

About Theodore Austin-Sparks

by T. Austin-Sparks

T. Austin-Sparks dedicated his life to emphasizing the centrality of Christ in ministry and the spiritual growth of believers through his teachings and writings.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:5, Ephesians 4:13, Philippians 3:8, Colossians 1:28

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Centrality of Christ"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks, born in London in 1888, experienced a transformative crisis that led him to abandon his denominational ties and focus solely on the ministry of Christ. His commitment to the spoken Word of God emphasized its relevance to the spiritual needs of believers, directing attention away from himself to Christ as the central message. Through his bi-monthly magazine 'A Witness and A Testimony', he sought to deepen the understanding of Jesus Christ and the purpose of salvation among God's people. Despite facing opposition, he remained dedicated to his calling, believing that true ministry should lead others to a fuller knowledge of Christ. His legacy continues through his writings and teachings, which aim to establish believers in the fullness of Christ.

Transcript

T. 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 crisis brought him to a place of brokenness and he left the denomination with which he was involved and dropped the title of "Reverend".

Mr Austin-Sparks' 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."

Although 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, he felt he should neither defend himself nor promote himself. 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: For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. (2 Cor 4:5).

Based in Honor Oak, London, he 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 centered and unfolded in:

- (1) His Person
- (2) The immensity of God's eternal purpose as centered 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 tapes from these conferences are still available today, as are many of his books and articles which have been republished. Contact information and catalogs for some of these

books and tapes can be found on the Resources menu. He was insistent that his writings and tapes should not be copyrighted and as a result they are still freely available today and can be distributed in whatever way God leads. In spite of not copyrighting his messages, TAS was particular about them being reproduced word for word as originally spoken or written by him.

Some of the messages on this website have been transcribed from tapes, others are from his many writings. The books were available at cost from Honor Oak and most of them were first published chapter by chapter in his magazine "A Witness and A Testimony" which TAS frequently called: "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 ministry following his death as he believed that what was from God and of God would be taken care of by Him. Time has proved that his trust was not misplaced as God has indeed preserved what was His own. TAS left behind a treasury of writings filled with the Wisdom, Life and Revelation of Christ. This website does not yet contain all of his messages and has four new ones added to it each week. Having greatly appreciated his writings ourselves, we offer them here on the web for the further establishing and strengthening of the Body, that in all things CHRIST might have the preeminence!

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/t-austin-sparks/about-theodore-austin-sparks/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net