

The Biblical Model

The Bible presents a model for churches that is each church is a local independent church, autonomous, not making hierarchies or authorities over churches.

The Dominion of Peter. The Catholic Church declares that they are the biblical authority over every church with Peter as the first pope, and all “legitimate” churches have to be subject under their pope, “the Victor of Christ.” Peter was the worse apostle with many errors because he is the only one who Jesus himself said “*Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me*” **Mat 16:23**. Moreover Paul had to rebuke Peter over his doctrine and poor conduct because of his errors (**Gal 2:11**). The poor example of Peter teaches us that men are not reliable. We have to base ourselves on an inspired Bible, not men, nor on the apostles. It is against the will of God that we follow men that “*draw away disciples after them*” (**Acts 20:29-30**). Then Paul, being a missionary who was not one of the apostles, corrected the principle figure among the apostles. Paul, working outside of an official commission by the apostles, was nonetheless recognized (**Gal 2:9**) by “the pillars” of the faith (James, Cephas, and John) even though he had no formal relationship with them. This is not to boast of his independence, but rather to realize who has authority in the church. It is not a spiritual father (guru) (Mat 23:8-10), nor the principle people in the church, nor the church as a human organization (where we historically came from), but rather who adheres best to Scriptures.

The Independence of Paul. Paul came after Peter, and was a novice when the Apostle Peter was well established among the Apostles, but Paul was authorized directly from God. False teachers were coming from Jerusalem saying that all had to be circumcised in addition to believing in Christ (**Acts 15:1-2**). The church in Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas leading them, confronted this heresy, and in the end, they went to Jerusalem to rebuke it. By being “the Jerusalem mother church” (**Acts 11:19-21**) did not make them immune from rebuke or

doctrinal examination. The discussion and logic of Scriptures was what had/has the authority of God, and not any “mother church.”

The relationship between Missionary, Mission, and Mother Church. Some people who declare that every legitimate church absolutely has to have come from a mother church (usually them only), and thus they trace their roots back to the Apostles. Their presumption is that nobody has authority except if it is conceded from a “legitimate church”, going back to the Jerusalem church. Paul was the first generation after the apostles, but he clearly declared that his doctrine and understanding of the Scriptures did not come the apostles, but directly from heaven, from god. God called him individually, and he accomplished his mission. In **Gal. 1:17-22**, Paul declared that he had neither relationship nor authority from the church in Jerusalem for his ministry. To the contrary the disciples refused to accept him when he sought to meet with them after his salvation (**Acts 9:26-29**). God told Paul to leave Jerusalem because they were not going to receive him, and so his acceptance by them was not important (**Acts 22:17-18**). Paul had neither authority nor relationship with this “*Jerusalem mother church*”, but was directly authorized from God.

Act 13:1 *Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, ... and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, **Separate me Barnabas and Saul** for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they **sent them away**.*

Barnabas and Paul were leaders of the Antioch church, and God called them to be missionaries. “*Separate*” is aphorizo, which means separate, and “*sent them away*” is apoluo, to divorce, separate, or totally liberate without further dealings. The church in Antioch had no powers of authority over these missionaries “like their employers” because they total divorced themselves from this church as far as their ministries were concerned. In **Phil 4:15**, Paul comments that in the beginning of his ministry, only

the Philippian church had supported him. Paul had relationship neither with the Jerusalem church, nor with the Antioch church. There was no “mother church” concept with authority over the missionaries. The Antioch church was not giving to Paul in the beginning of his ministry, although they probably did give him donations when he left them, but we do not see the tight obedience and submission some would teach.

The lack of authority in Paul’s Dealings

The Bible establishes that every church is independent from any other entity that would have authority over it. Paul established local churches, but Paul did not teach that they had to submit themselves to Paul nor to the church where he originally started out from (Antioch) neither to “*the Jerusalem mother church*.” Paul left them with the doctrine of autonomy. Almost all his churches fervently loved him and had tender affection for him as their spiritual father, except in the case of the Corinthian church (**2Cor 3:1**), where we see a frustrated Paul arguing with a rebellious church which had prohibited Paul from even speaking without a “*letter of recommendation*” from their church leadership. This would be the perfect opportunity for Paul to give them a good convincing argument about “*they are a mission work of Paul, part of the Antioch (or Jerusalem) church, and it is rebellion what they are doing!*” But instead of this, we see a total absence of ideas of ecclesiastical of a church or missionary who established their mission work (term and concept never used in the Bible). Paul started churches, not missions. Paul argued with them from the Scripture, expositing the truth by means of what God had said. Yes, he spoke with the authority of God (2Cor 10:8), but he never appealed to this authority as if he was their archbishop or something similar, but only as their beloved father (**1Cor 4:15**) that respected their autonomy. With the constant attacks of false prophets that try to enslave the brethren (**Gal 2:4**) under their systems and arguments of authority, God wanted every church to be autonomous. Every church had authority and responsibility for their own

church, and nothing more, and without intervention of outsiders.

The Four Columns of Independence

(1) **Individual Obedience to God's Will.** All this begins with and centers on the strong commitment of the members and ministers of the church to seek and comply with the will of God. Independence from others is not the same as doing whatever you want, but is liberty to obey God as God speaks directly to your heart from His word (Christian liberty **Gal 2:4; 5:1, 13**).

(2) **Auto Governing.** God instituted a group of elders in each local church to govern (Titus 1:5), and we see no mention neither of the presence of outside groups nor of outside individuals governing or giving orders in the local church. God has given the requirements for deacons and bishops, and told the church itself; to "look ye out among you" (**Acts 6:3-6**). Paul spoke to the elders of Ephesus (**Acts 20:16-30**) and clearly indicated to them "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers" (**20:28**). There were not outside entities, but the Holy Ghost that called them and established them in church leadership.

The idea of a person or entity who makes important decisions for the flock is exactly the concept of "pastor", one of the elders of the church. Paul (an apostle and missionary) established many local churches, but Paul had to use biblical arguments to convince them of their problems and solutions, and even though Paul was the founder of these churches, he respected their autonomy. Paul's interest was the establishment of local elders in each church to administer and supervise.

(3) **Auto Sustaining.** These churches had a great preoccupation with helping the poor among them (**Gal 2:10** *Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.* **Acts 11:20-30; Rom 15:25-27; 1Cor 16:1; James 2:15-16; 1John 3:17**). But always the principle is that every person should sustain himself and work in order to help the needy

(**Eph 4:28; 1The 4:11-12**). This principle extends to churches, in that no church should be economically dependent on outsiders. Help should be something of love, not control.

(4) **Auto Reproducing.** It is not possible that the church (the divine model) should be free of evil influences and forces of control if it depends on entities such as schools, seminaries, denominations, and fellowships in order to function and reproduce. Today there is no lack of people who "help" the church by stealing their authority and ministry. Each church should be a super strong instrument of God for evangelizing and teaching. Equally each church in particular should be who prepares their ministers and pushes the reproduction of local churches in the mission field.

Biblical Fellowship against Phariseeism

Missionaries promoted a very strong fellowship among the NT churches, but it was for edifying one another, not for control and dominion. God rebuked this doctrine of the Nicolaitans that is the dominion of the brethren (**Rev 2:6, 15**). The Pharisees established themselves on their control as an authority over Judaism in general, always presenting themselves as the experts and the authority for whatever matter. Jesus had to constantly and strongly rebuke them. God wants local church leadership, where each member weekly observes the personal example so as to judge if it was biblical. Denominationalism removes the leadership from being local. Modern Pharisees seek to rob us of our liberty in Christ, "reducing us to slavery" (**Gal 2:4**) under their systems of control.

Why we are Independent

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Why we are not part of a denomination or ecclesiastic hierarchy



At times people ask me, "Why aren't you part of a denomination group?" Others agree that they are not part of a denomination either, but they are part of church fellowships that come to be almost the same thing. A denomination is a hierarchy over local churches where they supervise from above the local church.