



The Online Library of T. Austin-Sparks

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Our Ministry

by T. Austin-Sparks

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Beloved of God, as the Lord makes possible a further issue of this paper, we send you greetings in His name. Our mailing list is a very living thing, and we want you to know that we think of you all, scattered over the earth. We should like to indulge in the Pauline way of mentioning lists of names and places, but this has now got well beyond bounds. So just believe that you are - in every place - in our thoughts.

My word to you in this issue is just one of reminding you of the ministry which we have felt to be that committed to us by God. It is but one among many given to His people, but it is one which is fulfilled with an ever increasing sense of its necessity.

May I say again, in the first place, what it is *not*. We claim no new revelation. We aim at no new "movement". We desire no new body of Christians as apart from all the Lord's people. We never say to any, "You should come out of your church, or mission, or society". We deprecate being called a "Fellowship", in the sense of being people in and for a special association. (The name of our place of meetings at "Honor Oak" has been altogether misunderstood. It only means a place for Christian fellowship and conference; not the "Centre" of a people or work as apart from all other children of God). We have nothing but horror of a peculiar phraseology and shibboleth. Exclusiveness and legality are far from our thoughts and hearts. Finally, we do not fail to recognise the value of all other work and ministry which has the knowledge of Christ as its object, and is carried on from a true love for Him.

What then *is* our ministry? We did not set out with this as a full-orbed vision at the first. The Lord just wrought in us a deep and terrible sense of spiritual need and dissatisfaction, and created an intense longing for something altogether fuller than we could find. Then He led us - by way of such exercise, and its resultant quest in prayer - through deep experiences, which made possible and fruitful the unfolding of His fuller thoughts, intents, and ways for us, and for all who would "go on" to His full end. This has gone on through many years, and every bit of new living light has come out of a deepening suffering and cost. So that nothing is just theory; it is experimental. Thus there has steadily grown this sense of Divine purpose and concern that the people of God should come to "the fullness of Christ." "Each several part" in its "due measure", and the whole "Body" to the "stature of the fullness." Every practical issue has to be a personal matter between those concerned and the Lord. We have made mistakes in the course of the years, but we have learned the more deeply by these. Many have prejudiced our ministry by misapprehension, misrepresentation, and precipitate action. We expect such a ministry to have many adversaries, and we shall not seek to vindicate ourselves. But our desire is that no *unnecessary* obstacle shall lie in the way of the Lord's people receiving any value from Him through this instrumentality.

It is clear that, even in New Testament times, not all believers were ready to go right on with the Lord, and more than ninety percent of the New Testament was written to urge Christians to do so. The uprise of the Convention movement amongst Christians in many lands is itself a strong evidence that this urge is greatly needed. But Divine fullness is only going to be reached by a progressive and ever increasing revelation of Christ and His significance. Such a revelation - unless we misunderstand the record of God's ways from of old - comes firstly to an apprehended instrument which is taken into the deeps with God; then it is given forth as His truth for His people; and then it becomes the inwrought experience and knowledge of such as really mean business with God - not as to *their* blessing, but as to *His* purpose and inheritance in them. In relation to this end each one must know for himself or herself what God requires in any given matter, and it would be unsafe for us to say what they should do. We can never do more than enunciate the principles of Life and growth. To "present every man perfect (full-grown, complete) in Christ" is, then, the burden of our hearts. "Let us, as many as be perfect (undivided in heart or mind) be *thus* minded."

The Lord make you know "what is the riches of His inheritance in the saints".