

Volume 31
March 1991
NUMBER 3

Published monthly by
**Fultondale Church of
Christ Meeting at**
2005 Elkwood Drive,
Fultondale, AL 35068

Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.,
Editor

Address

**POSTMASTER AND
READERS :** Send all
correspondence and
forms to **The Reflector,**
3004 Brakefield Drive,
Fultondale, AL 35068

Services

Sundays:
Classes 9:45 a.m.
Worship 10:45 a.m.
Worship 6:00 p.m.
Wednesdays:
Class 10:00 a.m.
Classes 7:30 p.m.

Meeting

Lynn Headrick
May 5-10, 1991

USPS 606-140
Second Class Postage Paid
At Fultondale, AL 35068

FROM FULTONDALE CHURCH OF CHRIST...

The Reflector

Just Do It

By EDWARD O. BRAGWELL, SR.

GENUINE Christianity is not so much subscribing to a philosophy as it is submitting to authority — specifically, the authority of Jesus Christ. Once convinced by the evidence that Jesus is the Christ, that He has all authority in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18), and that His authority is expressed in the New Testament (cf. I Cor. 14:37; Eph. 3:1-5), there only remains one thing to do — submit to that authority. It is not really a question of whether or not it appeals to us philosophically. It is a question of whether or not it is the Lord's will. He has all authority. If He says do it—just do it. If He says not to do it—just don't do it. If it is within the scope of His authority feel good about doing it, if it is not, then leave it alone. That may seem a bit simplistic to those enamored with the wisdom of this world—but that is basically the way it is.

Once we have become disciples of Christ by submitting to His authority, are baptized by that authority and are committed to “observe all things (He) has commanded (us)” (Matt. 28:18-20), we need nothing more than His word to motivate us. If He says do it — we just do it. If He says do not do it — we just don't do it.

We were baptized for that very reason — He said do it. We may not understand all about how being baptized could have anything to do with the remission of our sins or our salvation. We may never be able to understand nor explain the reason philosophically or psychologically. We do understand that He has all authority and that He said do it “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38) and that he who does it will be saved (Mk. 16:16). That is

all we needed, so we just did it. Oh yes, we were motivated because we love Him, because He first loved us — and because we love Him we unquestionably submitted to His authority.

Such simplistic thinking does not really appeal to the intellectuals(?) among us. To these people, answers to personal spiritual and moral problems are so complex that they can only be solved by extensive procedures that involve probing into the depths of one's personality to see what makes him tick. So, many brethren are demanding that local preachers be more than preachers — they must be professionally trained in psychology and human behavior so that they can understand, relate and properly counsel people with such complex problems. Being able to speak by the authority of Christ, expecting Christians to simply submit to that authority is no longer enough for many brethren.

The commands of the Lord are not that hard to understand nor to do for those who have unconditionally surrendered themselves to the will of God. Yet, we often try to make things as complicated as possible.

For example, reams have been written and volumes spoken about the many problems associated with human sexual behavior — premarital sex, sexually transmitted diseases, marital infidelity, sexual problems within marriage, sexual perversion, etc.

A preacher, Bible teacher, or parent is not considered to be with it any more unless he is up to date on the published data relating to the solutions suggested by the social experts. Without such information, he or she is not considered to be in any position to help other Christians

with such problems because they do not really know “where they are coming from.” But, I ask, is it all that necessary to have such extensive “insight” into such problems in order to help one who really wants to do the will of God? Just a few passages from the New Testament ought to do the trick:

“Flee fornication (sexual immorality —NKJ)” (1 Cor. 6:18) and “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4) will take care of those sexual problems out side of marriage for those who are willing to submit to the Lord’s authority.

“The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife’s body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband’s body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control” (1 Cor. 7:3-5 NIV) ought to solve most problems of sex within marriage for those who really respect what the Bible says.

Romans 1:18-32 and 1 Cor. 6:9

ought to be enough for sexual perversion.

Oh, I know that such an approach is too simplistic to suit some among us, but it should be enough for those who are committed to obeying the authority of Christ. If the one that comes to us with a problem in this area is not committed to such obedience maybe we need to back up and take it from the beginning — convert him or her to Christ so that such passages will be enough to get them to do what is right.

If the problem is marriage and/or divorce; Matt. 19:9, Matt. 5:32, Eph. 5:22-33, Tit. 2:3-5, 1 Pet. 3:1-7; ought to go a long way in solving the problem for those who really want to do the will of Christ.

If one has a “drinking problem”; Gal 5:21, Eph 5:18; should help a great deal — if one is committed to obeying the authority of Christ. Yes, I know that such a problem can progress until it becomes a physical and/or psychological problem — an addiction. Then, such a one needs a doctor. I can help him understand the moral and spiritual aspects of his problem by citing the Scriptures and urge him to respect the authority of Christ and leave the physical problems that may be associated with it to doctors trained

in that field

I once was trying to help some folks put out a house fire. A friend and I kept spraying the house with garden hoses, but the fire kept coming and even spreading. The volunteer fire department got there with their equipment and we even used their bigger and more powerful hoses — the fire kept burning. Another, more experienced volunteer arrived on the scene and told us that we were basically wasting our time and energy because we had not looked for the source of the fire — we were doing little more than spraying the flames. The source of the fire was a faulty water heater in a closet and once we got into the closet and put out the source of the fire the rest of the problem was solved in short order.

Brethren, we may be wasting a lot of our time and energy trying to analyze, understand and treat mere symptoms (spraying the flames) of the real problem — a lack of commitment to the authority of Christ. Maybe our “counselling” should basically consist of finding out if the person is committed to obeying the authority of Christ. If he is, tell him: if the Lord says do it, then do it; if the Lord says not do it, don’t do it. If the Lord allows it, then allow it; if He doesn’t allow it, then don’t allow it.

IF YOU’VE NEVER BEEN CALLED A FANATIC

By BILL HALL

Webster defines the word “fanatic”: “A person affected by excessive enthusiasm.” Its definition indicates that it is a relative term, dependent upon one’s judgment as to what is a *proper* degree of enthusiasm in contrast with what is *excessive* enthusiasm. Anyone who has any knowledge at all of the world and its standards knows that to “seek first” the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and to “love the Lord with all one’s heart, soul, and mind,” and to “present one’s body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” is to be in the eyes

of the world a fanatic. But before becoming too concerned, one should realize that every Bible character whom he admires — Paul, Peter, Eunice, Hannah, Jesus — would be looked upon by the world as a fanatic were he living today. While on the other hand, the world would smile approvingly on those of whom the Lord said, “So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”

If you’ve never been called a fanatic, you might need to reconsider your spiritual condition before God!

From The N.O.W. Version: “Women, Assert Yourselves!”



By EDWARD O. BRAGWELL, SR.

AN old uninspired, but potent, proverb says, “*The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.*” And another, “*Behind every great man there is a good woman.*”

There is no beauty greater than that of a woman who finds the quiet role into which God placed her fulfilling. It is a role for which she is best suited. Peter wrote about a woman’s “ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.” (1 Pet 3:4). She may not be worth too much in the sight of the N.O.W. (*National Organization for Women*) woman, but she is not too concerned about that — it is her worth in God’s sight that counts. The N.O.W. woman values assertiveness and outspokenness over quietness and meekness. She yells, “Women, assert yourselves!”, while God says “women, be quiet” — paraphrasing, of course. Women professing godliness should not drink into the bold spirit of many modern women influenced by the N.O.W. philosophy.

While in Christ “there is neither male nor female” as it pertains to salvation and spiritual blessings (Gal. 3:28), it is obvious from other scriptures that their functional spheres are not the same. A woman’s role is quieter, far less public, less authoritative, more subdued, and more in the background than that of men. “Quiet” is from *besuchio*, meaning “properly, keeping one’s seat (sedentary), i.e. (by implication) still (undisturbed, undisturbing)” (Strong); “in 1 Pet. 3:4, where it is associated with “meek,” and is to characterize the spirit or disposition.” (Vine).

This “ornament of a meek and quiet spirit” is the same ornament worn by godly women of old who trusted in God, being in subjection to their husbands — like Sarah. (1 Pet. 3:5,6). Of Sarah’s subjection, Guy Woods aptly comments: “Peter alludes

in his reference to Sarah the faithful wife of the patriarch Abraham. In referring to him as ‘lord’ (a term which, as here used, is a title of honor addressed to one regarded as superior), Sarah revealed an attitude of *habitual and continuous subordination*. (Italics mine, eob). Because she recognized the supremacy of her husband and gladly assumed her proper sphere in the home, she serves as an example for Christian wives today. ‘Whose children ye now are’ is, literally, ‘whose daughters *you became*’ (*bes egnethete tekna*), i.e., by following the pattern of Sarah.” (*A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles*, Volume VII, Peter, John and Jude, p. 91).

God’s order is clearly stated by Paul: “...the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.” (1 Cor. 11:3). This verse is not just talking about the order of authority in the marriage relationship. That is clearly and abundantly taught elsewhere (Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18; 1 Pet. 3:1-6). Paul is speaking of the headship of man in general over woman in general.

In the public assembly at Corinth, women were not permitted the same speaking privileges as men. (1 Cor. 14:34,35). In 1 Timothy 2:8-15, the more public authoritative place of a man is contrasted with the more private, modest, and subordinate position of a woman. The man [Greek-*aner* (male)] is permitted to “pray *everywhere*.” Of this Albert Barnes comments:

“Not merely in the temple, or in other sacred places. The Jews supposed that there was special efficacy in prayers offered at the temple in Jerusalem; the heathen also had the same view in regard to their temples—for both seemed to suppose that they came *nearer* to God by approaching his sacred abode.

Christianity teaches that God may be worshipped in any place, and that we are at all times equally near him... **The direction here given that men should pray, in contradistinction from the duties of women, specified in the next verse, may be intended to imply that men should conduct the exercise of public worship. The duties of women pertain to a different sphere; comp. ver. 11,12.**” (Bold emphasis mine, eob).

The woman is to be characterized by shamefacedness (KJV), shamefastness (ASV) or propriety (NKJ) rather than forwardness or boldness (v.9). These are translations of *aidos* which Strong defines “... (through the idea of downcast eyes); bashfulness, i.e. (towards men), modesty or (towards God) awe.”

A woman is not allowed to teach nor “have authority” (NKJ) over a man. (v. 12). Two reasons are given for this: 1) the man was created before the woman and 2) the woman transgressed first (v. 14). This is one reason a woman can not be a preacher or evangelist. Evangelists are commanded to “speak...exhort, and rebuke with *all* authority” (*epitage*) (Tit. 2:15), while women are commanded to learn “with all subjection” (v. 12) or under authority (*bupotage*).

Though her realm may not be as visible or public or forward as man’s, she has an important role. Verse 15 says, “she will be saved in childbearing.” The exact meaning of this expression has puzzled Bible students for generations. I am sure that I do not know all that is meant by it. But, given the context, it seems to me that David Lipscomb’s comments likely expresses the idea:

“Childbearing here embraces

not only the act of childbearing, but the life of caring for and training children that the bringing of them into the world necessitates. The *domestic life* of child rearing is placed in contrast with the *forward public life* in which she had blundered, and she is told that in this quiet life women shall be saved." (Italics mine, eob).

As women in our society demand and receive more "rights", I fear that Christian women are going to become increasingly restless and feel "unfulfilled" in their "traditional" roles. Already I am seeing more and more "seminars" springing up, some sponsored by churches and some not, with women as speakers, thus providing them with a more public forum to address religious and moral subjects. Teaching other women and/or children in a more subdued and quiet setting (as has been done in homes

and in our congregational Bible classes for years) no longer seems to fulfill their desires to work in the kingdom of God. Working in the background and quietly helping men who publicly teach and preach the word is no longer enough. These women must have some kind of platform, similar or equal to that of men, in order to exercise their public speaking abilities on religious topics in a more open, bold, and public manner. In most cases, the audiences (for now) are made up of women—but we wonder how long it will be before men will be allowed to sit in on these speeches. We just believe that it is all a step in the wrong direction and away from the meek and quiet spirit becoming to and required of women professing godliness.

I also hear, from time to time, of brethren that are not only permitting, but urging, women to become a part of church business meetings. The women are given the same "say" in the decisions made in these meetings

as the men. If this is not a violation of God's order as expressed in 1 Cor. 11:3 and elsewhere—I would like to know what it would take to violate it. In this brethren may be opening a door that no man can shut as women in the church partake more and more of the spirit of the nations around about them.

We must not allow the world to set the standard for our spirit and conduct. The worldly woman may not be content to be subservient to man and to quietly go about her business, but godly women should be happy to do so because of their love for Christ and respect for His word. (cf. 1 Pet. 4:6).

Sisters in Christ, you have a wonderful, beautiful and fulfilling work to do in quietly teaching and serving others (your family and otherwise as you have opportunity) without having to imitate the N.O.W. woman who must assert herself with disdain for the idea of being subservient to man in any way. Think about it.

Don't Let The Sheaves Rot In The Barn

By EDWARD O. BRAGWELL, SR.

DURING the recent Florida College lectures, there were two hot topics of discussion during the afternoon open forum sessions: 1) the marriage-divorce-remarriage issue with its fellowship ramifications and 2) the nature of Jesus while on earth. Both of these issues have received a good bit of attention recently in papers published by brethren. These are vital issues that need to be studied and discussed with the view of weeding out error and thus having a purifying effect upon brethren.

I remember well the discussions of other issues in such forums at other college lectureships in years gone by. While I was a student at Freed-Hardeman College in the early-mid 50's the institutional issue with its many ramifications was the hot topic. I am still grateful for those open (well, almost open) forum sessions that

helped me to sort things out in my mind on that issue.

During the recent sessions at FC, as it was in the 50's at FHC, a few would rise up during the discussion and point out that the "fields are white unto harvest" and make a passionate and somewhat rebuking plea for us to "quit fussing among ourselves" and get on with the harvest of lost souls. They would then either say or imply that all sides in these discussions ought to just drop these matters and get on with the more important task (in their minds) of evangelizing the world, taking advantage of new doors that were opening. In the 50's, the doors that were open in Europe after WW II was a focal point. At FC, this year, many were referring to the doors being opened in eastern Europe.

Even as a young student in the 50's, and now not so young, it occurred to me as I listened to these

pleas, which I believe were sincere and well-intentioned; that while we are singing "bringing in the sheaves" that we do not want to let the sheaves already in the barn rot. Yes, we must take advantage of all doors that are open to evangelism — at home or abroad. We want to support those who are willing to give the bulk of their attention to this phase of the work. But, at the same time, we must vigilantly pursue truth on issues that threaten, not only the peace, but the purity of the church. While we want to encourage all who can go and send all who will go into those fields that are especially "white unto harvest", we need to remember that we must at the same time do all we can to keep the sheaves that are already harvested, and are being harvested, from rotting in the barn.