



# The Online Library of T. Austin-Sparks

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*In keeping with T. Austin-Sparks' wishes that what was freely received should be freely given and not sold for profit, and that his messages be reproduced word for word, we ask if you choose to share these messages with others, to please respect his wishes and offer them freely - free of any changes, free of any charge (except necessary distribution costs) and with this statement included.*

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## About Theodore Austin-Sparks

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

*Written and published by Austin-Sparks.Net in 2003.*

Theodore W. Austin-Sparks was born in London, England in 1888 and was educated in both England and Scotland. At the age of 25 he was ordained as a pastor, however, a few years later his "career" took a decidedly different direction when a spiritual crisis brought him to a place of brokenness. He left the denomination with which he was involved and dropped the title of "Reverend". He wrote:

*Years ago I was unquestionably stretched out to the full for God's best (as I trust I am now), and there was no doubt whatever as to my devotion to the Lord. I was right in the full tide of every kind of evangelical activity, and especially in conventions everywhere for the deepening of spiritual life. I was a member of many Missionary Boards and Committees, and was greatly in demand because it was believed that I was a man with a message. This is putting into very few words an immense amount of truly devoted activity and concern for the Lord's interests. Being a man of prayer, I was open to the Lord for all His will, I believed. But there was a certain realm of things against which I was deeply prejudiced. It was really the very essence of the original "Keswick" teaching, but I would not have it at any price. I fought it and those who taught it. To make a long story short, the Lord took me seriously in hand along another line, and brought me into great spiritual distress. The very thing that proved my emancipation was that which I would not formerly have touched for anything. That proved the key to a fuller life and a worldwide ministry. I came to see that my judgment had been wholly wrong, and that I was blinded by prejudice. I believed that I was honest and right, and seemed to have evidence of it; but, no, I was in my ignorance shutting out something which was of great value to the Lord and to myself. Thank God for the grace to be perfectly honest when the fact of prejudice was brought home to my heart.... No man is infallible, and no one has yet "apprehended" nor is "yet perfect". Many godly men have had to adjust in the presence of fuller light given when a sense of need made such necessary.*

*(From an Editor's Letter first published in "A Witness and A Testimony" magazine, Jul-Aug 1946, Vol 24-4).*

Based in Honor Oak, London, TAS (as he was affectionately known) was not lacking in opposition and rejection to himself and his ministry in the denominational circles of the day, but he felt he should neither defend himself nor promote himself. His son-in-law Angus Kinnear wrote:

*From his early years he had believed in the power and significance of the spoken Word of God, and that all developments of its exposition and application should be vitally related to the actual and growing needs of the spiritual life of representative bodies of God's people. Through His Word God would meet His own, but His way of giving to His servants was not merely through bookish, cloistered or studied matter. Rather it was made necessary, drawn out and given meaning by the call and answer of living conditions. Its value - if it was to be anything more than words - lay in its being able to touch the Lord's people at the point of experience and need which had been the occasion of its original calling forth. Such was the special calling of T. Austin-Sparks, a man ploughing a furrow perhaps a little apart from his contemporaries, but always true to Christ Jesus his Saviour and Lord, and committed to a vision of spiritually fruitful harvests throughout the whole field that is God's world.*

Something which becomes clear when reading the writings of T. Austin-Sparks is that very little information is given about himself or his personal life; instead the focus is consistently upon Christ as his (and our) Life. Your attention is continually directed away from the messenger to the One Who is the Message (2 Cor. 4:5).

Mr Austin-Sparks published a bi-monthly magazine called "A Witness and A Testimony" from 1923 until his death in 1971. In the July 1966 issue of the magazine, he wrote the following:

*It is only occasionally that we write personally. Our desire has always been to avoid drawing attention to persons and things in the ministry, and to occupy our readers with the Lord and the ministry of His Word. But from time to time we have felt it to be both wise and important to remind our readers of the purpose that definitely governs this ministry - and has always done so...*

*What, then, is this ministry? We must go back. The name of this little paper, which has been the printed expression of the ministry for the past almost forty-four years, embodies the meaning — "Witness and Testimony." "Witness": the instrument or vessel used. "Testimony": the ministry in and through the vessel. The Testimony has ever been - but growing as light has increased - to the greatness and fullness of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man. This greatness has been centred and unfolded in:*

*(1) His Person*

*(2) The immensity of God's eternal purpose as centred in and exclusively related to Him*

*(3) The greatness of His Cross as basic and essential to the greatness of His Person and work both for and in believers*

*(4) The greatness of The Church which is His Body as essential to, and chosen for, His ultimate self-manifestation in fullness and government in the new heavens and the new earth*

*(5) The necessity that all the people of God should know, not only of salvation, but of the immense purpose of salvation in the eternal council of God, being brought to "full growth" by the supply of Jesus Christ in ample measure.*

*We feel that the New Testament contains a tremendous urgency in this matter; such urgency is summed up in the words of the Apostle Paul: "Admonishing every man and teaching every man.... that we may present every man perfect (complete) in Christ" (Colossians 1:28). We believe that all the sovereign activities of the Holy Spirit are directed to and dictated by this end and object.*

*There may be different aspects, but the end is single and one. The great evangelizing and missionary efforts, in so far as they are governed by the Holy Spirit, have this end in view...*

The cry which comes through his messages again and again is for believers to grow up into the full knowledge of Christ, to know Him as the One Thing, the All in all, the Head of all. As believers heard and responded to his cry, TAS was requested to speak at conferences in Europe, Asia and the USA, many of which were tape-recorded. The audio messages from some of these conferences are still available today, as are many of his books and articles which have been republished.

Some of the messages on Austin-Sparks.Net have been transcribed from audio messages, others are reproductions of his written messages. Some of his messages he published as books and these were available at cost from the Witness and Testimony Publishers in Honor Oak. However, most of these books were first published chapter by chapter in his bi-monthly magazine, "A Witness and A Testimony". TAS frequently called it: "This little paper". There was no subscription charge for this magazine which was sent freely to all who requested it. It was stated in the magazine that, "This ministry is maintained by the Lord through the stewardship of those who value it."

On the first page of the magazine was this statement:

*The object of the ministry of this little paper, issued bi-monthly, is to contribute to the Divine end which is presented in the words of Ephesians 4:13 - "...till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge (literally - full knowledge) of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we be no longer children...."*

*It is not connected with any 'Movement', 'Organization', 'Mission' or separate body of Christians, but is just a ministry to "all saints". Its going forth is with the prayer and hope that it will so result in a fuller measure of Christ, a richer and higher level of spiritual life, that, while bringing the Church of God into a growing approximation to His revealed will as to its 'attainment', the Church may be better qualified to be used of Him in testimony in the nations, and to the completing of its own number by the salvation of those yet to be added by the Lord.*

TAS was the editor of this magazine until his death in 1971. A similar style of magazine named "Toward the Mark" was then published by a colleague, Harry Foster, from 1972 until 1989. After T. Austin-Sparks' death in 1971 Harry Foster wrote:

*Perhaps one of the earliest of his books can best give us a real clue to his whole life and ministry. It is called "The Centrality and Supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ". This was where he began, and this was where he ended, for it became noticeable in his closing years that he lost interest in subjects and concentrated his attention on the person of Christ. Christ is central! None of us will claim always to have been "on centre", and he certainly made no such claim, but it was his life's objective and the aim of all his preaching and teaching to recognize that centrality and bow to that supremacy. At his funeral service there were hundreds who responded wholeheartedly to the suggestion that brother Sparks had helped them to get to know Christ in fuller and more satisfying ways. If anyone can make men realize something more of the worth and wonder of Christ, so that they love Him more and serve Him better, then such a one has not lived in vain. Many worldwide can truthfully say that through the spoken or written words of 'T. A-*

*S.' this is what happened to them and, especially with those who first trusted Christ as Saviour through his ministry, they will be his rejoicing in the day of Jesus Christ. Moreover, some of the truths, which were by no means accepted when he proclaimed them years ago, have now become widely accepted among evangelical Christians, so it is possible that in the long run his ministry may prove to have been more fruitful than at the time appeared to himself or to others. It is the steward's business to be faithful, and that he sought to be: only the Master is competent to judge of his success.*

TAS deliberately made no provision for the continuing of his magazine or ministry following his death in 1971. Harry Foster wrote: "Mr. Austin-Sparks had left word that there should be no automatic continuation of the magazine ministry". Mr Austin-Sparks believed that what was from God and of God would be taken care of by Him, he wrote: "God only takes responsibility to supply and to carry on that which is essentially heavenly, and in the measure in which a thing is heavenly, and only in that measure (but *surely* in that measure), God takes responsibility for it". Time has proven that his trust was not misplaced as God has indeed preserved what is His own.

Mr Austin-Sparks was insistent that his writings and tapes should not be copyrighted. In spite of this, he was particular about his messages being reproduced word for word as originally spoken or written by him.

Mr Austin-Sparks wanted his messages to be made widely available to all, but also insisted that they should not be changed. He wrote, "It has always been our desire to make the ministry through this little medium available to all of the Lord's people; not regarding it as our personal property. 'Freely ye have received, freely give' has been our principle." We have tried to express this in the statement that we have put on every page of this website: *In keeping with T. Austin-Sparks' wishes that what was freely received should be freely given and not sold for profit, and that his messages be reproduced word for word, we ask if you choose to share these messages with others, to please respect his wishes and offer them freely - free of any changes, free of any charge and with this statement included.*

Mr Austin-Sparks left behind a treasury of messages filled with the Wisdom, Life and Revelation of Christ. Many of these messages are available online at Austin-Sparks.Net, for the further establishing and strengthening of the Body, that in all things CHRIST might have the preeminence!