**THE ECCLESIA ARRANGEMENT**

1. Ecclesia is Greek for “Church”, “those called out”. It is not a building, rather it is the people whom God has called out to be his sanctified or separated people.
2. There was a time when there was no Ecclesia. From the time Jesus was 30 until he died 3.5 years later, he was the only one spirit-begotten, so there was no need yet for an Ecclesia arrangement, however, Jesus taught us invaluable lessons for future use.
3. Jesus’ example:
4. Jesus taught in Synagogues and when put out, he taught anywhere and everywhere, to many and to only one. He used the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and he spoke what his Father gave him to speak, which became the basis for the Gospels.
5. Jesus did not use the old Jewish Aaronic Priesthood nor the Levites, his nucleus was 12 apostles including fishermen and a tax collector. Only the apostle Paul (chosen later), was considered a learned man.
6. Jesus was not going to use “old wine skins” rather he used “new wine skins” that would present the new doctrines of truth he was giving.
7. When Jesus was still in the flesh, no one could be spirit-begotten yet, he had to die and ascend into heaven to present the merit of his ransom price unto God, that would allow for God to then spirit-beget men and women to become the “New Creation”, those enlightened with the holy spirit. This started at Pentecost in the upper room with the apostles and those gathered with them.
8. The Early Church.
9. After Pentecost, the need for the Ecclesia Arrangement.
10. In the N.T. we only have a few examples of the brethren meeting in homes and on Paul’s missionary journeys, he would first preach in the local Synagogues, and then eventually the believers would end up having to leave and meet in homes (Roms. 16:3, 5).
11. The buildings were not important, rather it was how the brethren would organize themselves to meet to worship, study, witness and serve one another.
12. Jesus had taught that all the spirit-begotten should consider themselves as equals – Matt. 23:6-12 speaking of the Pharisees –

“And love the uppermost rooms at the feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to called of men Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi (my master), for one is your Master (teacher), even Christ, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth, for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be called masters, for one is your Master, even Christ.

But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.”

NOTE: We are to have only one Father in heaven, but He is equally Father to us all. We have only one Master, that is Jesus the Head of the Body. In heaven’s view, those that are to be considered the greatest are those who serve the most, or in other words, those whose service costs them the most. Remember the lesson of the widow and her two mites (shall cast into the Temple treasury ALL THAT SHE HAD).

The apostle Paul stated it this way in Gal. 3:26-28:

“for you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized in to Christ and put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond or free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

1. Organization in the Ecclesia.
2. Although all are equal, yet the LORD knew there would need to be leadership and order.
3. I Cor. 12:28: “And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets (public expounders), thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of languages.”

We learn that it is God who has established the organization for His Church. Note the order:

1st. the apostles, there are only 12 apostles of the Lamb Rev. 21:14.

Some of these wrote our New Testament. They alone are infallible in their writings.

2nd. Prophets or public speakers, these are those who helped to spread the Word of God that established the Church.

3rd. Teachers who would be those who would be the local leaders in conducting the meetings.

NOTE that these are those who establish and maintain the Church, the following are miraculous gifts of the Spirit which were useful to assist the early Church while the N.T. was being written and distributed by the Apostles, then these gifts all ceased. This demonstrates the importance of doctrine over miracles.

1. Eph. 4:11, 12: “

Note: no miracles are mentioned here. Explain further.

This is how God and Jesus organized the Ecclesia in the very beginning and it was to be our example there after for the proper development of the Church.

1. Elders:
2. Acts 15:4, 6, 22, 23 NOTE: Apostles, elders, the whole church. NOTE: elders *PLURAL!*
3. Acts 16:4 NOTE: elders *PLURAL!*
4. There are no chief Apostle, nor are there any chief elders. It is true that some of the 12 Apostles and some of the elders have more or less TALENTS, (i.e. speakers, Pastors, evangelist),however, that does not give one anymore authority than another.
5. Acts 20:17:
6. Acts 11:26-30 with Acts 12:25. NOTE they were in Antioch which had multiple elders, then they were in Jerusalem were there were multiple elders.
7. Summary: we have specifically stated that the Ecclesias in Antioch, Jerusalem and Ephesus each had multiple elders with NO MENTION OF ANY CHIEF ELDERS.
8. The terms elders or deacons, is a JOB DISCRIPTION, NOT A TITLE!
9. Deacons: Acts 6:1-6:

Note: the deacon service is for the temporal affairs and concerns of the Ecclesia.

1. Laying on of hands:

a.The Greek word means to “stretch forth” or to “vote”or “ a hand reacher”. In fact, this is the common form of voting today, to raise the hand.

b. A caution by Paul I Tim. 5:22. We do bear a responsibility on who we support by vote.

1. Ordained:
2. Acts. 14:23:

The word “ordained” means to “to elect by stretching out the hand” – Young’s Analytical Concordance. Or “a hand-reacher, or voter by raisig the hand.,” – Strong’s Concordance.

1. The thought is clear, the Apostles were establishing the METHOD by which the Church throughout the remainder of the Gospel Age would signify and determine who would be elders (and deacons), in the Ecclesia arrangement.
2. This same Greek word is used in II Cor. 8:18, 19:

It is the word “chosen”. We read that is was the Church(s), that voted to have both a “brother” (noticed not titled!), and Paul, to take their gift to the brethren in Jerusalem.

Note: it was the Church (Ecclesia), that voted, not just elders or deacons.

1. The Method of choosing elders and deacons:
2. Titus 1:5: “

“set in order” = “to place down” or Ferrar Fenton “permanent basis”. This means that Paul was writing Titus to visit the various Ecclesias and teach them how to elect elders, as had already been done much earlier in Acts 14:23 as we have seen, it was by voting with the hand.

NOTE: it would not make sense to have Titus choose elders for each city or Ecclesia, for when he was gone and the 12 Apostles were gone, who would then have that kind of authority? In fact, it is the Ecclesia members themselves who are to have the authority and responsibility to vote for their elders and deacons.

NOTE: they were to have elders plural in each city or Ecclesia.

1. Who could vote? It would be only the Consecrated, those who had been spirit-begotten, the New Creatures. One brother or sister, one vote.

These are the only ones who could have the ability to determine the mind of the LORD in these matters. Even though the consecrated may make a mistake in determining the LORD’S will in a matter, they alone are the ones authorized to vote and we are to accept the vote of the Ecclesia. Each are to vote according to their conscience, which is to be educated by the Word of God.

1. We are not told in Scripture what percentage of votes would be sufficient to elect elders and deacons, however, Br. Russell recommends in QB 255 (1915), that even though 100% is desirable, 75% is reasonable.
2. The Ecclesia brethren are the final authority:

Matt. 18:15-17.

The exception? Each individual HAS TO ANSWER TO GOD, we each have to vote and act in harmony with our educated conscience. QB 253.

1. Qualifications:
2. I Tim. 3:1-13:

NOTE: Bishop just means an overseer. So Paul referred to the elders at Ephesus Acts 20:28. Each elder is an overseer.

Similarly Titus 1:6-9,

1. Describe the qualifications.
2. I Pet. 5:1-4. Describe.
3. “Apt to teach” F-249,250.
4. CTR, the qualifications outline a PERFECT man! We are not to expect that anyone would be able to live up to every aspect 100%. QB 255.

CTR, the main point – “But let us not forget that we shall not know how to write in the hearts of others what we have not already had written in our own hearts. Hence the propriety of great caution in the choosing of Elders-to find those who already have the writing of the Lord in their hearts, and who therefore will be competent assistants, under the Holy spirit’s guidance, for the writing of the Lord’s character-likeness in the heats of the younger brethren.” QB 235.

1. The number of elders per Ecclesia?

CTR states that the Scriptures do not say. However, he believes that no matter how small in number an Ecclesia may be, if there was a Class of 6, and all 6 were qualified, he would vote for all 6! He reasons that there are always privileges and services for any and all who are qualified for the work. QB. 236 bottom (1910).

1. How long should elders and deacons serve in office?
2. CTR states that the Scriptures do not say but suggests elections once a year. This is a protection for the Church and for the elders and deacons!
3. Roms. 16:17, 18.
4. Jude 11-13.
5. Acts 20:28-30.
6. Not a paid service:
7. Acts 20:33-35
8. I Cor. 4:12.
9. I Peter 5:2.
10. Satan and fallen men interfere with the Ecclesia arrangement over time.

The Nicolaitane spirit – to lord over. Rev. 2:6, 15. The development of the system of Clergy / Laity. Even the Reformers failed in this.

1. The Lord Returns.
2. Matt. 13:30 “Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather you together first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.”

The harvest is the end of the Age (vs. 39), since 1874 when our chief Reaper returned the harvesting work has been in progress.

1. Rev. 18:4 “come out of her my people”.
2. But where should the Lord’s consecrated people go?

Luke 17:34-37.

1. Matt. 24:26-28, 45-47. He is not in desert or secret chambers, but like sun rise, world -wide, but gather to the CARCASS, provided by our Lord through the W & Faithful servant.
2. The Present Truth is given to be a UNIFYING INFLUENCE. TO DRAW AND HOLD THE LORD’S PEOPLE TOGETHER. THERE IS NO OTHER MESSENGER TO BE EXPECTED, IT IS COMPLETE.
3. The harvest Message and Br. Russell’s ministry was in part to assist the brethren around the world to understand and implement the ECCLESIA ARRANGEMENT AS IT WAS IN THE EARLY CHURCH!
4. Each Ecclesia is INDEPENDENT! CTR DID NOT TRY TO ESTABLISH ONE GREAT CHURCH OR DENOMINATION! HE DID NOT RECOMMEND WHO SHOULD BE ELDERS, JUST THE PRINCIPLES INVOLVED. HE DID SEND PILGRIM BROTHERS OUT TO DIFFERENT AREAS IN ORDER TO TEACH THE BRETHREN -FROM SCRIPTURES – HOW TO ESTABLISH THEIR OWN INDEPENDENT ECCLESIAS.
5. Like the Early Church, the Nicolaitane spirit re-appears among the Ecclesias.
6. CTR goes to his reward, Oct. 31, 1916.
7. Judge Rutherford fraudantly wins election at a Convention, contrary to CTR’s instructions in his Last Will and Testament.
8. Rutherford stops the studying of the 6 Volumes and other writings of Br. Russell.
9. Rutherford stops the Ecclesia election process.
10. Rutherford establishes the false premise that the WatchTower Organization is God’s channel of Truth and instructions.
11. The WatchTower headquarters decides who will be the elders in the Kingdom Halls, they also decide what the Kingdom Halls will study.
12. I have a copy of the JW’s Elders Guide Book. Relate the Matt. 18 process, no longer according to Jesus’ instructions.
13. Why the Ecclesia arrangement is so important.
14. Individual character development.
15. Importance of individual decision making. No decision making, no character development.
16. Know you not that we shall judge angels…I Cor. 6:1-8.
17. Business meetings an important part of character development. Truth principles with the spirit of Christ like-ness, the fruits of the spirit.
18. Each Ecclesia has it’s own personality, why? Because it is a living entity, made of up by the individuals.
19. I Thess. 5:23 read (one spirit, one body – Eph. 4:3,4), (one heart and one soul Acts 4:32).
20. No central organization.
21. Why? The tendency is to by pass the Ecclesia voice and decision making of all the brethren on a matter.
22. Example of different Ecclesias cooperating for a purpose – II Cor. 8j:16-19.
23. In conclusion.
24. Good, healthy Ecclesias elect good elders.
25. Good elders DO NOT PROMOTE A PERSONAL FOLLOWING.
26. We are to each FOLLOW THE LAMB WHERE SOEVER HE GOES. Rev. 14:4.
27. Study the 6th. Volume “The New Creation”especially Studies V, VI. Also the QB (What Pastor Russell Said), look in the back, the Topical Index, under topics like “elders”, “elections”, and such.

LIBERTY, FREEDOM IN CHRIST HAS TO BE SOUGHT AFTER AND MAINTAINED. THE ECCLESIA ARRANGEMENT IS GOD’S INSTRUCTION FOR US. LET US STUDY THIS SUBJECT TO BE BEST ENABLED TO PRACTICE THIS THE LORD INTENDED.