

JESUS AND HIS CHURCH

Jeremy Main (2005)

Alumni Feature

West Virginia School of Preaching

What does the Bible teach about the church of Christ? For the purpose of this article, we will address the importance of the Lord Jesus Christ and his relationship to his church. We will do so by asking and answering six questions from the New Testament.

First, who built the church? Jesus said, "I will build My church" (Matt. 16:18, NKJV). He also referred to the church as the "kingdom" (Matt.

16:19). Metaphorically, Jesus promised to found or establish his church or kingdom. He promised to do so within the lifetimes of some of those who heard his promise (Matt. 16:28). Moreover, they would see the kingdom "present with power" (Mark 9:1). Death itself could not prevent Jesus from fulfilling his promise. Christ resurrected to establish his church, which was present with miraculous power on the day of Pentecost, in the city of Jerusalem (Acts 2:1ff).

Second, who adds people to the church? Luke wrote, "And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). On the day of Pentecost, in the city of Jerusalem, the apostle Peter preached the gospel of Christ. Peter quoted Joel as saying that "whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved" (Acts 2:21). After learning of their condemnation, the Jews asked: "Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Peter answered, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). He continued to preach: "Be saved from this perverse generation" (Acts 2:40). The word "church" (Gk. *ekklesia*) literally means the "called out." People are "called out" of the world of darkness and into his kingdom (Col. 1:13). Luke documented: "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*" (Acts 2:41). To what were those who obeyed the gospel of Christ added? They were added to "the church" (Acts 2:47).

Third, who are members of the church named after? Luke wrote: "And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11:26). Members of the church are divinely called Christians after the founder himself.

Fourth, who purchased the church? In reference to Christ, Luke wrote: "the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). The church is of divine origin.

Fifth, who is the head of the church? Paul wrote that "Christ is head of the church" (Eph. 5:23). In another passage, Paul wrote, "He is the head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:18).

Sixth, who loves the church so much that he died for her? Paul wrote that "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her" (Eph. 5:25). He also noted that the Lord "nourishes and cherishes" the church (Eph. 5:29). How do we feel about the church of Christ?

We hope these questions have reminded you of the intimate relationship of Jesus and his church. The Lord wants to add you to His church which he established, governs, and cherishes. Ω



In Memoriam

Florence E. Smith Cooper

In the very early moments of the morning of August 23, shortly after the stroke of midnight our dear sister Florence E. Cooper, wife of our beloved Director, quietly slipped the moorings of time and earth and gently sailed away into eternity. She was born May 13, 1926 in Junction City Ohio, but spent a great portion of her life in West Virginia. A little more than sixty-three years ago she married Denver E. Cooper, a preacher of the Gospel. The Coopers reared nine children, one of whom preceded her mother in death. There are three living daughters, Becky Messer, Denise Conley and Martha Nolan. There are four sons: Eddie, who is a preacher of the Gospel, Tim, Kelley, Jesse and Denver Jr. She is also survived by one sister Freda Downour. She was grandmother to twenty-five and great-grandmother to thirty-eight. Her passing is mourned by all these and several hundred friends in the Ohio Valley.

Florence was a woman who was devoted first to her Lord, then to her husband and family. She was a truly Christian lady in every sense of the word, basing her faith in Christ as the Son of God on the teaching of Holy Scripture. She had a clear, beautiful alto voice and was one of the sweet singers of Israel. She loved to sing and as death approached her bed, she was often heard to be singing one of the old hymns she had known and loved for years. Her faith was not a complicated one. She believed the Bible to be the Word of God and whatever that Word revealed on any subject she believed, accepted and acted upon it with a simplicity that defies description. She was also a woman with a fine sense of humor and would often make very funny comments on some of the most important earthly or physical things of life. She never joked about the serious truths of the Bible, her Lord or God her Heavenly Father. She always made each guest welcome in her home and reveled in the visits of her children and grandchildren and their offspring.

She was a lady who had honed all the "arts and sciences" of homemaking and used them efficiently to the advantage to all that were in her home. Her life and demeanor are fitly described by the inspired King Solomon in Proverbs 31:10-31. She will not soon be forgotten, but her memory will be revered by all who knew her best and loved her most. Gone, but not forgotten, her likes will not pass this way again in the near future, if ever. Ω



PRECIOUS PROPHETIC PROMISES

D. Gene West

Since the first predictive prophecy was made by God Himself and recorded by Moses in Genesis 3:15, man has been enthralled with prophecy, especially that which is both promissory and predictive. It would appear that one of the greatest apologetic tools at our disposal is that of prophetic promise, for if a promise is made centuries, years, or even months before an event transpires, God must be, for no man can see into the future. The Bible is replete with prophetic promises; consequently, it must be true that there is a God who has revealed Himself through inspired writings.

In Isaiah 65:23-24 we find one of the most magnificent, heart-warming and winsome prophetic promises ever recorded. The inspired Prophet wrote: ***They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth children for trouble; for they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them. It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear.*** Here, in a section of remarkable Prophecy concerning the coming of the Kingdom (Church) and the nature of it, Isaiah wrote a further description of the Peaceable Kingdom in which he included the promises of God for those who would enter it. Christians need to review these promises from time to time.

Working very hard at something and failing brings great disappointment and heartache to the laborer. Hence, the promise that citizens of the Kingdom of Christ will not labor in vain, nor will they bring forth children, i.e. make converts for nothing but trouble. The Prophet did not promise that Christians would never have trials, testings, or persecutions, he did emphasize they were not converted for that alone, but for the great blessings to be received in time and eternity. They are the descendants of those who had been blessed by Yahweh. In the New Testament, perhaps with this prophecy in mind Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:3: ***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual***

blessing in the heavenly places in Christ... Furthermore, the Prophet added that the offspring of the descendants would be blessed, simply meaning the blessings of the Kingdom would be passed on from generation to generation. Christians today receive the very same spiritual blessings as the first ones!

In the 24th verse Isaiah quoted God as saying, "...before they call, I will answer; while they speak He would hear," i.e. know, understand, and provide for their needs. God has fulfilled this promise in many ways. For example, before man ever knew he needed salvation from his sin, or called upon Yahweh to provide that blessing to him, the Father provided the answer to that dilemma through His Son Jesus Christ. When they did learn of that need, God hesitated not to fulfill it through the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. Even before the Christian calls upon the Father in prayer, He knows our daily physical needs (Matthew 6:8), and our spiritual ones, and while we are calling on Him to provide them, He hears and provides. The blessings that come to the citizens of the Kingdom of Christ are rich, full and never failing (Lam.3:22-23). What Precious promises! Ω

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Apologetics and Soul Winning (I)

Charles C. Pugh III

The field of study relating to the positive defense of the Christian faith and the refutation of unbelief is *apologetics*. The word is derived from the Greek word *apologia*. It is rendered *defense* (NKJ) and *answer* (KJV) in a relevant passage in 1 Peter. Peter wrote, "... [A]lways be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks a reason for the hope that is in you ..." (3:15), emp. added). Brown says, "... [A]pologetics is the working out and presentation of intellectual, scientific and philosophical arguments ..." (51). Rogers and Rogers state, "The word was often used of the argument for the defense in a court of law ... can also mean an informal explanation or defense of one's position" (575). Such entails a logical (correctly reasoned) defense. Apologetics is also called *Christian Evidences* because it involves the study of the evidence that provides the foundation for the case for Christianity. Apologetics (Christian evidences) is concerned with the evidence for (1) the existence of God, (2) the inspiration of the Bible, and (3) the deity of Jesus of Nazareth, and areas of study that relate to these crucial doctrines.

The word *evangelism* is derived from a family of Greek words (cf. Brown 107). *Euangelizo* is to bring or announce good news, or proclaim and preach the same. *Euangelizomai* is to proclaim or preach glad tidings. *Euangelistes* is the proclaimer of the gospel (good news), the evangelist. In a definitive volume on evangelism, Michael Green wrote:

THE ENTHUSIASM TO evangelize which marked the early Christians is one of the most remarkable things in the history of religions. Here were men and women ... so convinced that they had discovered the riddle of the universe, so sure of the one true God whom they had come to know, that nothing must stand in the way of their passing on this good news to others. ... In Christianity they had found something utterly new, authentic, and satisfying. They were not prepared to deny Christ even in order to preserve their own lives, and in the manner of their dying they made converts to their faith. ...

There can be little doubt that the main motive for evangelism was a theological one. These men did not spread their message because it was advisable for them to do so, nor because it was the socially responsible thing to do. They did not do it primarily for humanitarian or agathistic utilitarian reasons. ... ***Christian evangelism has its motivation rooted in what God is and what he has done for man through the coming and the death and the resurrection of Jesus.*** ... (236-37, emp. added).

There is a crucial relationship between *apologetics* (the defense of the Christian faith, and the refutation of unbelief), and *evangelism* (soul winning). First, the ultimate purpose of apologetics is understood in light of the very theme of biblical revelation, which revelation enjoins the need for Christian apologetics and evangelism. The theme of the Bible is the redemption of humanity to the glory of God through the person and work of Jesus Christ (cf. John 5:39; 2 Tim. 3:14-17). Francis Schaeffer, who did much work in the field of apologetics during the 20th century, said:

I wonder if "apologetics" which does not lead people to Christ as Savior, and then on to their living under the Lord-

ship of Christ in the whole of life really is Christian apologetics. There certainly is a place for an academic study of a subject called "apologetics," as the defense and the credibility of Christianity, but if it does not lead the students to use that material in the way I have spoken about in the previous sentence, one can ask its value. ... [I]f the total course does not give answers so that the students are left with more than probability in regard to Christianity, it is much less than a course in philosophy can ... be. (186-87)

Schaeffer's point is sound. Since "those who do not know God and ... do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus ... will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord" (2 Thess. 1:8-9, NASV), it surely is the case that true Christian apologetics ultimately seeks to see people delivered (saved) from this awesome fate of eternal lostness. Thomas B. Warren used to tell those of us who were his students that obedience to the gospel is the ultimate goal of the apologist, but the cause of Christ is still greatly served even when a skeptic, through sound apologetics, becomes convinced of the existence of God and the falsehood of evolution, though not convinced of New Testament Christianity. Surely one can see the possible good for the cause of evangelism that can result when a world-renowned atheist, such as the late Professor Antony Flew, renounced atheism and embraced theism even though, unfortunately, he did not obey the gospel of Christ.

Furthermore, the relationship of apologetics and evangelism is evidenced when one observes the current intellectual and philosophical landscape. British philosopher, David Conway, has stated:

... "[T]he theistic doctrine ... once formed the lynchpin of western civilization. ... Theism was ... increasingly subject to challenge and was eventually altogether discarded by most philosophers. ... [Today] skepticism ... has culminated ... not simply in a form of secularism or militant atheism that, for a long time, has been practically [fashionable] among western intelligentsia, but in a novel and highly sophisticated form of [relativism] ... known as *post-modernism*. According to those who share this fashionable intellectual posture, all belief systems are equally without rational basis and hence none is worthy of greater credence than any other. ..." (4-5)

As one aims to reach others with the gospel of Christ, it seems difficult to think of few things that could be more useful today than an awareness of how to set forth the case for Christianity in a culture so heavily influenced by atheistic, agnostic, and post-modern thought in education, government, science, and religion. Ω

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