

THE  
CANADIAN INDEPENDENT.

---

---

VOL. X.

TORONTO, MARCH, 1864.

No. 9.

---

---

THE INTERCOURSE OF SISTER CHURCHES.

We remember having met with a sneer at what was called the unscriptural system of Independency, and those of our readers who have long battled for the faith and order of our churches must have had cast in their teeth some grains, at least, of the rope of sand which their opponents allege they hold on by. Our experience of Congregational Independency has not brought us into contact with those who, in selfish and bigoted isolation, deny all fellowship with sister churches. As we understand our system, and as we have marked its operations, there is a cordial and generous recognition of mutual interests and work. This however, it is possible, may to some extent be overlooked; a practical isolation may induce a coldness and distance, injurious to all parties concerned. The intercourse of sister churches and their influence on each other is a subject we would rejoice to see brought out by the powerful pen of some brother. In the meantime, we advance a few thoughts.

The churches of Christ should hold friendly and fraternal intercourse with one another. Christian communion is not confined within the narrow circle of those meeting in one place. The reader of the New Testament clearly discerns a oneness of aim and a unity of purpose in all the churches of the saints. We do not find one set of doctrines suited to the climate of Judea, and another fitted to the tendencies at Rome. Everywhere and on all occasions there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Hearts conquered by the Saviour's love rejoice in submission to his authority. The two or three in one place, meeting in his name and honouring his laws, constitute a church; yet are they not cut off from sympathy and assistance on the part of stronger churches elsewhere: these remember, "we have a little sister." It has been well said—"It will greatly help us, in our examination of questions touching the intercourse of churches, to keep steadily in view *what* they are, and *for what purposes* they exist. It is possible for us, in discussing matters affecting ecclesiastical polity, to have our minds diverted from the *ends* of organization, and to view church order and church rights, as if these were the *ends*, instead of being merely means to an end. Churches are societies of Christians formed with the twofold purpose of promoting the edification of their members and of attracting others to their fellowship. No individual church can legitimately have ends of its own to promote, not in accordance with the true interests of other societies of Christian brethren. Were it possible for all Christ's disciples throughout the world to meet and worship in one place, 'being of one accord and of one mind,' as at the beginning, there would be one church. That there are more than one arises from the necessity of circumstances—from the impossibility of their being gathered as one flock, in