

## The Organization of The Church

by Hendrik Joubert

A famous theologian of the Reformation considered the book of James a book of straw and placed it at the end of *his* list of books which he considered to belong in the Bible. Another wanted to exclude the letter to the Ephesians because he thought that it says too much about the church – that called out body with Christ as its Head, the church of God which he purchased with His own blood. (**Ephesians 1:22-23; Acts 20:28**)

Ponder the idea of sinful man being the judge of, not only which books belong in the Bible, but also what in these books is essential and what not. Much speculation result in man following his own desires and escaping his responsibilities under the guise of complimenting God for His love and His grace. While denying the importance of the church – *Preach Jesus and not Church* – elaborate rules and regulations are drawn up to determine membership of human churches. The irony here is that in order to be saved and added to the body of Christ (**Acts 2:47**) it is believed one merely has to believe that Jesus is the Son of God (Without doing anything). However, in order to become, as well as remain a member of any Church, one has to adhere to the doctrine of that church. You have no freedom of interpretation of their rules, as they claim when considering the creed God passed onto us.

Organizing the church of Christ on earth as directed in the Scriptures is ignored, while the terminology of the Bible is (ab)used for elaborate human organizations with much pomp and pride. This is especially troublesome in the light of specific warnings found in the Scriptures. Notice what the Lord directs Paul to say when writing to the Corinthians concerning this problem, and the sinfulness thereof. First we want to notice that dividing the body of Christ among men is wrong – sinful. After exhorting them to be of the *same mind* and the *same judgment*, leaving no room for *personal interpretation* in the matter, so that there would be *no divisions*, he specifies the problem: **Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ."** (1 Corinthians 1:12)

Substitute the name of any person or organization: I am of the Catholic, I am of the Baptist, I am of the Anglican...etc. It amounts to a dividing of the body of Christ. Notice the questions God asked through Paul: **Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?** (1 Corinthians 1:13) No, Christ, and therefore His body, is not divided. It is therefore wrong to divide Christ among men. No man was crucified for me, and therefore does not deserve the credit of naming believers. One is baptized with the authority of Christ, and into Christ. (**Galatians 3:27, Romans 6:3-4**) He alone is worthy of all praise and glory.

Let us return to the apparent pomp and pride among men as they form these different denominations. In chapter 4 of his first letter to the Corinthians Paul explains that he applied the names of himself, Peter and Apollos for their benefit, **so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.** (1 Corinthians 4:6) The latter part of the verse deals with the sense of superiority that exist among the different denominations and denominational officials. Then the apostle adds: **For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?** (1 Corinthians 4:7)

Depending on the translation you are using elders in the New Testament are referred to as pastors, elders, presbyters, overseers and shepherds as each of these terms teaches us something about their work and responsibilities. In the New Testament the elders are the highest authority under Christ, to **shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain,**

**but with eagerness;...** (**1 Peter 5:2**) Men have used these terms, and added to them, in order to create a system of ranking by which one becomes superior to another.

Preachers and evangelists became pastors as they are considered to be the ones guiding the flock – and the qualifications for those who are to serve as elders (**1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-11**) Notice that the qualifications are such that the elder is supposed to guard the church of God against false teachers who change the gospel of Christ. Read Acts 15 and then read the letter to the Galatians to see how easily the gospel of Christ is twisted into a worthless doctrine of men. Notice also **Matthew 15:9**.

The church of Christ is talked about in the sense of the universal body of the saved, but the church of Christ assembled as congregations upon the earth. (**Romans 16:16**) The Bible not only supply us with the proper terminology to indicate the duties of those to serve in this body, it also supplies us with the qualifications of those who would serve in the church of God which He purchased with his own blood.