

one fold, under the care of one or more shepherds. As things are, the great body of believers must be formed into separate congregations; and each church or congregation must meet, observe Christ's ordinances, be tended and ruled by itself—must enjoy the privileges, and perform the functions of an integral portion of Christ's church. Other churches recognise the character and claims of a sister church, and they are, in like manner, owned and honoured in their respective localities and spheres of influence. They are ecclesiastically independent, but fraternally one. No one church interferes with the internal arrangements of its neighbours; no one claims jurisdiction over others. All, however, acknowledge each other as having a fellowship of interest, a oneness of character, a common bond, uniting church to church, and all to their common Lord. We do not here undertake to solve the ecclesiastical problem 'How far churches can be at once independent and united;' but it is obviously quite compatible with Congregational independence for churches to be united in the bonds of Christian fellowship and confidence, and to co-operate in promoting objects of common interest. This is theoretically acknowledged, but the practical manifestation of it may be very imperfect. Churches planted at remote distances from each other may be *negatively* united; that is, they belong to the same section of the professing church, and nothing has ever been said or done hostile to their unity and love; but there may be as little said or done betokening affectionate fellowship. The members of those churches are personally unknown; they have enjoyed no opportunities of intercourse; and they are not to blame for this, it is beyond their reach. In the case, however, of neighbouring churches this negative unity will not do. There will and must be something *practically* manifested, either for or against their loving fellowship.

The bond of christian love encircles the whole household of faith. Many passages of Scripture are emphatic on the operation of charity, the bond of perfection, as it bears individually on believers: there are, however, parts which indicate its existence in the wider sphere of the church, in its collective capacity towards other churches. "The churches of Christ salute you" (Rom. xvi. 16). "The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you" (1 Pet. v. 13). "Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another, and indeed ye do it towards all the brethren in Macedonia" (1 Thess. iv. 9, 10). Letters of commendation, granted and received, establish this intercommunion of which we speak: which, by the way, it is well to have specific in address and purpose, since the courtesy and close connection thus recognised will be felt. "I commend unto you Phœbe our sister, who is a servant of the church at Cenchrea; that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you" (Rom. xvi. 1, 2). "They are messengers of the churches, shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love" (2 Cor. viii. 23, 24).

Churches of the same faith and order will necessarily have great objects to prosecute in common. The diffusion of the Gospel in their own and other countries—the education of the rising ministry—the maintenance of suitable periodical literature—a just provision for the support of aged ministers, their widows and orphans—all this affords ample room for coöperation. Union is strength. A holy and quickening influence flows from the pursuit of any of the blessed objects connected with the kingdom of Christ. All the churches uniting for grand ends are stimulated, beholding each others zeal and faith; they provoke one another to love and to good works. The strong churches receive benefit in the exercise of giving, while those that are feeble are led to