

This spirit once perfected, would enter into every department of Christian life, and would especially characterise each congregation within the general household of faith, for, what the family is to the nation, the congregation is to the Church universal. We know that the virtue of the family constitutes the virtue also of the nation, so in like manner, the virtue of the congregation is reflected in the character of the united Church. Where the home spirit and affections are lost among a people, *there* nationality and patriotism will soon disappear. It is these home feelings which inspire patriotism and make a people feel that they have something worth defending and cherishing. The most famous cry of invaded nations has been, "Our hearths and homes"; and the defence of these has frequently set on fire the noblest passions of human nature. Love of home never destroys patriotism, on the contrary, it creates and strengthens it. Just so shall it be with the congregation. When the affection and spirit peculiar to it become dead or lost, in the same proportion will its catholicity disappear. The intimacy of congregational fellowship, or the purity and fervour of congregational love, will never diminish the sincerity or the vigour of the individual Christian, or of the united congregation in the prosecution of large Christian aims or in the exercise of wider Christian affections. The congregation is indeed the nursery of all Christian virtue. It is in it that for the most part, the graces of the Spirit find their due exercise and development; and by increasing and strengthening these graces, we do not contract the Christian heart, but rather fit it so to expand its sanctified affections as to embrace the whole commonwealth of Saints, and the whole work of Christianity. This is a Law of Nature. We see it illustrated in the Creation of the Sun, in which God concentrated the light which he had already made, not certainly that by this means the light should be confined within narrower limits than before, but that on the contrary it might exert a greater influence in the sphere of Heaven, and shine with greater power upon the revolving planets. So likewise, neither is the vitality of our bodily members hindered by the concentration of our life in the fountain of the heart. So neither will it be found in human experience that the concentration of the affections in the immediate circles of Christian life hinders their expansion toward those Christian objects which are more remote. The loving of God with all the heart, mind, and strength, has never hindered any man from loving his neighbours as himself, but on the contrary, those who love God best and most, have always had the most and the best love to spare for their fellows. The same thing applies to all things good and holy with which we come into personal contact. The giving to them the affection which they may justly claim, does not diminish, but rather enlarges, the fountain of love. Love developes itself from the centre outwards and admits of no ellipse. On this principal it were well to cherish the "*Esprit de Corps*" of the Christian congregation, and to encourage by every means in our power an enthusiasm for its welfare and a sincere devotedness to its divine work of converting sinners and edifying saints.

Under the dominion of this spirit, personal jealousies and animosities would soon disappear, and all would seek only to provoke one another to love and good works. When this "*Esprit de Corps*" shall prevail, the strength of a congregation, and consequently of an entire church, shall no longer to any extent be expended upon itself, but as from a strong and healthy heart, the pulsations of its vigorous life will ever send forth sympathy and aid to all the members of the body, and to the world at large. The prevalence of this spirit of brotherhood would further arrest the disintegrating processes which selfish affections and sectional errors are ever introducing into the Christian Church, and by which the "Unity of the spirit in the bond of peace" is frequently reduced to atoms. There would then be social strength,