The Role of the Spiritual Father in the Church of Christ

Many of us grew up in evangelical congregations. Few began their life of faith any other way.

And we grew up wrongly. We grew up in congregations where the whole doctrine of Christ was not taught, and Scripture says that such congregations do not have God*. (Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. 2 John 1:9) *

Many of us ended up in an institutionalised congregation, like an orphan nobody raised, where nobody ever asked us how we were doing or what was happening in our lives. We sat there for years, and our growth was badly stunted.

Many of us were never truly babes, never had a spiritual father to raise us step by step, the way a child is raised by its parents in the natural. At best, perhaps, we had an adviser, but never a father.

The Body of Christ is not a social club, nor simply a place where people worship. It is a carefully ordered structure that God established for the growth and perfecting of the saints.

The first stage of the life of faith that we find in the Word of God is spiritual infancy.

Yet few have had a spiritual father the way Timothy and Titus, and many others besides, had the apostle Paul.

The believers in the church at Corinth knew very clearly that the apostle Paul was their spiritual father. And when we look honestly at our own life of faith, we will find that we had no spiritual father to beget us through the gospel, to take care of us and give us the milk of the word, to see that our character was shaped after the character of Christ. There was no one to raise us and teach us to walk in the footsteps of Christ.

If our faith had been real, we too could say today what they could say: "He begat us through the gospel." Timothy knew full well that Paul was his spiritual father, and Paul called Timothy his beloved son, faithful in the Lord. Many times he said to him: "Son Timothy…"

If we do not begin the life of faith as babes, then we come in as a thief and a robber; we do not enter by the door the Lord Jesus left for us.

He established the Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. But if we try to enter the Body of Christ by some other door, it simply will not be possible.

Many of us have been saved for decades, yet when we came into the Church, we did not follow the steps laid down in the Word of Scripture.

We may well ask, taken aback: Did I really need a spiritual father right from the moment I turned to God? Can't it be done some other way? Why isn't a congregation good enough if it practises only worship, and not growth for the perfecting of the saints?

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"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it." (1 Corinthians 3:1-2)

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