



The Reflector

"We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" • Acts 4:20

Volume 29 • Number 9

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A WEEKEND OF GOSPEL PREACHING SEPTEMBER 22, 23, 24

MAX SHEARER of Monroe, Louisiana will be our speaker for this series of Gospel Lessons. Brother Shearer is a good student of the Bible with the ability to present lessons effectively. His last series presented here was excellent and we are looking forward to his being here again.

ALL OF OUR NEIGHORS in the Fulton-dale area are especially invited to come and study these lessons with us. Those in attendance may feel free to take notes and ask any questions they might have about any points in the lessons presented.

EVENING LESSONS will be at 7:30 each evening, including Sunday. These services will consist of congregational singing, praying and the lesson for the evening.

SUNDAY MORNING CLASSES for all ages will be at 9:45. Brother Shearer will preach at the 10:45 service on Sunday morning.

NO COLLECTIONS will be taken except the one regularly taken during the 10:45 service on Sunday.

NEED MORE INFORMATION? Call 841-1601 or 841-5293

Fultondale Church Of Christ

2005 Elkwood Drive



Fultondale, AL 35068

"We Cannot Tell"

By Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

Jesus asked the chief priests and elders a seemingly simple question: "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?" That should have been easy for this group of religious sophisticates to answer. However, they found it rather difficult and complicated. Why? No matter how they answered they would be in hot water with someone. To say it was from heaven, would have raised another difficult question: "Why did ye not believe him?" They were not ready to deal with that question. To say it was of men would have gotten them into difficulty with those who believed John to be a prophet. You see, to them, the question was not as cut and dried as it might seem on the surface. So, how could they answer this complex(?) question? "We cannot tell" (KJV) or "We do not know" (NKJV) seemed to present less difficulties for them. (Read Matt. 21:23-27).

Isn't it amazing how hard some apparently simple questions can become when answering them puts us into a position, real or imagined, that we are not willing to accept? Isn't it also remarkable how clear the answer to certain questions used to be—until we had to apply the answer under circumstances that would cause us problems? The once simple question now becomes so complex that the only sensible answer to us now is: "We cannot tell". Or, one almost as good: "Good, honorable, and knowledgeable brethren have differed over that for years".

So, as conditions in society and the church make it more difficult to take a firm stand on religious and moral issues without offending

a host of people, the list of items relegated to the "we cannot tell" file becomes longer and longer—until, with a great many, about the only thing that we can tell for sure is that we cannot be sure about anything.

Only a pompous fool would claim to have all the answers to all questions among brethren. I often say that I don't even know all the questions to say nothing of the answers. There are times when the only honest thing to say is: "I just 'cannot tell' what the answer is." Too, where honorable and knowledgeable brethren have differed for years, we should be extra careful in our study; and try not to be overly dogmatic in our conclusions. However, it seems to me that we are becoming too inclined to put things into the "we cannot tell" category in order to avoid the discomfort that taking a firm stand often brings. If we can convince ourselves that a question is beyond answering, then it relieves us of having to suffer the consequences of taking a stand.

Now, really brethren, can you name any spiritual subject over which good, pious, and scholarly men have not differed? Or any

questions that good men have not concluded that "we cannot tell"? Would it be baptism? Faith? The church? Institutionalism? Morality? Divorce? Fellowship? You name it. Should we dismiss all questions concerning these matters with, "we cannot tell". Is it not possible that some of those good men who differed could have been influenced more by difficulties that applying truth would bring than by textual exegesis or logical reasoning from the scriptures?

Brethren, today, as it has always been, have to wrestle with controversial questions that affect the nature, activities, and responsibilities of congregations—questions about divorce-remarriage, fellowship, singing (choral, solos, or congregational), etc. Because of the serious effect the answers to such questions have upon the churches, they must be studied and ultimately a stand taken on them. Before we assign any of them to the "we cannot tell" bin, let us be sure that such is not just a convenient device to avoid having to live with the repercussions of taking a firm stand. *It is just too easy to say, "we cannot tell".* □

Our Regular Services

Sundays:

Bible Classes 9:45 A.M.

Worship 10:45 A.M.

Worship 6:00 P.M.

Wednesdays:

Bible Class 10:00 A.M.

Bible Classes 7:30 P.M.

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PART TWO

Abortion On Demand— Another Name For Murder!

by Ron Halbrook

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The reader may want go back and refer to the first part of this article in last month's paper to help establish continuity of thought, we had to divide it somewhat arbitrarily because the original article, which appeared in the GUARDIAN OF TRUTH, September 4, 1986, would not fit into one issue of this paper.)

The law went even further. If the mother or the baby was seriously hurt, the offender was subject to the law of retaliation (also called *lex talionis* or *jus talionis*). This law controlled and inhibited the passions of offended parties and of their relatives. The penalty inflicted upon the guilty party could not exceed the wrong suffered by his victim. Hebrew experts and famed Bible commentators C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch point out that the penalties in Exodus 21 :22-25, including the *lex talionis*, protect both the mother and her child:

If men strove and thrust against a woman with child, who had come near or between them for the purpose of making peace, so that her children come out (come into the world), and no injury was doing either to the woman or the child that was born, a pecuniary compensation was to be paid A fine is imposed, because even if no injury had been done to the woman and the fruit of her womb, such a blow might have endangered life. . . . "But if injury occur (to the mother or the child), thou shalt give soul for soul, eye for eye . . . wound for wound": thus perfect retribution was to be made (*The Pentateuch*, II:134-35).

We should note that even if Exodus 21 required a more severe penalty for harming a mother than a prenatal child, this would not prove the child less than human. Different penalties for different people in various cases are not based on the premise that some offended persons are human, some sub-human, and some not human at all! Is the punishment more severe for betraying military than

door to further abuse of the slave, Freeing the slave punished the master without jeopardizing the slave's safety. *The slave is treated as human though the penalties differ.* Might not a wife who served the family be more highly valued in the home than an unborn infant whose potential is undeveloped? The penalty of the law for harming one of them could take that fact into account without denying

"What is the solution to abortion on demand? It ought to be against the law of the land because God ordained civil government to protect innocent life (Rom. 13:1-7). When a nation sheds innocent blood it causes the inner decay which leads to its ultimate downfall. 'Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people' (Prov. 14:34)."

business secrets because soldiers are fully human and other people are not? Why do the penalties differ for going to sleep on a factory job and on sentry duty in the army during a war?

Legal penalties take into account social, economic, and other implications. The loss of a family member is always treated more sternly than the loss of a slave. In Exodus 21 :26-27, if a master put out his servant's eye, the servant was freed rather than the master's eye taken. Is this just? Does God not consider the slave human since an eye was not taken for an eye? Taking the master's eye would only open the

the full humanity of either!

Exodus 21 offers no comfort to abortion on demand. Abortion is still just another name for murder.

Pro-abortionists may offer this argument, "The Bible does not say, 'Thou shalt not perform an abortion.'" No, and it does not say, "Thou shalt not poison babies or cut up their defenseless bodies after they are born", Abortion is a method of murder and the Bible does not list every method. But the Bible covers them all, including abortion, when it forbids murder (Rom. 13:9-10).

"What about a medical abor-

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Abortion

Continued.

tion?" someone will ask, Statistics show that about 1 percent of the abortions are performed because of the mother's health problems, An uncle of mine who has been a doctor for many years said that he personally has never encountered a case of medical abortion nor known another doctor who has. It is rare indeed! A true medical abortion is comparable to rescuing one person from a burning house even when you cannot rescue another. This is mercy not murder and bears no relation to abortion on demand.

What is The Solution?

What is the solution to abortion on demand? It ought to be against the law of the land because God ordained civil government *to protect innocent life* (Rom. 13:1-7). When a nation sheds innocent blood it causes the inner decay which leads to its ultimate downfall. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34). God rules over the nations of earth. He destroys and replaces them when they harden themselves beyond the hope of correction. We should pray for our leaders and encourage them to do what is just

and right (1 Tim. 2:1-4).

But civil law cannot provide the final solution to abortion on demand. *We must abhor it as a sin under divine law whether or not it is a crime under human law.* Civil law may permit many things which are sinful before God -- drunkenness, gambling, adultery, homosexuality, etc. "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29) When we disobey God, the gospel convicts us of sin and points us to Christ for the forgiveness of all sin!

Respect for God and the humility to accept from Him the pardon of our sins is the only true solution to the sin of abortion on demand. The sin frequently begins with fornication -- sexual relations outside the sacred bonds of marriage (Heb. 13:4). It is no solution for the schools and "Planned Parenthood" clinics to pass out information on sex and contraceptives *without reference to moral values.* That encourages moral decay. It is like expecting schools and the National Rifle Association to put guns into people's hands "without reference to moral values" -- without teaching that there is a "right" and "wrong" way to use guns *because of the moral value of human life.*

Abortion is not the answer to the sin of fornication, To murder someone (a defenseless infant) to escape the difficulties which follow our sin is just to compound sins and difficulties. It is like a bank robber shooting his unarmed witnesses to escape being identified!

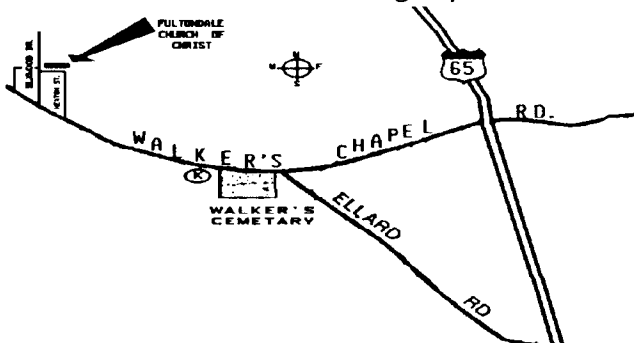
Jesus reaches out in love to all of us who have sinned—even to those who have committed fornication and murder by abortion -- and says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). By faith in Him, we repent of our sins, confess Him as the Son of God, and receive His cleansing blood in the waters of baptism (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-4). This brings us into God's spiritual family. If we stumble and sin again, we are to repent and pray for pardon (Acts 8:22). God will patiently help us to "walk in the light" of His law and His love as we turn our backs on sin (1 Jn. 1:6-10). But will God forgive a sin so serious as murder? Yes, if we turn from sin, He will "cleanse us from all unrighteousness!" (1 Jn. 1:9). □



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