

THE
CANADIAN INDEPENDENT.

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THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE
CHURCHES.

WE Congregationalists lay a great deal of stress on the independence of the local church. This is one of our distinctive and prominent doctrines. We strenuously insist on this: that every society of Christian believers is competent to manage its internal affairs, without dictation or interference from any outside body. But this doctrine is not all that we hold. The fellowship of the churches is as much an article in our creed as is the independence of the churches. We maintain that our several local organizations should be in relations the most intimate the one to the other, and that out of these relations flow blessed privileges and solemn obligations.

Perfect Congregationalism—indeed, we may say, perfect Christianity—is found in the perfect combination of these two ideas—*independence and fellowship*. Freedom with Union! is its motto; but it is not very easy to combine these two elements. The fact is, that they are hardly ever combined properly. As a rule, there is an over-dose of the one, and an under-dose of the other. They are like two unequal horses harnessed together; instead of pulling together evenly and well, one gets ahead of the other. In our Church, in England, up to the present time, independence has been made far more prominent than fellowship; in the United States it has usually been otherwise. English Congregationalism is freer, more liberal than American; American Congregationalism is better organized and drilled than English.

There is no reason for discarding either idea of Congregationalism, here, in Canada. We must insist on the independence of the churches—we must also insist on their fellowship.

But are these two principles understood by our churches? We fear that they are not. And because of this, there are two dangers that ever threaten us; the one is, that liberty may degenerate into license and anarchy; the other is that union may lead to centralization and ecclesiastical domination.

Mistakes are often made by those who specially advocate the closer Fellowship of the Churches. How can these mistakes be escaped? By remembering two things:

First, the fellowship is fellowship of the churches. The union is not a union of pastors, or of pastors and deacons, but of churches, and of churches in their church capacity. There is a wide distinction between these things, although there are some who cannot see it. It is the fellowship of the churches. The churches by their corporate action

must enter into it. The churches in their corporate capacity must discharge all the obligations that arise out of it. There must be no confounding of churches and church officers.

Then, further, it is *fellowship* of the churches. All churches are placed on a level of brotherly equality. There is no arrogation of authority. There is no claim of such a thing. The churches are simply on the footing of good neighbors and friends. Their intercourse is the intercourse of neighbors and friends. They are to work together as neighbors and friends.

Now, for fellowship in this sense we would plead earnestly. Our Canadian churches have had too little of it in the past. They have stood too much apart. And we would recommend that some measures be immediately proposed to bring them nearer together. We would ourselves suggest one or two agencies that might be used.

In some of our American associations they have employed with great success what are called "circular meetings." A few contiguous churches are selected, and a fortnight or so is devoted to special services in these churches, going through them in order. Members of one church will then attend the services of the other churches and become acquainted with their brethren. We think that in some sections of Canada, this instrumentality could be used to advantage.

Then, sister churches should be consulted with more frequency and regularity than has been done as yet in unusual cases, not only in cases of perplexity and difficulty, but in all cases of an extraordinary character. There might often be a transmission of messages from one church to another, and every church might be helped by the wisdom and sympathy of its neighbors.

We look for a movement in this direction, and that right speedily. Our churches must come closer together, otherwise they will never be much of a power for good in the land.

TAKE YOUR OWN CHURCH PAPER.

SOME people good Christian people, too, do without any newspaper in their houses. Others take the county paper and are satisfied with that; others still add to the county paper some cheap, city journal, that may be very good in its place, but does not contain much food for a hungry soul. A few reverse all this order, and take first, their own church paper, then the county paper, and then some other religious paper, or some literary paper or magazine for themselves and their children. Which do you think is the better way for Christian people—those who profess to be living not so much for this world as the next? Which?

An American exchange puts the matter of church papers thus:

Every cause has its organ. We have papers adapted to

every class of minds and to every drift of thought secular and religious. We have undenominational, independent papers, as they are called, that claim to represent religion at large, some of them very able and very full of intelligence. They may serve well the general interests of a nation. In comparison with them, the denominational paper may appear as, in itself, of less value. But in its sphere, in the special work to which it is devoted, it does a service which the outside paper can never do.

This needs no argument. The pastor does not need to be told that the paper of his Church, if at all worthy of its place, better than any other, helps him in his pastoral work. It can help him in his teachings in ways inadmissible in the pulpit. It can say to his people many things which they need to know, but which, in delicacy, he would hesitate to say and could not say to so good effect. It keeps them in a knowledge of Church work without which they cannot be expected to be duly interested in it, or to fully act their part in supporting it. In addition to editorial suggestions and discussions, it may give in its matter, communicated and selected, the best thought of the best minds of the Church and of the best organs of other Churches; so that, other things being equal, the congregations best supplied with the Church paper are the best informed in what they need to know for their own prosperity and for what they are called to do in promoting the general interests of the Church.

No such results can be expected from an outside or independent paper. It may excel as a medium of general information, but so far as the faith professed or the special work to be done by any particular denomination is concerned, it cannot meet the wants. It is more likely to weaken attachment to the principles and devotion to the interest of the denomination.

News of the Churches.

SPECIAL services are being held in Newmarket.

STUDENT SAER has preached for three Sabbaths at Quebec.

REV. E. C. W. MCCOLL, M. A., has accepted the call to the church at Quebec.

THE Rev. J. G. Sanderson has left Oro for Danville to commence his ministry there.

ON Monday, the 6th inst., Rev. Manly Benson lectured at Frome, on "Across the Continent."

STUDENT POWELL has been preaching during the Christmas vacation at Ayr and Guelph, and at both places with much acceptance.

REV. J. A. R. DICKSON has resigned the pastorate of the Northern Congregational Church. The resignation has been accepted.

REV. CHARLES B. WOODCOCK, pastor of the Congregational Church, of St. Johns, New Brunswick, has resigned on account of ill-health.

THE Stouffville Church deeply regrets the loss of Mr. Timothy Millard, an obituary of whom will appear in our next issue. On New Year's Eve the friends had a "Temple Arch." This was loaded with gifts for the Sunday School scholars and friends, who spent a most happy time.

REV. ARTHUR MURSELL's lecture on "David Livingston," in Shaftesbury Hall, Monday evening, was one of the richest treats that a Toronto audience has had for many a day. The large audience shewed their appreciation of the lecture by frequent and prolonged applause. Hon. Alex. Mackenzie occupied the chair.

THE anniversary services of the Alton Congregational Sunday School, were held on New Year's Evening. The exercises consisted of recitations, readings and music. A sumptuous tea was provided by the ladies of the congregation. Addresses were delivered by Revs. Lynch, Love, and the pastor, H. J. Colwell.

THE Coldsprings Congregational Church held a very successful Soiree on New Year's Eve. Excellent music was furnished by a choir of Indians. Speeches grave and gay were delivered by the Rev. Messrs. Renner, Bell, C. S. Pedley and the pastor. The church is doing well. Some have become members lately, and others are ripening.

REV. A. J. BRAY preached in the Western Congregational church, Sunday morning, the 19th inst. His sermon, from the text, "Let us go on to perfection," was listened to with profit by all who heard it. On Friday evening he will lecture in Shaftesbury Hall, on "Politics: their use and abuse." Mr. Bray is the guest of Prof. Goldwin Smith while in the city.