

widespread in the Empire by 100 AD and it surely was linked closely with the movements of the Apostles after they departed from Jerusalem. But the exact means and ways of its growth are essentially matters of tradition and much of it late tradition at that.

### Structure

No evidence exists for a power structure in the early church or for the proof of organizational oneness. The Jerusalem church was very prominent in Acts and the care of the saints in Jerusalem later occupied a significant place in apostolic thinking. But there is no proof of an imposition of authority by one congregation on another. There is no suggestion that the Jerusalem council (Acts 15) was a continuing body or that it sought to exercise authority over any matters other than those addressed to it as they grew out of the Pauline witness. The earliest authority seems centered in the Apostles and the message they conveyed. There is no evidence of a planned "apostolic succession" although in the next century something was wanted along that line.

Similarly there is no evidence for the concept of absolute autonomy. There was a sharing of communications, responsibility, and witness. If the organizational structure was not mandated on the one hand, absolute independence is not seen on the other. The churches seemed to "belong together" and to a large extent they understood this so far as we can see. No doubt this was made more possible by the simple fact of the governmental organizations with which they lived. It was easier, we assume, to see a oneness concept in a world where the societal patterns followed that line...easier to see it there than in a world where the societal patterns diverge.

### Discipline

The most basic church discipline suggests that the earlier movements of believers followed the developed patterns of the synagogue. It was the background of most of the early company and had been enormously used in the expansion and nurture of Israel. There is no reason to think the form was contrary to the general ideal of the church and as the pattern had been so well used among the Jews, it may be what accounts for the rapid spread of church centers. (It is a principle of expansion that might work well in our modern work of missions.) The total break with the