

CHRISTIANITY: THEN AND NOW

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“GC BREWER, NOBLE ANCESTOR OF FAITHFUL CHRISTIANS”

Happy is the man who can call a godly man his near kinsman, whose ancestors were great and noble preachers of God’s Word. That said, God offers no special dispensations or indulgences to the sons, grandsons and nephews of his great servants. Frequently the descendants of godly servants do not follow in the righteous paths of their forefathers. Absalom and Adonijah were no credit to King David, nor was Rehoboam to Solomon. Good king Hezekiah was followed by a worthless son, Manasseh, who undid much of the good his father had accomplished. The same was true of Jehoiakim son of righteous Josiah.

In reading the books and articles published by the spokesmen for the change movement, that is wreaking havoc among our brotherhood. I am impressed by how many of the writers seek to bolster their weak resumes by claiming kindred with godly preachers of days past. Me thinks they hope such will give them some credibility or perhaps deceive some soul that is blinded to the danger by the glitter of an illustrious name.

A name I have frequently encountered is that of the late and beloved G. C. Brewer. Being well familiar with Bro. Brewer and possessing most of his books, I decided to reread some of the powerful words from his pen. From his **Autobiography**, his books, **Contending for the Faith, A Medley of the Music Question, As Touching Those Who Were Once Enlightened, Is The Church of Christ a Denomination?, The Model Church**, his **Brewer’s Sermons**, and his paper, **Voice of Freedom**, I have drawn the following conclusions.

- Bro. Brewer was a simple Bible Christian, a member of the church of Christ just as the first Christians were.
- He loved the church of which he was a part and devoted himself to building her up. He

was never known to engage in preaching, writing or conduct which denigrated, shamed or damaged her good name and standing in the world.

- He believed that the Bible was absolutely true and dependable and understandable. He defended the teachings of Christ and his church against enemies that rose up against them.
- He believed that the Roman Catholic Church, which arose after the apostolic age, was corrupt and not the church founded by Christ. He openly opposed that institution with all his strength.
- He did not believe that the many different Protestant denominations, the various cults and isms, were Christ’s church or a part thereof. He did not hesitate to engage them with the sword of the Spirit.
- He insisted that the church of Christ was not a denomination; that if it were, it had no right to exist.
- He believed it was right, scriptural and desirable for modern Christians to seek to restore the ancient faith, worship and practice of the apostolic church.
- He was convinced that brethren who created missionary and other societies to do the work of the church and added instrumental music to the worship were wrong and should not be counted faithful brethren.
- When brethren grew tired of being Bible Christians and sought fellowship among denominational groups he considered them apostates, not worthy of our fellowship.

- He believed and preached that baptism by immersion was essential to man's salvation.
- He argued successfully that Christ expects us to commune on the first day of the week, not on Saturday or other week days.
- He was persuaded that in preaching and teaching the gospel one should rely on the sacred Scripture and not on jokes, frivolities and foolishness. To him, preaching was a most serious undertaking.
- Brother Brewer wrote: "It does not cease to astonish us that Christians generally, preachers especially, are now holding views and making arguments that we opposed and refuted when advanced by denominationalists forty, forty and a hundred years ago. Like Paul, we are going to have to declare again the gospel which we preached" (**Autobiography**, p. 133).

G. C. Brewer did indeed leave a worthy legacy that blesses the church to this day. No doubt, many of his posterity are faithful to the Cause he served. However, his descendants who embrace the things that he rejected and oppose that for which he stood can gain no credibility by claiming him as their ancestor. Neither should the church of our day provide them a hearing because they drop his illustrious name. **JHW**

WHO IS TO BLAME?

The First Ave. Church of Christ had existed and flourished for sixty years. Its identity and message had never been in question. It was conservative and thoroughly biblical. It was a church of Christ modeled after the pattern set forth in the New Testament.

Then Bro. I. Wanna Change came into their midst. He introduced new beliefs and practices he had learned in Church Growth Seminars. Some he convinced but others objected. For resisting his proposals, Bro. Change accused them of being divisive.

Russell James III aptly describes the absurdity of this situation: "I have never understood why if two men are standing firm in the same place and one leaves to go somewhere else, that it is the man who remains who is called divisive when he points out the separation, rather than the man who left the original position."

In the years ahead, we will see this scenario played out in hundreds of congregations. When you see those who protest the innovations branded as factious, divisive, legalists or trouble makers,

remember such is ever the tactic of church robbers. Remember that wicked Ahab accused Elijah of being the troubler of Israel when in fact he was the guilty one (I Kings 18:17).

Those brethren who seek to seduce Christians to think of the church as a denomination and seek the fellowship and approval of denominational bodies are troublemakers of Israel. Those who would lead our brethren into unauthorized worship, such as using instrumental music, using women to lead in public worship, taking liberties with the Lord's Supper, are the troublemakers of the church. Those who deny the essentiality of immersion to sinners' salvation, who accept as brothers in Christ those not scripturally baptized, are the troublemakers of God's people. The brother or sister who refuses to surrender his/her Bible based beliefs, or compromise with those who do, is not causing trouble for the church! He or she is being faithful to Christ.

Be not deceived, just as the thief or the liar blames others and excuses himself, so do the change agents who seek to capture the souls of our brethren. **JHW**

HOW DO YOU SEE THE CHURCH?

Observation reveals that not all Christians see the church in the same light. These different points of view affect the way those people act toward the church.

- For some preachers the church is "my place of employment," my source of income. They are not too concerned about what is happening in the church beyond the congregation by which they are employed. They are diligent to build up that congregation, to mend its breaches, to protect it from danger; but they manifest no interest in what is happening the church elsewhere.
- For some folks, the church is "my social center." It fills the same need in their lives as social clubs, lodges and civic clubs do for others. It is the hub of their social life. There their friends congregate. They love their congregation and readily work for its welfare. But they care little for the kingdom of Christ beyond their home church. If other congregations are wrecked and destroyed they are not the least disturbed.
- For some the church consists of those congregations with which they are familiar. They are concerned about churches in their vicinity, or where their extended family

worship, or where a friend or former classmate preaches, or where they may once have preached or worshiped. But their vision and concern ends with those five or ten congregations.

- Some are concerned with the churches in “their circle of influence.” Those who have preached a while gradually build a circle of congregations where they have influence. It may be churches with which they have worked or held meetings; it may be where they are personally acquainted with leadership figures. It may be those whose preachers yield to their suggestions and ideas. Those congregations they are very concerned about, but the welfare of others does not concern them.

God would have us see the church as He does. The church of Christ is the household or family of God (I Tim. 3:15). All Christians, everywhere are the brotherhood of Christ’s disciples (I Pet. 2:17). The church is Christ’s kingdom (Matt. 16:18). It is his spiritual body (Eph. 1:22-23). Perceived this way, the church is precious beyond words. Whether it be a dozen disciples meeting in a mud hut in Africa, a little band meeting in a home in Russia or a great congregation of 3,000 in a costly plant in a great metropolis, each congregation is dear to the Father. They all should be just as dear to us. We should love even those whose faces we have never seen, because they are our kindred in Christ. We should care about their welfare and lend them our assistance when they suffer or are threatened by false teachers. We must never be content to be concerned only with our home congregation or our small circle of friends or relatives. To love such a small portion of the church is like person with five siblings who loves only the one near him.

This lesson is especially timely in the crisis fomented by the promoters of change. While your congregation may not yet be effected by the drummers of error, others are. We must rise to their defense. We must strive to extend protection even to those in distant places because they are God’s beloved children. We must reach out across our nation and even into our mission fields, reminding brethren of the “faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). We must exhort them to stand fast in the ancient faith and not be blown about by these winds of error (Eph. 4:14). Don’t be among those small-minded men who close their eyes to dangers threatening the Lord’s Cause in places beyond their sight. With Paul, every faithful disciple will daily feel “anxiety for all the churches” of Christ wherever they may assemble to serve him

(II Cor. 11:28). JHW

SONGS, CYMBALS AND TAMBORINES

This excellent book is subtitled, "**The Music of Scripture.**" Richard Wolfe, the author, is a graduate of Harding University with a degree in Music Education. He spent 22 years as a missionary in Belgium. Rather than a polemic against instrumental music in worship, the author examines every verse in the Bible mentioning music, whether vocal or instrumental, whether secular or spiritual. I found his analysis extremely interesting and enlightening. His approach refutes some commonly held views about the use of instruments in the worship of the ancient Hebrews.

The author notes, there are very few mentions of musical praise in the Pentateuch. Three are acappella, one includes tambourines and dancing with only women participating and one involved idolatrous worship. From Moses to David the only mention of music for worship is that of Deborah's song where no instruments are mentioned. Thus the early part of the Old Testament is not overflowing with instrumental music in worship.

When David came to power he not only made Jerusalem his capital, but the center of the nation's religion. He moved the tabernacle to Jerusalem and organized an extensive liturgy for the tabernacle worship. Instrumental music was at that time added to the worship of the sanctuary, but it was done by God's direction, not simply by the preference or desire of David (II Chron. 29:25).

Many assume that the Psalms are "full of instrumental music." Wolfe's research shows that only 16 of the 150 psalms mention instruments of music. It is also assumed by some that by definition the Psalms were sung with instruments of music. Wolfe notes that in their synagogues Jews sang the psalms without instrumental accompaniment. Thus the common assumptions are faulty. He concludes his review of music through the time of David, by noting that, "Vocal music existed in its own right. By a five-to-one margin, it is mentioned much more often than instrumental music."

By showing that "Old Testament worship music did not have wholesale use of instruments" he neutralizes the claim that the Old Testament gives a precedent for an extensive use of instruments"

His review of the New Testament text notes, "The silence of Scripture concerning instruments in early Church worship is resounding and repetitive. Since our biblical sources never mention instruments for

worship purposes, if we are paying attention, we begin to understand that they never used them. This impression is definitely confirmed by historians, who invariably agree that early Christian worship...did not include instruments" (p. 136) His conclusion is, "When Christians worship God with a cappella singing, they have absolute certainty that such music has been ordained by God for that purpose" (p. 147).

The rise of numerous voices among us insisting that the use of instruments of music in worship is an acceptable practice, reveals the fact that many of our younger preachers were not properly taught God's truth on this subject. The schools that provided their education obviously failed to do an adequate job.

This book should be assigned reading for all preaching students. It would be helpful for most of the men now filling our pulpits. You may order this book from the **Gospel Advocate, 1006 Elm Hill Pk. Nashville, TN 37210**

GO MAKE DISCIPLES, TEACHING THEM

The ultimate purpose of our teaching is to make disciples for the Lord Jesus (Matt. 20:19-20). Whether you teach the cradle roll or the golden-agers your aim must be to bring them to the Master. For the little ones, you are preparing them for obedience in adolescence, for the seniors it is to win them before their life ends.

Those teachers whose students are already believers, should see their goal to be helping them to be "truly (his) disciples" (John 8:31). A disciple is a student of, a follower of Jesus. How tragic that this sacred term has been tarnished by zealots who have created their own version of authoritarian Christianity and labeled it "a discipling ministry."

Like Jesus, a faithful teacher will **challenge his students to be loyal disciples of Jesus**. He will teach them to deny themselves, take up their crosses and follow the Master (Matt. 16:24). They will be taught to "observe all things whatsoever he commanded" (Matt. 28:20). They will learn that if they are ashamed of Christ and his words, He will be ashamed of them in judgment (Lk. 9:23-26). They will be made to understand that to be a disciple means to be a fisher of men (Matt. 4:19).

A good teacher will **involve his students in the work of the Lord**. Jesus said to his disciples. "We must work the work of him that sent me..." (John 9:4). Teaching is not completed until it results in doing. Take your class to visit a nursing home, or those who are homebound. Get them together and make gifts for the sick and needy. Involve your teens and adults in

soul-winning campaigns and visitation. Take them on a summer mission trip where they can put into action the lessons they have learned. Thus did Jesus for his disciples.

An effective teacher will **encourage his pupils to be spiritually mature**. This is a principle reason for the office of "teacher" in the church. "He gave some to be... teachers; for the perfecting of the saints..." (Eph. 4:11-12). Spiritual maturity means to be conformed to the image of the Son of God (Rom. 8:29). Immature babes love spiritual milk, while full-grown men desire the strong meat of the word (Heb. 5:12-14). Spiritual infants are carnal-minded, given to jealousy and strife. Their loyalty to men precedes loyalty to Christ and his church (I Cor. 3:1-4). The mature disciple speaks the truth in love and does his part to make the church grow (Eph. 4:15-16). Spiritual growth will be enhanced or retarded by one's teacher.

A good teacher will **help his students to know and enjoy the spiritual blessings of God's Holy Spirit**. When they are baptized into Christ, all spiritual blessings are theirs (Eph. 1:3). In obeying the gospel they received remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). While we expect no miracles or new revelations today, we are "strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man" (Eph. 4:16). The Spirit helpeth our infirmities... the Spirit maketh intercession for us..." (Rom. 8:26). The indwelling Spirit is the seal of our sonship and the earnest of our redemption in heaven (Eph. 1:13-14). To leave our students ignorant of these rich blessings robs them of great strength and makes them vulnerable to the allurements of Pentecostalism and Calvinism.

A faithful teacher will **remind his class of the claims of Christ on their lives**. We must love him more than our dearest earthly family and friends (Matt. 10:37). Our bodies and souls belong to Christ for we were bought with a fearful price (I Cor. 6:19-20). We must deny ourselves anything that would be contrary to his sovereign will (Matt. 16:24). We must confess him as Master and Lord and bow ourselves before him as his bond-servants (Rom. 10:9-10, 1:1). To be his disciple we must "abide in his word" (John 8:31) and be "faithful unto death" (Rev. 2:10).

Paul charges every teacher who stands before a class to "Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee" (I Tim. 4:16). **JHW**