

As one body they are exhorted to mutual forbearance in non-essentials. They are also told that their faith, speaking of them again as one, is known throughout the world, and that their obedience is come abroad to all men. The apostle trusts to be brought forward by *them* in his journey to Spain, and he earnestly requests that they would strive together with him in prayer for his safety and usefulness in Judea.

Now, if these little house-churches and assemblies had had diverse interests, had been in the habit of keeping isolated from one another, had cherished feelings of hostility, jealousy, and dislike towards each other, is it not evident that the apostle could never have addressed them as one? Is it not certain, indeed, that he would have visited them with rebuke? Was it not a somewhat similar state of things in Corinth that brought down some of the severest reproofs to be found in his writings?

We may gather, then, respecting city churches, these general principles:

1. That though the Christians of a city meet in separate assemblies, there should be a manifest and substantial oneness of spirit amongst them, a knowledge of one another by name, and a unity which, though not corporate, is certainly real.

2. Members of one church are members of all, and are entitled to church privileges in all.

3. Teachers and officers are for the benefit of all, and are not merely officers so far as the individual assembly is concerned. Their gifts are to be used on behalf of the whole body, for the sake of the common Master of all.

To give effect to these principles, and to manifest and increase fraternity, it is necessary that there should be interchanges of services between the pastors on behalf of the people, and frequent consultations of pastors, deacons and teachers, respecting matters of common interest, and especially such as relate to aggressive operations. The subjects of such consultations might be the welfare of the Sabbath schools; the drawing in of young men from scenes of temptation, and bringing them under Christian influences; the extension of the gospel amongst the ignorant, the abandoned, the degraded, and the criminal portions of the population; in addition to which might be named the care of orphans, of the sick, of the prisoner, of the emigrant and of the stranger. Some of these works, though in perfect accord with the example of the great Master, are not perhaps as well cared for by us as they ought to be—in fact one might say they are sadly neglected.

Such frequent conferences would tend to break down that isolation of churches from one another which is the great reproach of our church order, and would bring about a much nearer approximation to that unity of believers in one city which was undoubtedly the rule in apostolic times. And I would still further suggest, whether it would not be possible to have, once a quarter, a united meeting of all the churches of a city for prayer and conference on the same subjects; on which occasion it might be desirable to partake of the Supper of the Lord.

But whether thus or not, I would further suggest that a united communion service of the most solemn kind should take place on the first Sabbath of each year, in which the whole operations of the churches during the preceding year should be reviewed; confession should be made of short-comings and sins, and, after much prayer, a solemn renewal of a church covenant be ratified in the name of the common Head. Such a service would be the strongest possible bond of brotherhood between the members of various churches in one city; and where a city was too large for this to be done (a