



Overseas Ministries Training Course

# Pastoral Duties

R. V. Reynolds & W. H. Cole

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Ralph Vincent Reynolds  
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## Table of Contents

1. Church Government	7
2. The Pentecostal Pastor	13
3. The Pastor's Character	21
4. The Pastor's Training	29
5. The Pastor's Calling	35
6. The Pentecostal Meeting	41
7. Conducting Services	47
8. Special Services	61
9. Other Duties	67
10. Pastoral Visitation	71
11. Counseling	79
12. Church Membership and Fellowship	85
13. Church Discipline	91
14. Church Financing	97



## Chapter 1

# CHURCH GOVERNMENT

## I. CHURCH GOVERNMENT IS ORDAINED BY GOD

*“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues” (I Corinthians 12:28).*

Sometimes unwise criticism of organization abounds. This irresponsible and unjust censure comes mainly from two sources:

1. People who have been saved from the denominational church world desire to be set free from the bondage of the traditional church structure. They therefore swing to the other extreme of discarding all church government.
2. People who refuse to submit to discipline adopt an independent attitude and spirit and promote the so-called “free” church.

One may meet other reasons for condemnation being directed against church organization. It is very important and necessary that Christians be fully persuaded that God has ordained church government and the Bible clearly teaches a divine plan for order in the church. Without organization, no government or discipline would be in the church. If these are both scriptural and necessary, then the logical conclusion is that organization is of God.



In *The New Testament in Modern Speech*, Richard Francis Weymouth translates I Corinthians 12:28: “And by God’s appointment there are in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers. Then come miraculous powers, and then ability to cure diseases or render assistance, or powers of organization, or varieties of the gift of tongues.”

To remove all misunderstanding, let everyone understand that the church is not an organization but a living organism indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The true church knows no denominational or organizational barriers. Walls erected by the will of man cannot restrict the body of Christ. The church of God cuts across denominational lines. Definitely, the church is not an organization but an organism—a body through which the very life and Spirit of Christ Himself pulsates through the veins and arteries.

Knowing this truth, the questions to ask are: Is organization of God? Is it scriptural? Is it necessary? To all three questions we may reply emphatically and without hesitation, “Yes, organization is of God.”

One of the conditions of the days just prior to the coming of the Lord is the spirit of lawlessness and anarchy in the land. “For lawlessness is already at work in secret; but in secret only until the man who now restrains it is removed, and then the lawless one will be revealed” (II Thessalonians 2:7-8, Weymouth). Here Paul speaks of the Antichrist as the “lawless one” and the mystery of iniquity as the “spirit of lawlessness.”

This spirit of lawlessness can be seen everywhere today. Crime, juvenile delinquency, divorce, and strikes have all been greatly increasing in recent years. Individuals desire to be a law unto themselves; they do not wish to respect government or acknowledge the rule of any person over them. This spirit of lawlessness has entered our homes until the children rule the home and rebellious and unfaithful spouses break apart marriages. This same spirit of lawlessness has entered the church until many professing Christians no longer are willing to abide under the preaching of sound doctrine.

Without church government, every person is a law unto himself or herself, and there is no divine order or discipline. The lack of divine order and discipline

can lead only to confusion and disorder, disrupting the divine harmony and order of God's government. "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace" (I Corinthians 14:33). Everything God has created or ordained has beautiful order and form. So it is with church government.

The local assembly—as well as in the church as a whole—needs church government and discipline. The ministry is subject to government and discipline as well as the laity. Individuals who cannot humble themselves to obey those whom the Lord has placed over them disqualify themselves from ruling over others. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves" (Hebrews 13:17). This applies to both ministry and laity; no one is exempt.

## II. THEOCRACY IS GOD'S FORM OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

The form of church government given in God's Word is a theocracy. It is God ruling His people through a God-called, Holy Ghost ministry.

Two extremes in church government exist; both are wrong:

- A. **Rule of the people:** A democratic form of government may be best for a country, but God has not ordained it for His church. Certainly, one should never ignore the laity. They should be consulted, and they should be permitted to express freely their desires and convictions. They may influence the decision of the ministry, but at the same time, they must submit themselves to the final decision of their pastor.
- B. **Rule of the Priesthood:** A totalitarian form of government causes the pastor to become a lord over God's heritage and creates a dictatorship.

A theocracy is a balance between these two extremes. It recognizes the pastor as the head of the church ordained by God and through whom God may lead His people. It does not make the pastor a lord over God's heritage, but rather a spiritual father, a shepherd of the flock, a leader of the people of God.

A theocracy concerns, affects, and benefits only those who voluntarily submit to it. When Christians rebel against the admonitions and instructions of their pastors, they are actually rebelling against God. It is a very serious offense for any person to put forth his or her hand against the ministry. "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm" (I Chronicles 16:22). "Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father" (I Timothy 5:1).

### **III. ORGANIZATION IS A MEANS TO AN END**

The church does not organize in order to build a strong organization, but rather to evangelize the world. The mission of the church is missions. The Great Commission Christ gave to the church is to preach the gospel to the whole world. The purpose of organization is to get the job done.

That a group of people, united together with system and order, can accomplish much more than if each of them is working separately is a well-recognized fact. This is possibly one of the main reasons why God ordained organization in the church.

Organization must always be a servant to the church, never the church a servant to organization. Like so many other things such as fire, organization is a wonderful servant, but a very poor master. Organization is not the end in itself; it is the means toward that end.

### **IV. EACH LOCAL ASSEMBLY SHOULD BE SET IN ORDER**

Every local assembly should affiliate with the organization and have a pastor who has been properly installed as well as other church officers that may be necessary. In order to accomplish this, the local church assembly should be set in order by the presbytery at the earliest possible date.

We understand that a church cannot be set in order until there are people who are born again believers with the New Testament experience of salvation. In

other words, a church cannot be set in order until a group of saints has united to create a local assembly. However, as soon as a company of saints forms, no matter how few in number, a meeting should be called over which the district superintendent or sectional presbyter should preside, and the church should be set in order.

The agenda for such a meeting should provide for handling the following matters of business:

1. Scripture reading and prayer
2. Appointing a recording secretary to accurately report the minutes of the meeting
3. Recording the names of the charter members of the assembly
4. Choosing the name of the assembly
5. Reading the Articles of Faith of the organization and the adoption of same by the assembly
6. Installing the pastor
7. Reading of the church constitution for the local assembly and adopting the same by the assembly
8. Electing church trustees
9. Appointing all other necessary church officers by the pastor and the assembly ratifying the same
10. Accepting the statement of affiliation by the presbyter to the assembly

## **V. EACH ASSEMBLY SHOULD HAVE A PASTOR INSTALLED BY THE PRESBYTERY**

When the presbytery installs the pastor, the overseer gives the pastor a measure of prestige and recognition of authority that it is difficult for him or her to receive in any other way. It builds confidence and the members understand that the entire organization is standing behind the ministry of their pastor and they would do well to recognize the authority behind their pastor. At the same time, the people understand that they are given protection. In the event of their

spiritual leader falling into sin, they would not be left helpless. The entire organization would be there to give them protection and support.

Pastors may be chosen in one of three main ways.

- A. Pastors may be pioneer preachers and raise up assemblies through their own ministry. In this event, they would be installed when the assembly is set in order.
- B. The presbyter, bishop, or superintendent of the district may place a minister in a congregation and appoint him or her as pastor.
- C. Assemblies themselves may call pastors by the majority vote of the congregation. In this event, the members of the assembly should vote on only one prospective minister at a time. Never should there be an election of one person over the names of others. Otherwise, there can be much confusion, disunity, and dissatisfaction over the choice. Also, it should be remembered that only the names of people approved and recommended by the presbytery should be considered.

In every case, the pastor must be placed there by the “Chief Shepherd” Himself. The method of choosing a pastor is of secondary importance. The will of God is the one thing that is all important here. The pastor must be there in the will of God. No wrong motives must influence the choice either on the part of the pastor or of the people.