

WHY CHURCHES FALL APART – ELM MAY 1996

Article by Brian H. Butler B.A., D.O., F.A.S.K.

Class of '64 Graduate & former Faculty Member of Ambassador College, England.

These notes, composed from 2013 on, are based on taped lectures given between 1977 and 1997 by Dr. Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D., formerly the Head of Theology for the Worldwide Church of God; he resigned in January 1974 because of his unresolved doctrinal issues with the administration. Sadly Dr. Martin died in January 2002, a great loss to the world and to those who seek Biblical truth.

To be human is to be immersed in a world of division. People vote for one party or another, and often fiercely defend their decision to favour the party of the left, the right, or the centre. But there are almost always variations of opinion within any group or party. People just cannot agree!

As far as religion is concerned, there are over 20,000 Christian denominations extant in the world today. There are billions professing to be Christian, but they all have their own view of God and religious observance. Among the millions of Catholics for example, there are those who follow the dictates of the Pope in Rome concerning birth control, and there are those who do not.

Whether in religion or politics, people lock into believing different doctrines or policies, or they follow different personalities or people, or adhere to a specific organization, but whatever anyone believes in or practices or follows, there will always be those who disagree with them. Division is the norm among human beings.

If there is one area where unity should be paramount, it is in the matter of the worship of God, and the practice of Christianity. Sadly this is not the case. The word 'church' used in the Bible actually refers to an assembly, but the word has unfortunate historical origins, and it would be preferable to translate the original word in the manuscripts as 'assembly', or Ecclesia.

Before his conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul with authority from the Sanhedrin was persecuting those Jews who had become Christians, hauling them off to be tried, judged and killed. Paul understood the dangers of divided opinions among people. The he studied under the direct inspiration of Jesus Christ for three years, learning the detailed aspects of the Gospel and how to present them.

Paul undertook many journeys, and was in Spain in 62-63 A.D. when the 'mystery was revealed to him, understanding which had never before been given to human beings until this time.

The revelation of the Gospel was progressive. The Apostles taught the 'a,b,c', then as time progressed, as they understood more they taught the 'l,m,n', but it fell to Paul to teach 'x,y,z', when the completion of the 'fullness' of the mystery was revealed to him, and to give it to us in Ephesians, Philipians, and Colossians in God's Word.

Peter and then John came to realize that the expansion of the Gospel had been given to Paul. There is only ONE standard that will engender unity, and that is the Holy Bible, which is the Corporate Word of the Almighty God.

Ephesians 3:3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

Even in the New Testament Ecclesia, there were divisions, and there were differences of opinion concerning doctrine and other matters. Paul felt very strongly about them. It was essential that the books of the New Testament were canonised under God's inspiration so that there was one standard for all, and to unify the presentation of the full Gospel.

Unity can only come to people in this world of today through the only permanent standard, the Holy Bible. Only when people base their belief and allegiance to a love of the Holy Scriptures will unity be realized. The Bible is full of personalities, or principles concerning morality and ethics, and of God's true doctrines.

The Bible teaches 'mortality' not 'immortality' as is taught by most Christian churches. It reveals the idolatry that has infiltrated virtually every religion on the face of the earth today. Even the fundamental doctrines taught by most Christian churches are not supported by God's Holy Bible. We need to be very careful about what people say the Bible is and what it teaches, and to study for ourselves, with the help of the Holy Spirit, what the Bible is, and what it teaches.

Romans 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

Paul said and wrote on the direction and inspiration of the Holy Spirit that Christians were to avoid those who cause divisions and avoid them. Does that sound un-Christian? It is not.

1 Corinthians 1:10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Paul was preaching UNITY. Differences of opinion on any matter, especially doctrinal, cause divisions, and Christ is not divided.

1 Corinthians 1:12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. 13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

Ephesians 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: 14 That we henceforth be no more children (grow up!), tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

Paul was suffering divisions among those Ecclesias in Asia Minor, Turkey and neighbouring countries as we know them today.

2 Timothy 4:10 For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. 11 Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.

John 15:1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. 2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. 3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

Everything that man does, indeed everything physical, even the wonders of our modern era, are temporary. Even those physical things which God causes to be built, history has proved are only temporary. The Temple, the type of God's throne in heaven, was destroyed.

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The Temple, was a representation of God's Home in heaven, and yet it has been destroyed more than once. God built thy Tabernacle, but allowed the Philistines to remove the wealth from it and move it. David captured Jebus, and wanted to build God's House, the Temple, but because he was a "bloody man" God said no. It fell to his son Solomon to build a very lavish Temple which took seven years. Only five years after it was completed it was ransacked.

400 years later, Jeremiah foretold the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar, and God allowed it. The Temple was unifying centre, but then it was gone. In the 5th century B.C. it was rebuilt, then in Christ's time King Herod refurbished the Temple again but in 70 A.D. it was completely razed to the ground and utterly destroyed by the Romans. In 132 A.D. Barcoba attempted to rebuild it, then in 324 Constantine tried to rebuild it, and then in 359 the Julian the Apostate tried to build it, but all failed to do it.

If any Temple should be built now of stone and gold, it will be temporary and likely suffer the same fate. Nothing physical is permanent.

On the other hand, the Word of God, The Holy Bible will endure. It is in a sense the "Spiritual Temple" of God.

Isaiah 29:14 Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work, a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.

The Bible will be restored to its original pristine design and order. The Canon of the Bible is a permanent feature of this life, and will endure.

Matthew 24:35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

Throughout history, nothing physical ever endured, but the Bible has endured. Many copies have been destroyed by despots, but the Word of God has endured through thousands of years, and will continue to endure.

We as humans live in a world of division, and the key to unity is the Holy Bible. People have shuffled the order of the books, they have put spurious words into it to obscure the true meaning, they have mistranslated some

words distorting the original meaning, all this will be corrected and put right. There are basic scientific truths contained in the Bible that have still to be understood by the 'scholars'.

The Word of God remains available to us from the original manuscripts, and they will be used to produce a correct version. It may not be perfect in its first printing, but often the way God works is to allow things to mature slowly.

Churches, political parties, kingdoms, countries all fall apart eventually because they are based on unstable foundations of a man or a woman, or on 'traditions', or on 'doctrines' and belief systems, and are not based on the Rock, and that Rock is Christ, the Firstborn Son of God, the Author of the very Word of God.

The whole Bible was written and canonized to lead us to Christ.

These words were some of the last penned by Paul just before he was put to death by the Romans.

1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture (the Canon) is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

The Bible is the Spiritual Temple of God and Christ and will endure.

