

Spirit. All the churches therefore are, in one point of view, apart from all prudential law, as much bound together, and are as fully obligated to labor unitedly, as the different individual members of one particular church are obligated to labor in unison. As the different blocks of stone which constituted Solomon's temple did fit with each other ere they left the mountains where they were prepared by the workmen, and all fitted admirably when the whole were put together in the massive building; so the individual members of a congregation are happily jointed and straightened by the gospel to fit with one another, and the whole materials in all the churches join beautifully together to make the entire building which is fitly framed.

Hence, we are willing to maintain, by the oracles of heaven, that the independence of each church is neither longer nor broader than the independence of each individual member of a church.

Now, for the sake of being in good company, let us glance at some of the primitive churches to observe how they contributed, not for one specific purpose, but for all purposes. For we must not suppose that the apostolic congregations consisted of members who were such caviling, ring-streaked, nut-shell calculators as to construct diverse kinds of treasuries and parcel out their offerings by models such as have since become fashionable. Their pattern, in all things, was their Generous and Divine Lord, and they were whole-souled imitators, doing nothing on the dwarf or half principle. 'Neither was there any among them [the multitude that believed in the city of Jerusalem] who lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them [very expensive religion!] and brought the price of the things sold, and (put it into the treasury of a Help-the-Poor Society or into a 'missionary organization' treasury?—no, by no means—but) laid it down at the apostles' feet'—just the place for the contributions of such a people as the multitude of Christ's friends in Jerusalem. At *the apostles' feet* is a very impressive mode of expression to indicate that this gospel liberality was put under the divine control, or subject to the apostles' authority. The issue justifies the wisdom of this control: for distribution was made according as every man had need. Acts 4: 34, 35. The prudential Ananias, under the plea of bringing the whole of his riches to be used by divine wisdom, reserved a portion of it in his own hands; but we will not say that he designed to begin a discretionary society, for it is apparent he conceived that his own discretion, with the help of lady Sapphira, was quite sufficient to manage his reservation to advantage.