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Notes on Divine Principles

by T. Austin-Sparks

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Unpublished study notes titled: The Divine Principles Governing the Life and Worship of the church.

(3) The Principle of Life in the Spirit *(Principles (1) and (2) are missing)*

By the Cross the principle of self which the scripture calls "the flesh" is ruled out in order to make way for the Lordship of Christ, made effective by the presence, and powerful control of the Holy Spirit. In this world, where Christ's Lordship is denied, the church is the sphere of His authority, which is always marked by the activity of the Holy Spirit and a spiritual order of things.

1. The prophetic promise of the New Covenant

In Jeremiah 31:31-34 God promises a new covenant with His people, in which He will "*put His law into their inward parts*", so that all should know Him.

This is further explained in Ezekiel 36:25-38 in these words: "I will cleanse you... I will give you a new heart... and I will put My Spirit within you". The famous passage in Joel 2:28-29 confirms it in a promise "*to pour out My Spirit on all flesh*".

These verses promise a new dispensation or dispensation, the age of the out-poured and in-dwelling Spirit of God. The New Covenant came in with Christ, and the new dispensation began with the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost.

2. The teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ

With the incarnation we begin to move towards the age of the Spirit. John the Baptist says "*He shall baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire*".

In the preparatory days of His incarnation our Lord showed:

(a) The spiritual nature of the kingdom of God

It is a spiritual kingdom requiring a spiritual birth in its members (John 3).

(b) The spiritual character of the new dispensation

Christ is to go away. The Spirit is to come to take charge until Christ comes again (John 14-16).

Note "*I go away*", "*I will come again*", "The Father will give you another comforter".

(c) His Ministry

(1) To indwell, guide and teach believers (John 14:17,26; 16:13).

(2) To glorify, testify of and reveal Christ (John 15:26; 16:13-14).

(3) To convict the world (John 16:8).

3. The historical record in Acts

The new dispensation began at Pentecost. Henceforth the church is to be a company living in the Spirit. Everything is to be "in the Holy Spirit" and under His power.

So the Holy Spirit:-

Creates the church (Acts 2:47; 5:14).

Fills the church (Acts 2;4; 4:31; 6:3; 7:55; 9:17).

Unites the church (Acts 4:32).

Witnesses through the church (Acts 5:32).

Empowers the church (Acts 1:8; 4:29-33).

Works through the church (Acts 2:41-47; 4:10; 5:1-11; 10:44).

Extends the church (Acts 8-11 and further).

Directs the church (Acts 8:29; 10:19; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 20:28).

4. The teaching of the epistles

Full development of truth comes in the Epistles. Main passages are -

(a) Romans 8:1-16 LIFE in the Spirit

(b) Romans 8:26-28 PRAYER in the Spirit

(c) 1 Corinthians 2:1-16 KNOWLEDGE in the Spirit

(d) 1 Corinthians 12:1-13 FELLOWSHIP in the Spirit

(e) 2 Corinthians 3:1-18 MINISTRY in the Spirit

(f) Galatians 5:16-26 PRACTICAL CONDUCT in the Spirit

(g) Ephesians 6:10-18 CONFLICT in the Spirit

(h) 1 Peter 2:1-9; Heb. 13:15; Philippians 3:3 WORSHIP in the Spirit

All is governed by Galatians 5:25: *"If we live in the Spirit"*. "Life in the Spirit" is to be the character of the church.

(4) The principle of separation

Our study of the truth of separation begins with consideration of two words "separate" and "sanctify". "Separate" has the idea of division between two inconsistent things. Used in Genesis 1. e.g. 4,7,14,18. God divides between light and darkness etc.

Sanctify has the idea of "withdrawal" or "apartness", and is used to describe the character of God as One who is utterly apart from sinfulness or defilement of any kind, e.g. Isaiah 6:3; Exodus 3:5.

These two ideas blend in the truth of the separation of God's people. God makes a "division" which must result in "apartness".

1. Separation in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament God is always seeking a separated people.

(a) Illustrations of it

(1) The Sons of God, i.e. godly line of Seth (Gen .5-6).

(2) Abraham (Gen. 12,13,14,17).

(3) Moses (Heb. 11:24-27).

(4) Israel (Ex. 19:5-6; 33:16; Lev. 20:22-26; Deut. 7:6; 1 Kings 8:53).

Note: "Separate from among all peoples, to thyself for an inheritance".

(5) The Levites (Deut. 10:8).

(6) The Nazarite (Num. 6:1-12).

(b) Meaning of it

(1) People for the Lord. The Lord's portion (Deut. 32:9; 14:2).

(2) Testimony in the World (Lev. 11:44; Deut. 28:9-14).

(c) Result of the denial of it

Wherever God's people forsook their separate position, judgment inevitably followed, e.g. Flood, Baal-Peor (Num. 25) and the events of Judges.

The other consequence was *the utter frustration of the purposes of God*, e.g. history of Israel.

2. Separation in the New Testament

The church is a separated company. Our position is plainly stated by the Lord in John 17. "*They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world*". We are to be sanctified and yet are sent into the world as witnesses for Christ. We are "in the world" (v. 11) but "not of the world" (v. 16).

The New Testament gives us five governing factors which determine our separation.

(a) We are separated by the cross

As the cross separated the Incarnate from the resurrection life of Christ, so the cross separates the Christian from sin and the world. (Rom. 6. Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 5 and Gal. 6:14). We are dead to sin, and crucified to the world.

(b) We are separated by our life in Christ

In Christ we live unto God and are to yield ourselves to Him as those alive from the dead (Rom. 6:10-14).

In Christ we are "hidden in God" and are therefore to "seek the things that are above", i.e. in the spiritual world (Col. 3:1-4).

(c) We are separated by the light

God is Light. Christians are "children of Light" and they should "walk in the light". The world is in darkness (Eph. 6:12. 1 Thes. 5:4-8). Light cannot have fellowship with darkness, it can only witness against it (Eph. 5:7-14).

(d) We are separated by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit

We are a sanctuary, a temple of God, in whom God dwells and walks (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). Therefore we cannot have fellowship with idolatry of any kind. (1 Cor. 6:13-20).

(e) We are separated by our love to God

Love for God, and love for "the world" are inconsistent (1 John 2:15-17). The world is ridden with lust, i.e. ... selfish desire. God is full of love, i.e. selfless desire, and these two do not cohere. At Calvary

the world's lust and the Father's love were fully revealed, nor is the situation any different now. Therefore "love not the world".

(5) The baptism of the Holy Spirit

Believers should live under the governing fact of their "baptism in the Holy Spirit". Yet this term needs to be rightly understood so as to avoid error both in doctrine and experience.

The word 'baptise' means to 'immerse into', and has a reference both to a literal act and a spiritual experience. Literal baptism or immersion in water is the symbol of or testimony to spiritual baptism or immersion in the Holy Spirit. As a single drop may be submerged in the ocean by means of contact, so every believer by union with Christ is baptised into Him. We, however, do not lose our personality.

1. The prophecy of John the Baptist

John stated "*I baptise you in water ... He shall baptise you in the Holy Spirit and fire*" (Matt. 3:11). Baptism at the hands of John was a sign of repentance, a washing away of sin, and a desire to begin a new life. But Christ would begin a new era in which Israel would be enveloped in the Holy Spirit who would burn up unrighteousness and purge sin like cleansing fire. So would be fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 4:4 and Joel 2:28.

2. The Fulfilment at Pentecost

The Lord's statement in Acts 1:5 refers to the baptism of John and contrasts it with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is distinctly applied to. Pentecost. The term "baptism" in or by the Holy Spirit is never used again except in 1 Corinthians 12:3. Note the following facts about the Pentecostal baptism.

- (a) A distinct event fulfilling the promise of Christ.
- (b) A sending of the Holy Spirit to abide for ever (John 14:16,26).
- (c) A filling of believers, i.e. a controlling of them.
- (d) A showing of His presence by supernatural actions.
- (e) A commencement of a new dispensation. Other supernatural evidences (e.g. Acts 8, 10 and 19) were given at distinct points where the transition from the one age to the other was to be markedly shown.

3. The Teaching of Paul in 1 Corinthians 12

The only use in the Pauline Epistles of the term "baptism in the Spirit" is in 1 Corinthians 12:13: "*For in (or by) one Spirit have we all been baptised into one body... and have all been made to drink into one Spirit*".

Two parallel phrases describe one experience, under two figures — "baptism" and "drinking into". What is this experience?

(a) It is a past completed act — not a constant experience.

This is shown by the aorist tense of the verbs.

(b) it is an experience shared by all believers.

"We all have been". The baptism of the Spirit is not an experience enjoyed by certain Christians and not by others,

(c) It is equivalent to the act of receiving the Spirit.

"We have been baptised ... and made to drink into". Now faith in Christ, and confession of Christ is the one condition for receiving the Holy Spirit. That is clear from Acts 2:38 and the following verses: 1 John 5; 1 John 1:13; John 3:6; Romans 8:9,15,16; John 7:37-39.

(d) It is baptism into the Body of Christ.

If it is a select experience, then only those who know it are in the church, the Body of Christ.

4. Baptism in the Spirit in the Spirit and baptism into Christ

Romans 6.3-11 show that baptism into Christ is spiritual union with Christ as of a branch grafted into a living stem. Union in death and in resurrection. "Alive unto God — in Christ".

Galatians 3:27-29 shows that baptism into Christ is a receiving of His life and nature, so that we are "One Man" in Him. Old distinctions and divisions do not pertain in the fellowship of a corporate life in Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:13 shows that baptism in the Spirit is the same as baptism into Christ and baptism into the Body.

5. Baptism in the Spirit and the Filling with the Spirit

"Pentecost is the one great effusion of the Holy Spirit which ever after touches and governs every individual conversion" (Calvin).

(a) At regeneration we are baptised by the Spirit into Christ and into the Body.

In one divine act we receive the Spirit, are joined to Christ as living members of Him, in His Body the church.

(b) By continual yielding of ourselves to God, we are filled with the Spirit, i.e. controlled by the Spirit. This may be by successive crises, or by a gradual process. Involves an inward sense of fellowship, a change of character, an outflow of power, and a progressive evidence of spiritual fruit.

(6) The Principle of the Body of Christ

Introduction

Our previous studies lead up to this important subject of 'the Body of Christ'. The cross leads to the Lordship of Christ which is the key to Life in the Spirit, by which we are separated from the world. All is comprised in the fact of our being baptised in the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ.

The important passages dealing with this truth are:

- (1) Romans 12.
- (2) 1 Corinthians 12 (also 1 Cor. 10:16,17).
- (3) Ephesians 1:22,23; 2:16; 4:1-16.
- (4) Colossians 1:18,24; 2:19; 3:15.

(1) What is the meaning of the Body of Christ

The term is figurative, and is the most important of the nine similes for the church: body, building, bride, family, flock, household, husbandry, temple, vine.

A body is two or more cells united by the same life. A single Christian, like a cell, is indwelt by divine life. But in Acts 2, when the Holy Spirit came, we read "*It sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit*". The result was "they all continued in the fellowship" (2:42). The word 'fellowship' means 'common life'.

1 Corinthians 10:17 says "*we being many (i.e. cells) are one body, for we all are partakers of that one bread (i.e. life)*".

So the body is the relationship of Christians, by their common sharing of the life of Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

(2) What are the characteristics of the Body of Christ?

Pauline teaching concerning the church as the Body shows that the features of the church are analogous to those of the human body. There are 8 characteristic features.

1. **Life.** A body lives. However it may grow, it is always instinct with the same life. The Holy Spirit is the life of the church (1 Cor. 3:16). So the church should be characterised by divine or spiritual life.

2. **Organic Unity.** "*As the Body is One*" (1 Cor. 12:12).

"*We being many are one body*" (1 Cor. 10:17). The secret of this organic unity is seen in John 17: 21-23. It is the divine life or element in us that makes us one.

3. **Headship.** "*He is the Head of the Body, who is the Beginning — that in all things He might have pre-eminence*" (Col. 1:18). See Ephesians 1:22,23. As Lord of each life, as the Giver of the Holy Spirit, and as the first to rise from the dead, Christ is the Head of the Body. This involves two things:

- (1) He gives life to the church.

(2) He controls the church.

4. **Relatedness.** "*We are members one of another*" (Eph. 4:25). See 1 Corinthians 12:14-24. Each member is "set in the Body" by God in relationship to each other member. We are necessary to one another, and cannot grow unless we are spiritually joined together. N.B. Eph. 4:16: "fitly joined and compacted". Col. 2:19 — "knit together".

5. **Sympathy.** The body must not only be vital with LIFE, but warm with LOVE. The Holy Spirit, like the nervous system relates the parts of the body to the Head, and communicates "feeling" throughout, e.g. "*the fellowship of the Spirit*".

"*That the members should have the same care one for another*" (1 Cor. 12:25-27). In honour or in suffering we should feel for one another in Christ. The warmth of Christ's Body is the warmth of LOVE (1 Thess. 4:9-10).

6. **Expression.** The body should express the personality, in every part. Each part expresses something of the one person. Which Person should the church express? Surely Christ.

"*As the Body — so is Christ*" (1 Cor. 12:12).

"*Is Christ divided?*" (1 Cor. 1:13).

"*His Body — the fulness of Him*" (Eph. 1:23).

"*The new man, created in righteousness and holiness of truth*" (Eph. 4:24),

7. **Activity.** The body is the sphere of living activity, the activity of the one life which pervades "All these work the same spirit" (1 Cor. 12:11).

There is a function for every member (1 Cor. 12:7; Eph. 4:7; Rom. 12:6)

There is a variety of gifts (Rom. 12, 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4). Apostolic, prophetic (i.e. speaking divine message) teaching, evangelistic, pastoral, faith, healing, miracles, discernment, tongues, exhortation, giving, ruling, showing mercy. Above all — LOVE.

8. **Growth.** The Body should grow. First - in itself. It should build itself up, each member supplying nourishment to the other. (Col. 2:19. Eph. 4:12-16). Note — it is love that builds up the church. Second — out from itself. This is seen in Acts 2:47; 3:14; 11:24.

N.B. "*Believers added to the Lord*".

Conclusion

Everything in the Christian life should be on the basis of the Body, i.e. in the Spirit, under the Head, and in true relatedness to others.

(7) The Priesthood of All Believers

Every Christian is a priest unto God. This is a fundamental truth of the New Testament, yet sadly misunderstood and neglected. Even in the free churches, where it is strongly claimed it is little expressed.

1. Priesthood in the Old Testament

The word "priest" derives from the idea of "one who stands before God" and "one who guards the sanctuary". So the priest stands in special relation to God, fulfilling God's original thought — i.e. that man should worship Him and live in perfect communion with Him. This was the purpose and calling of Israel. They were "*a kingdom of priests, a holy nation*" (Ex. 19:5,6) and their priesthood was symbolised in the Aaronic priesthood, acting on behalf of the nation.

The failure of this is seen in Hosea 4:6 and in the utter failure of the priests to recognise and accept Christ.

2. Priesthood in the greater and more perfect tabernacle

The tabernacle was the centre of a system of worship by which men approached God and learned of Him. It passed away, giving place to "the greater and more perfect tabernacle" (Heb. 8.2; 9:11). This is a new order of things, a new creation, a heavenly fellowship in Christ, a way of approach to God in and through His Son.

In this heavenly tabernacle, Christ is the High Priest, fulfilling all other priesthoods. He alone can stand before God with perfect right, and can satisfy the Father (Heb. 3:1-6).

By virtue of our oneness with Him, we are made priests, as Aaron's family were, by their relationship to him. Sonship and priesthood go together. "*A royal priesthood*" (Eph. 2:18-21; 1 Peter 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6). "In Him we have access, by the Spirit to the Father".

3. Priesthood — what it involves

(a) **Access to God.** Priests are men who draw near to stand before God. Hebrews 10:19-22 is the classic portion of Scripture showing this. We draw near as those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, reconciled and cleansed by His blood, justified by faith in Him alone (Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:17; 1 Peter 3:18).

(b) **Acceptability** (Ex. 28:1-5,36,43).

We draw near covered in the righteousness of Christ, and sanctified by the Spirit. Holiness — separation from sin and unto God must be the character of our life.

Romans 12:1,2 shows us the nature of our priestly separation (1 Peter 1:16; 2:5)

(c) **Worship.** The ministry of the priests was to offer sacrifice, incense and offerings to the Lord, to maintain the constant ritual worship. This was the highest ministry possible.

Our offering is seen in Romans 12:1 and Hebrews 13:15-16, 1 Peter 2:5; Revelation 8:3. "Spiritual sacrifices", "the sacrifice of praise", "living sacrifices", "prayers of saints". These are well pleasing to God in Christ.

(d) **Intercession for others.** The offering of incense was part of the priests' ministry. It speaks of prayer. Example of intercession is seen in Numbers 16:46: "He stood between the dead and the living".

"Prayers and intercessions be made for all men" (1 Tim. 2:1; Rev. 8:3).

4. Priesthood — how it should be practised

Our priesthood must be real and practical. Melchizedek was "priest of the Most High God" and "he brought forth bread and wine and blessed Abram" (Gen. 14:18). How solemn and wonderful to be "*priests of the Most High God*".

Priesthood should be expressed in:

(1) True separation of life to God (Isa. 52:11; Heb. 10:22).

(2) Continual Occupation with Divine Things (Col. 3:1).

(3) A deep spirit of worship (John 4:20).

(4) A flow of spoken praise (Heb. 13:15; Col. 3:16).

(5) A constant ministry of intercession (1 Thes. 5:17).

Conclusion. To be a Son, is to be a priest. A Son of God, a priest of God. What unspeakable privilege and responsibility. How far do we "minister unto the Lord in the priests' office".

(8) Nature and practice of authority

The root idea of the word 'authority' is 'that which is allowed or permissible'. Power is inward force; authority is the right or ability to use that force. There is all the difference between a very strong man assaulting you in a street and a policeman arresting you. The first has power only, the second has authority. So authority is power acting in the name of some supreme power, by its permission, or as its agency.

This Supreme Power is God Himself. All other authority (even that of evil) is within His sovereign power, or by His direct appointment or inspiration. Satan's 'authority' is allowed by God (Luke 14:6; Col. 1:13). Christ's 'authority' was given Him by God, (John 17:2), Moses, Samuel, Elijah and the prophets (see Jer. 1:10) were all men invested with divine authority.

1. The authority of God Himself

God's authority is absolute. Simple illustration seen in Acts 5:4: "After it was sold, was it not in thine authority?" i.e. in Your right to do with it as it pleased You.

God's authority over mankind is shown in Rom. 9:9-24. "Has not the potter authority over the clay?" God as creator has absolute right and ability to do as He pleases with man.

God's authority over history. "Times and seasons", i.e. the ages, the movements of history are set within God's own authority.

All other authority exists within or under this supreme authority of God — the Almighty (a term used 9 times in Revelation).

2. The authority of the Lord Jesus

God has given all authority to His Son.

Authority over all — to give eternal life (John 17:2).

All authority in heaven and earth — go ye therefore (Matt. 28:18).

Authority to execute judgment (John 5:27).

Complete and final authority (Rev. 12:10).

Yet the amazing thing about the authority of Christ is that it is the authority of the Lamb, the meek and lowly, broken, willing, self-sacrificing one. This is seen in Revelation 5 and 6.

3. The authority of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit exercises the authority of Christ in the church.

Christ risen and exalted is given to the church to be "Head over all things", i.e. to be Lord, Controller, Life-giver (Eph. 1:20-23).

This Lordship is made real by the inward control of the Holy Spirit. This is clear from 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 and by our Lord's words in John 14:15,16. The filling of the Spirit is the Lordship of Christ.

This authority is exercised by means of the Word

Christ's word is a word of authority (John 12:47-50). It demands obedience. It judges. The Spirit teaches the Word of Christ. He is the Spirit of Truth, demanding obedience.

This authority is exercised through spiritually constituted overseers

Christ's authority by the Spirit is shown in the church by a pastoral body, raised up and appointed by the Lord (Acts 20:28). It is ordained by the church (Titus 1:5). Such a body is said to rule (Heb. 13:7,17; 1 Tim. 5:17).

(a) The nature of this authority

It is spiritual (2 Cor. 10:4,5).

It is the authority of men broken before God, e.g. such were Paul and Peter (see 2 Cor. 10:1).

It is the authority of love (2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10; 1 Pet. 5:2).

(b) The exercise of this authority

Here is the authority of Christ in the fellowship binding on earth what is bound in heaven (Matt. 18:18-20).

(c) The divine care for this authority

Not he that commends himself, but whom the Lord commends (2 Cor. 10:18).

Great example of this is Moses (Numbers 12). This solemn event shows the divine vindication of His appointed authority.

Conclusion. Divine authority in the church is most important. It is the authority of wisdom, spiritual understanding, example, meekness, love, exercised by the Spirit through those whom He appoints to "take care of the church of God" (1 Tim. 3:5).

(9) The principle of dependence

Independence is the essence of sin. "*We have turned every one to his own way*". Therefore it is plain that salvation must be the bringing back into the life of dependence upon God.

1. Dependence is the quality of sonship

"*Beloved, now are we the sons of God*". To be a child, a son, involves many things — but within all — dependence.

"*A certain man had two sons*" (Luke 15:11). They were in dependence on their father and the sin of the younger son was the sin of wanting to be independent.

"*Adam, the son of God*" (Luke 3:38), i.e. he was made to live in dependence — physically and spiritually.

"*As a man his son — so the Lord — thee*" (Deut. 8:5). Deuteronomy 8 is a chapter which brings out the lessons of dependence which Israel had to learn in the wilderness (e.g. verse 3). Throughout its history Israel was to be a testimony of a nation living in dependence upon God. Hence no king, and no horses and chariots.

2. Dependence was the character of Christ

In His incarnation the Lord Jesus lived the perfect life of dependence. John's Gospel blends together Christ's sonship and His dependence on the Father.

His own Testimony, e.g. John 5:19,30; 6:57; 8:28,54; 14:10.

His prayer life. Our Lord's dependence on the Father is shown in His life of constant prayer. Note especially how He prayed at critical points in life, in addition to His regular practice of prayer, e.g. Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18,28;11:1;22:40.

3. Dependence should be a great feature of the Christian life

(a) Dependence is the outcome of the cross in our life

"I am crucified — Christ lives — I live by faith" (Gal. 2:20).

"That we trust not in ourselves, but in God that raises the dead" (2 Cor. 1:9).

(b) Dependence is the essence of faith

"The life I live — I live by the faith of the Son of God" (Gal. 2.20).

(c) Dependence allows the Holy Spirit to control

e.g. Romans 8:10-14. Spirit indwells, Spirit quickens, Spirit leads, Spirit helps infirmities (Rom. 9:11,14,26).

(d) Dependence is expressed by a life of prayer

E.g. Acts 1,4,12,13. The church of the Acts was a church that did everything in prayerful dependence on the Holy Spirit.

4. Dependence on the living God should be the hallmark of the church

e. g.

Evangelism (Acts 2:47).

Ministry (Rom. 12:6-8).

Spiritual Maintenance of the church (Acts 20:32).

Conclusion. We walk by faith, and faith is dependence, the drawing upon God for all needs, the confident trusting on Him at all times. Dependence is "living out from God".

*I would not have the restless will, that hurries to and fro
Seeking for some great thing to do, a secret thing to know;
I would be treated as a child, and guided where I go.*