

THE ROLE OF THE LEADER IN THE CONTEXT OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

Dr. "Piff" G.C. Pereira, Baptist Theological College of Southern Africa, Randburg

Abstract

Congregational Church Government is one of the Baptist Principles, but is a concept looked upon with disdain by many. It is understood to create tension in the church, and the whole practice of leadership is stifled to the demise of many churches. Congregationalism, as it is now referred to, is one of the most misunderstood and even misapplied Baptist Principles; certainly in South Africa as it is also globally. Many "experts" believe this to be the weak principle among our principles, and there are many voices in the Church who seem to want to shed it. But it is not as easy as that. This matter is of such severity that it even threatened to bring division among Baptists. Profound questions first need to be answered. Is it biblically founded and supported? We must deal with this issue as to its scriptural validity. Is allowance made in Scripture for alternative church government models? Why do we espouse this one? What will best serve the Church? How can this principle co-exist with decisive leadership practice? These are the kind of questions our denomination had to ask and resolve. Then again, are these very questions not raised because of a fundamental misunderstanding of the principle's biblical applicability? This article seeks to put this principle into proper perspective as unthreatened by, and non-threatening to godly and decisive servant-leadership. The church cannot afford to have a stifled leadership, nor a stifled congregation. That, the Bible does not allow, neither will it be healthy for Christ's Body.