

Congregational Independence

Local church

- Plurality of saints...
- Pool abilities...
- Common oversight

NT does **not** authorize local churches to pool their abilities under a common oversight

There is **no** organization of local churches

No local church is over another local church

The church is saved people

“So far as we know all brethren have always understood that the individual Christian is the unit of the ‘church universal’”

“The organizational structure of the church begins and ends with the local congregation”

– Reuel Lemmons, Editor, *Firm Foundation*

<u>Local</u>	<u>Comparison</u>	<u>Universal</u>
Rv.2-3	Number	One, Ep.4:4
Ac.5; 1 Co.16	Treasury	Vatican City?
1 Jn.2:19	Salvation	2 Tim. 2:19
1 Co.5; 2-3 Jn.	Discipline	?
Hb.10:24-25	Assemblies	?
Ac.14:23	Overseers	[1 Pt.5:4]
Acts 8	Baptism	1 Co.12:13

I. Three Types of Church Organizations

1. Roman Catholic

Local churches comprise the Church (society that gives blessings of God, preserves the faith)

Ac.20:32, So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified

Ja.1:21, Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls

1. Roman Catholic

Local churches comprise the Church (society that gives blessings of God, preserves the faith)

1. They put an institution between Christians and God... (the Lord's position)
 - 1 Tim.2:5, For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus
2. Catholic arrangement calls for universal oversight, action, and treasury
[Parish funds go to Vatican City]

2. Denominational

Episcopal: “The modern Anglican bishop ... unlike the elder of the NT has the oversight of a large number of churches in his ‘diocese,’ and exercises authority over the clergy of that area. The elders of the NT are responsible to the chief Shepherd alone, and have a strictly local charge” – ZPEB I, 854

- **Congregations cannot act collectively and remain independent**

3. Independent

NT: Each church does its own work

No church is accountable to another church or organization. Ac.9:...18-25, 26-27

A local church can do its work even if every other church ceases to exist

“The presbyter-bishops appear to have exercised their authority within the sphere of the local congregation, but not beyond it”

– ZPEB I, 855

I. Three Types of Church Organizations

II. Practice Does Not
Always Match Preaching

Many who plead for Bible pattern
do not always practice what they preach

A. Campbell wanted Brush Run Church to
join Redstone Association

[Where does NT authorize an
association of churches????]

Six years with Mahoning Association (1824)

They dissolved in 1830 to operate
independently; A.C. objected

May 1831, A.C. advocated a church made up of local churches

His reasoning...

1. “Must preach gospel to world”
2. “Bible does not tell *how*”
3. “This requires ¹organization and ²oversight”
 - * Missionary Society
 - * 1849, first president – A. Campbell

“Every individual disciple is a particular member of that body (or congregation) with which he is united in Christian communion; and *the whole of that community to which he belongs is but a member of that great body which is figuratively called ‘the body of Christ.* He is the head of the whole body, or Christian congregation; not merely or specially of one community, *but of all the separate communities as constituting one kingdom”* – *Millennial Harbinger*

- Makes a Christian a member of a member of body
- Pushed collective action of churches –
[denomination]

“Now **if** Christ’s kingdom consists of 10,000 families or churches – particular, distinct, and independent communities – **how** are they to act in concert, maintain unity or interests, or cooperate in any system of conservation or enlargement, **unless** by consultation and systematic cooperation? I affirm it to be, in my humble opinion, and from years of observation and experience impossible – M. Harbinger

[unscriptural]

If churches are systematically organized, they are *no longer independent*

This makes each Christian *a member of a member* of the body of Christ

This makes *each church a unit* of the universal church

False beliefs lead to unscriptural practices

Jn.15:5-6. 1 Co.12

1 Pt.2:17, brotherhood

Churchhood???

childhood
adulthood
priesthood
neighborhood
statehood...

Only 1. preserves congregational independence
Problem is not methods, but organization
No scripture for 2. or 3. 2 Co.11:7-8

1. Go...Teach – church can send preacher / by plane / use powerpoint... (methods)
2. Go...Teach – sponsoring church (methods)
 - *Each church has its own treasury...
 - *Contributes to / operates separate treasury...
 - *Same methods; support different organization
3. Go...Teach – M. Society – preacher / plane / powerpoint...

Problem is not methods, but organization

I. Three Types of Church Organizations

II. Peaching Does Not Always Match Practice

III. Does God Want Congregations
to Act Independently?

1. Limits scope of each congregation's **treasury**. 1 Co.16:1-3 –
Corinth did not control Galatian churches
Members of each flock contributed
Each church chose own messengers, v.3
*2 Co.8:19, 23
*2 Co.11:8, same true in evangelism

1. Limits scope of each congregation's **treasury**. 1 Co.16:1-3

*2 Co.11:8, same true in evangelism

- “Other churches”: puts treasury on local basis
- Each church had own funds; independent
- They did not send it to someone else to send to someone else. The money stopped where they sent it

2. Limits scope of each congregation's oversight

Acts 14:23, each had its own overseers

Ac.20:28, elders limited to one flock

1 Pt.5:1-2, shepherd flock among you
(limited scope)

Many denominations have elders over the flock but also join a denominational organization

3. Limits scope of each congregation's **work**

1. Each church operates independently of other churches
2. Each church acts as if it is the only church on earth
3. 2 Co.11:8; 1 Th.1:8, no diocese

B.C. Goodpasture (1985 World Book) –

Churches of Christ are...

“a group of religious congregations...”

They support about 200 workers in more than 50 countries

They also operate 4 senior colleges, 10 junior colleges, more than 20 Bible schools, and several orphanages and old-age homes”

The name for group of churches that pool resources to act as one – denomination!