, the first-born was the first person to be born to each mother. In references to the first-born in the New Testament the male side is mainly considered and here the first point of note is that to be the first-born was to be accorded the highest possible honour.

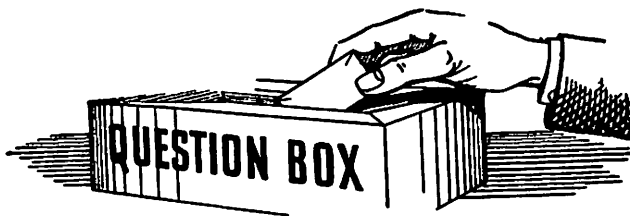
As in many other things, Hebrew and Jewish law and practice is used descriptively to illustrate great truths in the New Testament. The expression 'the First-born' is used several times in the New Testament. It is essential, if we are to escape denominational confusion, that we realise the expression is used in several different aspects with regard to Jesus.

In Matt. 1:25, Luke 2:7 and Heb. 1:6, we have reference to the physical birth of Jesus. The Gospel writers telling of the first-born of the woman and in the case of Luke, showing her fulfilment of the Jewish law in this matter. If we read carefully Matt. 1:19 and Luke 1:34-35, we can understand the Word telling us quite distinctly that Mary's conception was due to the intervention of the Holy Spirit. We are left in no doubt that God was the Father — the begetter, just as Mary was the Mother, the conceiver. With this understanding then, we can readily accept Jesus as God's first-born Son. Other passages bear this out: John 3:16 speaks of God giving His 'Only Begotten Son'. If anything is the only then it must of absolute necessity be also the first. Just so, it is also the last, here will be readily seen the thought of Jesus as the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last.

The first of the spiritual aspects of the phrase is found in Rom. 8:29 and Heb. 12:23. (The Greek in the Heb. ref. is actually plural). Those who are born again, are, by their re-birth, fashioned like unto Jesus. Freed from sin and animated by the Holy Spirit. Thus there is a great family of brothers among whom Jesus is the First-born — The Principal One. This is also borne out in the name 'Christian' — Christ-follower. All follow the Christ by word and action and, in that all follow, none precede, so all must be antecedents and so Jesus is first in all things. The church also is comprised of 'First-borns'. Turning to Col. 1:18 we read "The First-born from the dead." Again Paul is speaking of Jesus in relationship to the Church. Jesus is the Head - the Principal — the Director of the Church (because it is absolutely dependent on Him for its coming into being and for its perpetual existence). He was its origin as He was the first to be brought forth (born) from the dead. This cannot be understood if viewed only from the physical aspect. The whole matter is discovered when Jesus' resurrection is seen to be unique. He was the first to rise from the dead never to die again. Lazarus, Jairus' daughter, the son of the widow of Nain, all rose from the dead — physically — and all have died again — physically. Jesus rose from the dead — physically and was received up into heaven where His mortal form was transformed into immortal. The saints also, who have become united with Jesus in His death, by baptism, have risen to life which is spiritually unending. Our mortal passes away but our soul is promised a new body like unto Jesus' glorified body, in which to continue eternally.

There is yet one more reference which must be considered. Col. 1:15. "The First-born of all creation". This is the phrase used by the Devil now-a-days to teach that Jesus is not equal with the Father but only a created being. If we study John's Gospel chapter 1 verse 1-3 & 14. John puts the position very clearly. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us". Here we have the incarnation of the Word, that Word which created all material things must of necessity have pre-existed when all things were created by Him. He did not have a material form but God, who sees and knows all things before they occur, often uses expressions in the past tense to foretell that which will come to pass. See how through Isaiah God said, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter". Isaiah lived several hundreds of years before Jesus went to Calvary. The original Greek of Col. 1:15 bears the interpretation, 'born-before all creation', and is equal in relation to time as Rev. 13:8; 1 Peter 1:19-20. Jesus was not slain until thousands of years AFTER the beginning of the world, but in God's perfect knowledge His death was an established fact at the moment when all things were created. Just-so the physical birth of His Son was perfectly accomplished at the time of creation, although it did not occur in man's limited field of knowledge, until more than four thousand years had elapsed.

Thus Jesus is God's first-born and only begotten Son. The first-born of God and the then 'virgin' Mary. He is spiritually the first-born of all God's spiritual children, being the first to rise from the dead never to die again, and the One known by God from before the beginning of Creation, who should be His incarnate presence upon the earth. PAUL JONES



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"ABORTIONS are taking place in large numbers these days. What views on the subject ought we to have in view of the fact that the scriptures say nothing whatsoever about it?"

THIS is a very important question and no doubt many christians will already have made up their minds as to the answer. It is always best, however, to be able to give an answer to explain why we take certain viewpoints, and whatever answer I am able to give will be based on the reasoning which we can bring to bear upon the question; in this context I hope to be able to help both the questioner and any other christian who may be troubled by this problem.

I agree that the Bible says nothing about abortion directly, but there are certain principles associated with the subject and these we should examine quite critically. It seems to me that the best way to sharpen our views on the problem is to deal with it by employing the question and answer technique, and this is what I shall do.

What is Abortion?

According to the Oxford Dictionary, to abort means to miscarry, to have premature delivery, to arrest development. Everyone will appreciate, of course, that we are relating abortion to the normal process of child-bearing in women.

Furthermore, when we think about abortion we are thinking about an act which is carried out by someone on some member of the female sex. The person who carries it out may be a qualified medical practitioner; on the other hand, it may be someone who is totally unqualified. The former operates under recognised and controlled medical practice; the latter operates outside the scope of recognised medical practice.

Why are abortions done?

I think it is true to say that in most cases abortions are carried out to prevent the birth of unwanted children. There are cases, of course, when to allow a pregnancy to continue would endanger the mother's life; in such cases it may be advisable to save the mother's life rather than put the lives of both mother and child at risk.

To put it bluntly, however, the man and woman freely engage in satisfying their own sexual pleasure, and if a pregnancy ensues then they still pursue their own selfish ends, and the life which they have engendered in the womb can, by mutual consent, be terminated.

Now to the christian this is a totally unacceptable situation. Even if the christian girl is unwise enough to become pregnant outside of marriage, I believe that there should be no abortion. It is easy to use the escape route, but the question which should be asked of oneself is, "I have conceived a child; am I now going to kill it?"

Is abortion killing?

The question we are really asking is this. 'Is that life which is in the womb really a person or not in the early stages of its development?' I do not have any specific medical knowledge beyond what I have read but I understand that there is a development of external form in the

womb from what is known as the somite embryo to the fetal stage of the child; this development evidently takes place from about 30 days to the 8/9th week. It is a well known fact that most miscarriages occur during the first three months of pregnancy. It is rather significant, I think, that when a mother suffers a miscarriage she does not say, 'I have lost my embryo or foetus', but she says, 'I have lost my child'. Under normal circumstances and when the development cycle was complete she would, in fact, give birth to a child.

Now then, what does a person do who carries out an abortion? That person induces a miscarriage and arrests the development of a child. I know what my reaction to that is, and I am quite sure that the reactions of other christians will be the same. But the abortionist will say, "How can you destroy something that doesn't exist". Well, it may be that a foetus does not have a separate existence, but who would deny that it exists?

The Christian view

There is only one place in the New Testament where abortion is indirectly referred to. In 1 Cor. 15:8 we read, "And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time". The Greek word EKTROMA denotes an abortion, an untimely birth; it is from EKTITROSKO, to miscarry. The phrase "one born out of due time" means that in point of time he was inferior to the rest of the Apostles, as an immature birth comes short of a mature one (W.E. Vine).

The abortionist of today is not thinking in terms of an immature birth; he is thinking in terms of a final and conclusive death. The idea, that abortion is all above board and does not contravene any of the laws of God or society he is selling to a public who in the main want to believe it. The christian, I believe, should be uninfluenced by such arguments. Abortion offends the moral and social conscience of society; to the christian it offends the law of God, and the christian's attitude towards it should be one of complete non-participation unless it is absolutely necessary for urgent medical reasons.

(Questions please to Brother Alf Marsden, 377 Billinge Road, Highfield, Wigan Lancs.)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

FEBRUARY 1977

6—Joshua 3	Matthew 14:22-36
13—Isaiah 29:9-24	Matthew 15:1-20
20—1 Kings 17:8-24	Matthew 15:21-39
27: Deuteronomy 18:9-22	Matthew 16:1-20

RESPONSES TO JESUS

1 The five thousand men:

"This is that prophet" John 6:1-14.

The certainty of divine power and possible fulfilment of worldly ambitions and hopes, made them determined to make Jesus their king, to lead them to death or victory. Violence is in view, and this is totally out of harmony with the divine will. How Jesus managed to deter them we are not told. It must have been a trial of personal strength of character — or did He pass through the midst of them as on another occasion (Luke 4:30)? He had first 'constrained' (Forced, pressurised) His disciples to get away from the crowds, and leave Him alone to deal with them. Then He

went alone up the hillside to commune with His father. What superhuman selflessness was required to face the road of humble submission, to humiliation, mockery, degradation, instead of leading legions of frantically loyal men in a war against oppression. The glory of a cross of deepest shame was chosen, rather than the glory of politico-military victory over men. Those whom men hail as great have risen over the dead bodies of their dupes. Those who chose the way of suffering, ignominy and shame, have the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

2 Peter on the water.

"Bid me come unto Thee" Mathew 14:28.

How the disciples felt about their dismissal, we do not know. Down from the hill of communion with God, Jesus descended on to the stormy waters of Galilee, to give comfort and help to those humble men who were learning His way of life. Struggling manfully against wind and weather in obedience to Him. He comes to them with His message "it is I, be not afraid" (14:27). Then, to the future leader of the apostolic band "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt"? (14:31) Safe only in His grasp, upheld by His person, safe

with Him in the boat, all is well! "Without me, ye can do nothing" as is true today.

3 The crew.

"Thou art the Son of God" 14:35.

Presumably all the crew were disciples of Jesus, not necessarily apostles. The simple fact of Jesus's power over the elements, made them offer worship (homage, adoration, praise, reverence). They got immediate relief. They gave immediate praise—"revealed to babes"(11-25)

4 The Caananite woman.

"Thou Son of David" 15:22.

Jesus was seeking quiet but He could not be hid. How did this woman know? Was it His personal appearance? Was it the groups of disciples with Him? She addressed Him by the messianic title "Son of David". Heathen neighbours knew a Son of David was promised. She was sure of Him and His compassion because she had heard of Him from others. He certainly imposed a test of faith, and her persistence was allowed by Him but not by His disciples. His commendation must have rejoiced her heart. Dogs are the scavengers of the east, but the word she used, indicates house dogs.

5 Great multitudes

"Glorified the God of Israel" (15:31)

In the northern area of Galilee, we assume drawn by the rumour of Jesus's presence, crowds recognised the Great Healer, and humbly brought their sick to His feet. The resulting wholesale miracles made them recognise Jesus as representing God. We suspect that it was a mixed crowd of Jews and heathen in that district, hence the term "God of Israel". No other nation had such a God.

6 The Apostles

'The Christ, the Son of the Living God' 16:16

Now it is time for the apostles to recognise their teacher as divine. So Jesus takes them aside in quiet, which they did not experience with Him often at this time. We note the approach "whom do men say that I am?" to fix their minds on His position in religious matters. John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, one of the prophets. How does Jesus compare with these? These guesses could not satisfy men who had complained with Him so long, and Peter answers for them all. We are sure "the rock" named by Jesus, is His position, not Peter's, yet Peter has the honour and commission to open the door to the kingdom of heaven which must mean in this connection,

the Church, Apostolic authority controls the church, by divine, not human appointment, for this is not an appointment for personal absolution, but one for organisation of the community. What they ordained is heaven approved

7 The religious authorities

"Obey the traditions and prove your messiahship" 15:1 and 16:1.

While Jesus was exercising His miraculous powers, teaching the common people in full measure, His work and character were under careful and critical consideration at headquarters in Jerusalem. Even now, while the most outstanding works of healing are in process in Gennesaret (14:34-36), a deputation comes from Jerusalem to demand obedience to the traditions, supposedly approved by Moses. Jesus adopted the principle here that the best defence is attack, and chooses a weak point in the traditions - a point used probably by the very critics He is facing, as an excuse for avoiding an obligation to parents. They used the tradition to escape obedience to Moses. Jesus takes the opportunity to push home the lesson that the washings imposed by traditions are powerless against real evil. Cleanliness may be next to Godliness, but is not a substitute for it. Cleanliness of mind is what Jesus wants, and how important is also the expression of it. Jesus calls the multitude to hear these truths and warns against their established leaders (15:10-14). In a sense the gloves are off, and this may account for His going to the borders of Tyre and Sidon well away from Jerusalem for a time (15:21).

With regard to the demand for signs, we are reminded of the reply to John the Baptist - "Go and tell John" Matt. 11:2-6. If the signs Jesus wrought were not convincing. No other would be given, except the final one the resurrection.

The leaven of the religious leaders was their hypocrisy in appearing to be God's representatives, but not practising His law. How often have the supposed leaders of religious bodies been false to the truths for which they nominally stand. Their positions can be a mere show. Every one of us wants to appear his best. Beware, lest it is only an appearance.

R. B. SCOTT

THANKS

West Hallam, Derby: June and I would like to express our heartfelt thanks to all the brethren who have remembered us in their prayers during our time of need: also for the letters and cards sent to us. Praise be to Jesus for His healing power which has been bestowed upon us. As we read in James 5:26 "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed, the effectual prayer of a righteous men availeth much". Once again thank you all very much. Gary and June Wheatley.

Brother Alf Marsden wishes to thank all those who visited him recently in hospital. He also wishes to thank all those who sent get-well cards, which he received from all those whom he loves very much in the Lord, and for the prayers on his behalf.

Brother R.B. Scott and sister Scott wish to say how grateful they are for the many letters cards, and other communications they have received expressing concern, love and sympathy in connection with brother Scott's accident. God willing, normal recovery will take a few weeks. meanwhile please continue your prayers and the Lord be praised for mercies already granted.

CHANGE OF SECRETARY

The Secretary of the church meeting at Newtongrange, Midlothian, Scotland, is brother Robert Hunter, 14 McCathie Drive, Newtongrange, Midlothian, EH22 4BW

COSTS

To all those who send insertions for the "S.S." and ask the cost - the answer is 'Nothing'. No charge is made for the having any material or news item printed in the "S.S."

EDITOR

ARE YOU A GIANT OR A GRASSHOPPER?

Numbers 13:33

YOU will remember that Moses was instructed

You can fill in the void in your historical perspective by reading the revised edition of *The Anabaptist Story* by William R. Estep, Professor of Church History at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. The 250-page volume, produced by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., at \$3.95, was scheduled for release on the 450th anniversary of the Anabaptist movement which began on 21 January, 1525, when a dozen or so men had, trudged through the snow to the home of Felix Manz in Zurich.

The *Large Chronicle* of the Hutterian Brethren describes what happened: "After the prayer, George of the House of Jacob stood up and besought Conrad Grebel for God's sake to baptize him with the true Christian Baptism upon his faith and knowledge, And when he knelt down with such a request and desire, Conrad baptized him, since at that time there was no ordained minister to perform such work".

Alas, the children of Israel did not believe the Lord was with them and how sad the result was. - The 10 men who brought back the evil report died, with many others, and the children of Israel were made to wander 40 years in the wilderness, as a punishment, and only two of the original number (Joshua and Caleb) were allowed to see the land flowing with milk and honey. (The New Testament says "They entered not in, because of UNBELIEF").

Joshua and Caleb were men of courage. We are told Caleb "had another spirit with him and WHOLLY FOLLOWED THE LORD" (as did Joshua). What wonderful GIANTS these two men were: they believed God. Let us all strive to WHOLLY FOLLOW THE LORD and become GIANTS in his kingdom.

"BE STRONG AND OF GOOD COURAGE".

Miss PAYNE, Reading

DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER: PAUL JONES 3 St. Laurence Crescent, Slamannan, Falkirk, FK1 3HY, Tel. Slamannan (032 485) 200 to whom change of address should be sent.

EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 88 Davidson Terrace, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland.

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