

THE
CANADIAN INDEPENDENT.

VOL. X.

TORONTO, OCTOBER, 1863.

No. 4.

CHURCH FELLOWSHIP.

CORRECT views on this question, are in our opinion necessary to the conscientious and profitable discharge of the duties of membership in a Church. Undoubtedly, there is a confidential and Christian communion of individuals in the private exchange of sentiments and mutual love flowing from the truth sincerely received by the parties. There is, however, according to the New Testament, a *Church fellowship* which it is not well either to ignore or forget. When men believed the gospel they separated themselves from the world, and joined together as disciples. This was the invariable order of proceeding, a fact which is destructive of the theory of Church polity, which makes the ecclesiastical organization the channel of grace and salvation. The association of believers in visible societies, to obey the laws of Christ, followed conversion. In that new position they had duties to discharge, it demanded steadfast continuance in the Apostle's doctrine and *fellowship*, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. The true nature and design of Church fellowship should be considered. The Apostle John says, "that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Fellowship implies oneness. Between an Apostle and the weakest believer there is communion, for they are one in heart and soul on the great essentials of religion. By the Apostolic testimony, cordially embraced, every barrier of caste and animosity is swept away, for there is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Sythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all. A Church of Christ must therefore be constituted of material that harmonizes; indeed society among men necessarily involves unity in the great objects for which the body exists: friends and not enemies compose the membership. In religion, oneness of views, of character and of work, forms the fitness for combination. Ceaseless contention and strife would spring up from the amalgamation of parties diametrically opposed, hence the charge to the Corinthian church, 2 Cor. vi. 14, 16, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an Infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

At the very entrance into fellowship, it becomes needful to furnish such evidences of the experience of the power of religion as will be satisfactory. This touches an important controversy. Is it to be evidence of true conversion to God, or a certain measure of Christian knowledge, and a good moral