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Corporate Life

by T. Austin-Sparks

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In order that life may fulfil its function, reveal its power, reach its full measure, and pass on its potentialities, it must assume form. Life in itself has never been seen. Only through the form which it takes can it express itself. It must have a body. It is only through the body and corporate relations that the great laws of life and the spiritual kingdom can come to fullest expression and efficiency. Life involves relations. Isolation spells death.

The relation into which the new-born child of God is introduced is twofold - first to its risen Lord, as Head of the Body which is the Church, and secondly to all its members, consisting of those who in every age and country have heard His voice, and come out at His call. They have not merely been 'called out,' they have been 'called in.' It is a call with a double object.

First it is private, personal, specific, as between the individual and his Lord. Stripping himself clear of all relations, entanglements, and environments, he must come first of all into the consciousness of his own nakedness, face to face with God *alone*, bringing nothing with him of his own personality. We are as truly born naked in the spiritual as in the natural realm. In the private presence of God relations are set up which are primary and fundamental. Spirit meets with spirit.

From that personal relatedness the child of God is introduced to a new order, a great spiritual fellowship, a relatedness of all who have been "born of the Spirit." This relatedness is as absolutely essential as is that of the organs of the physical body. For growth, function, safety, balance, and fulness, this co-ordination, interdependence and co-operation in spirit and practice is indispensable. It involves an utter repudiation of independence, separateness, and self-centredness. This is inherent in new birth and being "in one Spirit baptized into one body," and the sooner it is recognised the greater the saving of the precious time in spiritual maturity.

We are related to an order which is higher than anything on this earth or of the natural creation. The higher the organism, the longer the process of co-ordination. It takes a very much longer time for an elephant to be formed than other animals. But the presence of life can and will consummate the order if it is not violated.

"Till we all attain unto... the stature of the fulness of Christ."