

Church Organization

Christians are charged to preserve the faith as delivered - **Ephesians 4:3; 1Timothy 6:20; 1Corinthians 11:2**

Yet almost every generation has failed in some aspect of this duty

One of the most difficult seems to be preserving the distinctive organization revealed in the New Testament

Most apostasy seems to have begun in the organizational structure

These changes pervert both local and universal aspects of the Lord's Body

Warnings regarding local perversion - **Acts 20:28-30**

Warnings regarding universal perversion - **2Thessalonians 2:2-4**

Apostasies begin with changes in the local church no matter which aspect is ultimately perverted.

Missionary society (1849) sought to remodel the organization from local to universal in structure.

A church can do what an individual cannot, and so can a district of churches do what a single congregation cannot - Alexander Campbell Millennial Harbinger, 1831

We fear that the large conception of the church universal is too little realized by many Christians of the present day. Their idea of the church and of the responsibilities and work of the church circle too much within the limits of the local congregation. - W.K. Pendleton Millennial Harbinger, 1866

This attitude led the organizational perversions of the 1800s

Unfortunately, such attitudes have not changed. The absence of an organized missionary society among churches of Christ created several unique handicaps in selection and preparation of qualified missionary workers. (p 273) They could not resist the temptation to shop and contrast their plight with the obvious strong points in denominational machinery. Thus, they sought for some practical, scriptural means of brotherhood-wide co-ordination without creating an agency for brotherhood-wide control. (p 313) - Wm. Banowsky The Mirror Of A Movement

Such attitudes led to the development of such plans as Herald of Truth.

Consider some things regarding Scriptural Church Organization.

Universal Level - All saved of all the world - **Matthew 16:18; 1Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 3:10-11**

Entire body of saved - **1Corinthians 15:20**

Christ is Head - **Colossians 1:18; Matthew 28:18-20**

King - **1Timothy 6:15**

Author/Captain - **Hebrews 2:10**

Under Christ given - **Ephesians 4:11-12**

Apostles - ambassadors, representatives, judiciaries

2Corinthians 5:20; Ephesians 6:20; Matthew 18:18; Matthew 19:28; Acts 15

Prophets - inspired, proclaimers, revealers, edifiers,

1Corinthians 12:28; James 1:25; 1Corinthians 14:3

Still operate are active, not in flesh but in message revealed in inspired writings of Scripture -

Matthew 19:28; 1Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 4:9

There is no earthly organization from Christ for the body as a whole. He as head is the sole hierarchy. Any effort to activate the universal through some agency of man's design pits the foolishness of man against God's wisdom - **1Corinthians 3:19-20; Acts 5:33-39**

Local Level - All saved in particular location - **1Corinthians 1:2; Philippians 1:1**

Each submits to Christ as Head

Under - evangelists, pastors, and teachers - **1Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11**

Special servants – deacons - **1Timothy 3:8-13**

The wisdom of God, designer of the church, has revealed this as the only functional unit of church on Earth. Anything larger, smaller, or other than this unit is a failure to preserve distinctive nature of New Testament church organization - **Ephesians 3:10**

Preserving this requires we understand the character of these local units

Autonomy

Independent in government; self-governing; without outside control - Webster's International Dictionary

Combination of two Greek words: Auto – self; Nomos – law

Thus self-law, self-governing, self-rule, each local unit is to govern itself
This nature is clear from Bible statements regarding local church
Law of Exclusion - Only organization found in NT, thus all others excluded

Direct Statements

Elder authority limited to local group - **1Peter 5:2; Acts 20:28; 14:23; Titus 1:5**

Apostolic Example

Autonomy of local elders respected by brethren in Antioch - **Acts 11:27-30**

Necessary Inference

Independently organized - **Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; Philippians 1:1**

Independently directed - **1Peter 5:2; Acts 20:28**

Independently charged - **Ephesians 4:12**

Independently functional **Acts 11:27-30; 2Corinthians 11:8-9; Philippians 4:15-16**

Applying Autonomy

Three areas of governance. They are not mixed and matched. Local autonomy does not mean each local unit functions in all three areas

Legislative - makes the laws - Christ ONLY lawgiver - **James 4:12; Galatians 6:2**

His law is complete - **2Peter 1:2-3**

Perfect - **James 1:25**

Final - **Galatians 1:8-9; Jude 3**

Church cannot legislate - make its own laws

Judicial - interprets the laws - Apostles are the judiciary of the kingdom - **Matthew 19:28**

Applied law to function and discipline of the church

Church do not judge law to determine official meaning - **James 4:11-12; 2Peter 1:20-21**

Executive - carries out the laws – Local Church

Determines what expediences will be used to carry out law. Function in harmony with law and what law has authorized

Fellowship - **Acts 9:26**

Discipline - **1Corinthians 5; 2Thessalonians 3:6; 2Thessalonians 3:14-15**

Who, when, where to do work

Equality

Each local body is equal

No sponsoring church or contributing church

Each local congregation is equally responsible to carry out law

Man's plan would have some groups more, or less, responsible

One group overseeing the work while other, usually smaller groups, simply provide funds for doing the work with little or no oversight regarding what work is to be done by whom or where the work is to be done.

Sufficiency

Each local body is sufficient to do the work

No external organization or society is needed

No need for boards or councils