

The Man Whom He Hath Ordained

by T. Austin-Sparks

God's explanation of the universe, answer to the fall, proclamation to men, and object in all His dealings is a Man, specifically Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Romans 8:29, Galatians 4:19, Ephesians 2:15

Topics: "Unity in Christ", "The Person of Christ"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes that God's ultimate answer to the complexities of life, sin, and human destiny is found in 'the Man Whom He hath ordained,' referring to Jesus Christ. He explains that the universe's meaning, the solution to the Fall, and the essence of salvation are all encapsulated in this Man. Sparks argues that God does not offer a religion or a set of doctrines but presents a personal relationship with Christ, who embodies wisdom and power. The sermon highlights that true unity and resolution of human problems--be it racial, social, or existential--are found in Christ, who is the key to understanding and fulfilling God's purpose. Ultimately, the message calls for believers to recognize their vital union with Christ as the foundation for spiritual success and transformation.

Transcript

Reading: Rom. 8:29; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 2:15,16; 1 Cor. 1:24-30, 12:13; Gal. 3:27,28; Acts 17:31.

"Inasmuch as He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man Whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

The words "the Man Whom He hath ordained" take us back to the point where we commenced our contemplation of things, into the counsels of God before times eternal. It was then that the Man was ordained. The history of this world, then, is to be gathered up, to be summed up in that Man; its destiny is to be determined in Him.

Let us make a few comprehensive, and yet quite concrete statements in relation to this fact.

Firstly, God's explanation of the universe is a Man. If we want to know the meaning of the universe, we must look at a Man: and if we look at that Man Whom He hath ordained, and see Him with the eyes of our hearts enlightened, through a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, we shall see Him as God's explanation of the universe.

Secondly, God's answer to everything that has resulted from Adam's fall is a Man. That is comprehensive. It is quite beyond our working out; but it does not matter at what point you touch the outcome of Adam's fall, or what phase of the result you touch, you will find that God answers in a Man, in this Man. You may take any one of the issues of the Fall as you see them expressed at different points, representing a state full of difficulty, full of complexity, full of tragedy apparently, and ask, How is this to be dealt with, to be remedied? God's answer is a Man, and this Man Whom He hath ordained.

I do not want to launch out upon a course of illustration, but I will give you one example of what I mean by this. Take Babel. Now Babel is a problem: the scattering of the people, the confounding of the language, and all the result of Babel in nations and diversities of tongues, with all the weakness that issues from that--a determined and intended weakness--is a problem of considerable magnitude. It was a sovereign act of God, against a certain kind of strength which would take charge of the world apart from God. But Babel itself represents a very big problem, and a complex state of things, as being in itself something which God never intended. It is the outworking of the Fall, and the expression of a curse. It has to be dealt with. The whole thing has to be cleared up. It can never abide if God is to have things as He intended. What is the answer to Babel? It is a Man. It is this Man. All that situation, that confusion, that tragedy, that evil, will be eventually cleared up in a Man. There will be in that Man a unity of all that is divided and scattered. There will be in that Man a coming to one understanding. We have the earnest of all this now in Christ. There is such a thing as spiritual understanding, and it does not matter whether we can understand one another in our human language or not, we can all understand by the Holy Spirit the same thing, and speak an inward language. There is a oneness of understanding, and the full assurance of understanding in Christ. I merely instance it and do not stay to work it out.

Thirdly, God's proclamation to men, in respect of their salvation, their satisfaction, their fulness, is a Man. We will break that up in a minute or two.

Fourthly, God's object, in all His dealings with His own, is a Man. The object of all the Lord's strange and mysterious dealings, and of all His painful dealings with His own, is a Man, and He is entirely governed by His view of that Man in all He does with us. Nothing in all His dealings is something in itself, but it is all related. He has His eye all the time upon a Man, and He acts in relation to us with that Man in view.

No experience of ours, under the hand of God, is an incident by itself. It does not come into our lives because of this, or that, or something else as apart. If we go wrong, God does not chastise us for this or that as a thing in itself. God's chastisements are not incidental, are not detached, are not apart, but in relation to an object, the object in His eye, a Man.

God's dealings, not only with His own, but with the world, which are different kinds of dealings, are in relation to that Man. If we were able to recognize what that means, and apply it, bring it into the realm of applied truth, it would considerably help us in our everyday life.

Now in those statements we have comprehensively set forth God's object, the great governing reality. Everything is explained by a Man, and in a Man, and that Man interprets the history and the destiny of the universe. It could be put in other ways, and a great deal more from the Word of God could be cited to show how this is so, but we have to go on to break it up further.

God has not Evolved or Produced a Religion

God has not evolved or produced a religion, that is, a system of religious teaching and practice. That is where so many have gone astray, and, as a consequence, you get the clever and scholarly works on the religion of the Semites, and all that sort of thing. To these are added works on comparative religions, with Judaism and Christianity included. The whole matter is reduced to comparative values in the religions of the world, as to which is the best, and if it can be proved, as many have tried to show, that Judaism was better than all the ancient religions, and Christianity better than both ancient and modern religions, then it is to be concluded that Christianity is the religion for the world. This is a missing of the point. It is not a thing that we are likely to be caught in, but we have to recognize this truth for ourselves, and see where men have gone astray. God has not evolved or produced a religion: God has presented a Man.

God has not Presented a Set of Themes

God has not presented us (in the first instance) with a set of truths, themes, subjects, although the Bible may be full of these. He has not presented us with them, but with a Man. We are never called upon to preach salvation to anybody: we are called upon to preach Christ, and the salvation that is in Christ Jesus: "...it was the good pleasure of God... to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles..." (Gal. 1:15,16). Any truth, any doctrine, any theme, any subject which is not a revelation of Christ, and a ministration of Him, and which does not bring into Christ and make Christ Himself greater and fuller in the life, has missed its intention, has been divorced and separated from the purpose of God, and does not stand with God at all. God has not presented us, in the first instance, with a set of truths, themes, subjects, though there be found great themes in the Word of God, such as atonement, redemption, and the many others; He has presented us with a Man. Everything with God from eternity to eternity is inseparably bound up with a Man.

Perhaps you are wondering what is the practical value of saying such things. The practical value is this, that you never come into the meaning and value of the things, even should you deal with them all your life long, if they are taken as things in themselves. The only dynamic in any truth is the living Christ. Sanctification is Christ, even as justification is Christ. These are not things to be taken and stated, laid hold of and appropriated as things in themselves: Christ is made unto us sanctification and redemption.

Now one or two qualifying statements need to be made alongside of that. While it is true that God has not presented us, in the first instance, with truths, and so on, but with a Man; while it is true that God has not evolved religion, but presented a Man; while we are called to preach, not salvation, but the Saviour, we must remember that, even then, it is not with a Man officially that we have to do, but with what He is personally. By officially, we mean it is not the office that He occupies as Redeemer, Saviour, Mediator, or any other of the designations which may be given Him, representing His official work, with which we have to be concerned. That is not the first thing, but the Man Himself. We are not saved by coming to Him in His official capacity as Saviour, we are saved by vital union with Him as a person.

It is not by our objective vision of the Man that we receive all God's meaning. There is great meaning and great value in Christ, viewed objectively; that is, as having summed up in Himself all that we need, and our holding fast by the fact of the completeness of everything in Christ. There is a real value for the heart in that, but it is not in having to do with the Man objectively alone, but subjectively, that we come into the Divine intention. The full hope of Christ is not Christ in salvation, but Christ in you. There are the values associated with Christ in salvation, but such a conception may be no more than of the official values of Christ as placed out there. The practical values of Christ are only known subjectively; they are what He is in Himself, and not what He is in office. You will see what we mean as we go on. It is very important for

those of us who have responsibility in the things of God to recognize these differences.

Vital Union with Christ the Basis of God's Success

The point is this, that the basis of God's success is vital union with Christ, what we sometimes speak of as identification with Christ. God depends for His success entirely upon Christ within, and therefore, as we have said before, the one thing that God is after, and the one thing that the Devil is against, and will counter by every means of substitution, imitation, counterfeit, and so on, is getting Christ within men. Oh, how far things can go, and yet fall short of that! This is where the importance comes of recognizing the difference between doctrine-- even the doctrine of salvation--and the Man, the Person. We can preach the doctrine to men and get an assent, the consent of the mind to the doctrine, so that we have our catechumens, our classes for instructing converts in the doctrine; and when they have come to the place where they say, Now I understand the doctrine, it is all clear to me now! we think they are ready to be brought into the Church. The matter is much simpler than that; and it must be more than that. You cannot educate anybody into the kingdom of God, not even with Christian doctrine. No one ever passes into the kingdom of God by understanding Christian doctrine intellectually. You may have all that, and yet have a serious breakdown before long. You may have an awful condition amongst your so called converts in the face of all that. It may be found in the long run that they were never really saved, though they were baptized on the grounds that they understood all that you could say to them about Christian doctrine. Thus, on the one hand, perfectly honest people may make a grave mistake, and, on the other hand, the Devil is out to give a tremendous amount of what comes just short of new birth. He will readily allow things to go so far, provided they do not go that far. But once that thing is really done, you have the basis for everything. You have the basis for the doctrine in a living way, the basis of complete assurance, the basis for everything, once Christ is within. God's objective is reached with regard to the starting point, and everything is possible. That is what I mean by the difference between doctrine and the Person, between the official and the personal. The basis of God's success is Christ in you, union with Christ, identification with Christ in an inward way. This is laid down in the Word of God as the principle upon which God works in this dispensation from first to last.

The Perfection of the Divine Provision seen in Relation to (a) The Problem of Human Life

Let us take some of the passages to which we have referred at the commencement of our meditation, and see how they are but a following out of this very principle laid down as the basis upon which God works through this dispensation. Turn to Galatians three, verse twenty-eight:

"There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female: for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus."

This is the way in which God solves the problem of human life. As we find human life on this earth today, it really is a problem. It is up against that problem that all those well intentioned people who have round-table conferences of an International character always come. You call your round-table conference, and you have your representatives of the different nations of the earth, East and West, North and South; you have your different representatives of the social realm, your working man, as he is called, and your aristocrat, your capitalist, the employer and the employee; and in order to get different points of view, you will have your male and your female. You laboriously work: a proposition is made, but someone from the other end of the earth cannot accept that; it is not suitable to their realm of life, to what obtains in their nation. Then, of course, the employee cannot bring himself to see the point of view of the employer,

neither the employer the point of view of the employee; and there is not a little difficulty in a man seeing a woman's point of view. How many round-tables have been held, and how many of them have been successful? The amazing thing is how men go on with their conferences! As long as we have been living, men have been having conferences, and what is the upshot? Every one gets just so far, and then there is dead-lock. But they will have another one, and they will go on to the end trying to solve the problem of human life on that level of discussion, of conference.

Now God is perfectly aware of the whole situation. He is far more aware of the difficulties and the problems than anyone else. From His standpoint there are a great many more factors and features in the whole situation than have ever been manifested to men. But He has a solution, an infallible solution, and one which has fully proved itself wherever received. What is God's solution to the problem of human life? It is a Man.

(b) The Problem of Race

Here we have it: "...neither Jew nor Greek...." That is the national problem. If you are familiar with the background of Galatians, you know that it was a national problem that gave rise to that letter. Jewish believers were assuming a status above other believers. They were saying, Well, we are the Jews, and they are the Greeks; we stand in one realm and they in another! We, as the Jews, have certain privileges and advantages, which they have not: we stand in a more favoured position than they do; we are altogether superior! Greeks or Gentiles are spoken of by Jews as "the dogs," the outsiders. How are you going to deal with the national problem? You will never finally solve that problem by a round-table conference. It is that problem which is so pressing in the world today, between the superior and the inferior races, between those who have the advantage and those who have not the advantage.

God's solution to the problem is a Man. In Christ there can be neither Jew nor Greek. Has not the Man solved the problem? You and I who come on to the ground of the Heavenly Man, who forsake the earthly ground, forsake the national ground, and come on to the ground of Christ, find blessed fellowship. Oh, what perfect fellowship! What profitable fellowship! What prospects loom up in view; how fruitful it all is! So far from being a way of loss, it is blessedly full of value. What a tragedy that even so many of the Lord's own people have not forsaken national ground. What prejudices and implied limitations there are through pride. How they limit, how they blight, how they keep out the fulness of Christ, and make God's intention impossible. Get off that ground on to the ground of God's Heavenly Man, where there can be neither Jew nor Greek, and the national problem, as a part of the human problem, is solved.

(c) The Social Problem

Then further it is said, "...there can be neither bond nor free...." The social problem is dealt with, the problem of the master and the slave. How are you going to solve the problem of the employer and the employee? You will only solve it in the Man, but in Him you will solve it in truth. Then, if the Jew thinks that nationally he has an advantage over the Greek, and if the master thinks he has an advantage over the servant, and, as is often the case, particularly in the East, the man thinks he has the advantage over the woman, how are you to get over these problems? God's salvation is a Man. You do not, of course, get rid of the facts; the distinctions are not abolished here on the earth--and God forbid that we should attempt such a thing--but on the ground of the "new man" we are made as one. There we meet on a different ground altogether. In Christ there can be neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female, neither bond nor free, neither superior nor inferior: advantages and disadvantages disappear.

(d) The Religious Problem

The Apostle refers again to both the national and social problems, as you notice, in Colossians three, verse eleven, but he also expands a little: "Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision...." Here he is perhaps putting his finger a little more firmly upon the Jew and the Greek problem. He is now stressing, not only the national, but the religious problem. How acute that was. In Christ there is no religious advantage over others; no one is in a position of less advantage on religious grounds than others. Then he speaks of barbarian and Scythian. This is a further reference to the racial question. These represent different levels of civilization and cultivation, and the Apostle is clearing up the problem by saying that in Christ such distinctions have no place.

(e) The Problem of Human Destiny

Then another aspect of this is brought before us in the passage in First Corinthians one, verses twenty-four through thirty:

"But unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God... But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption...."

Here is another problem, that of human destiny, and this is gathered up into two words, and words that are frequently repeated, wisdom and power, power and wisdom. The question here at Corinth is a reflex of Greek philosophy, which had crept in with its subtle and pernicious suggestions. The question is that of reaching the super-man status. That is the question of philosophy--the highest wisdom and the greatest power. Wisdom and power are the two constituents of the super-man. Philosophy has always had in view the thought of man reaching his destiny, the idea that man has a great destiny. Man has indeed a meaning, a great meaning; there is bound up with man a great idea. With many of the Pagans, the idea was that of the deification of humanity, of man slowly evolving until he becomes deified. So that the great man is to be worshipped. Their heroes were worshipped as approximating to their ideal, and this was all a movement toward the ultimate deification of humanity, and the characteristics of this supreme super-man, as thus conceived of, were wisdom and power. They were always stretching out for a superior wisdom to bring them into a place of superior power, and thus to realize the great destiny of man. The problem of human destiny was dealt with in the light of wisdom and power.

That lies behind the world today. Is it not this that we are meeting with now in dictators, in men who would dominate the world? It is a case of wisdom and power reaching such an attitude of human status that everything is brought under the dictator's dominion. He is regarded as the embodiment of the world's highest wisdom and greatest power. That is man. Such will be the Devil's man on the human level.

The question of human destiny is quite a living one for us. It is just as real and important and right a question for believers as it is for the world. It is not the world which is really in line with the destiny of man. There is no getting away from the fact that man has a marvellous destiny. God created man with an object far greater than anything the princes of this world have ever conceived, and so the question of human destiny is a right and a proper one, and perhaps one of the greatest. But the question which goes with it is, How is the end to be reached? Wisdom is quite right. This "one new man" is to display the manifold wisdom of God unto all supernatural intelligences, to be the embodiment of Divine wisdom on all its sides. Power is quite right. There is no doubt at all that this one "new man" is to be the instrument of the exercise of the infinite power of God, to be a display of God's mighty power. These things are a right consideration

for us: they present a legitimate question, the problem of how to reach the super-man status. That was the question with the Greeks all the time. The answer of God through His Word is a Man Whom He hath ordained. The answer is Christ within, the power and the wisdom. Christ within, in the power of death and resurrection, solves the problem of human destiny.

This world has tried to solve this problem by numerous systems of philosophy. If you sit down to investigate any one of them, you will find it is an attempt to solve the problem of human destiny, the meaning of man, and the meaning of the universe, and how man and the universe are to reach their predestined end. The world is full of systems of philosophy which are seeking to answer this question. The Lord answers it in a simple and direct way, and says that the solution to the problem is a Man, and that Man, in the power of death and resurrection, dwelling within. How are you and I to realize God's predestined purpose? This is the answer: "...Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). But this is Christ within as the wisdom and power of God. This wisdom is so simple. What does Christ within mean in relation to that great ultimate purpose of God? It is the earnest of that to which the Apostle by the Spirit elsewhere gives expression: "...foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son..." (Rom. 8:29); and again: "...until Christ be formed in you..." (Gal. 4:19). When that is done the world will be occupied by a great corporate Man of God's own kind, and the end will be reached. That Man is Christ, in His fulness--His Body.

How then are you going to solve these problems? Well, Plato will tell you all about it in his Republic! Oh, the laws and the regulations! Oh, the observances! See all that you have to take account of, to do, and not do, to institute, and carry out. It is all a tremendous system to bring man up to standard. The Lord's answer is a very much simpler one than that. Let Christ but dwell within, and He will work to bring you up to His own level. Give Him a chance within, and you will be conformed to His image; Christ will be fully formed in you. And when that is true of the whole Body, you have the one new, universal Man. Is that not wisdom? Oh, the poor philosophers! How they have exhausted their brains, and many of them have gone mad in the attempt to solve the problem of human destiny. The Lord's wisdom is so simple. Christ in you is the wisdom of God. That is how the whole problem is met. You have not to think everything out, plan it all, work to a colossal system of rules and regulations and observances; you have simply to let the Lord within have His way, and the end is sure. The problem of the universe is solved without any mental exhaustion. It is a matter of life. The foolishness of man is wiser than men, and the wisdom of God so simple. Men are spending the centuries wearing themselves out, and what is the result? Look at it today. What a sad picture of the upward progress of humanity! But God is effecting His purpose, and in the unseen there is a Man growing that is to fill the universe. God's way is so simple and so effective. If you want to solve the question of wisdom and power, this is it. Wisdom is the question of "how." Then it becomes a question of ability when you know how. Christ within is both the "how," and the "ability."

All this, and much more (the Word is full of it and we shall never exhaust it all) comes back to the one thing: ALL THINGS IN CHRIST. God's answer to everything, God's explanation of everything, God's means of realizing everything is a Man, "the Man Christ Jesus." When this world has run its evil course, this inhabited earth will be judged in a Man. Men will be judged by what their inward relationship is to that Man. The question at the judgment will never be of how much good or bad, right or wrong, more or less, is in a man; it will turn upon this one point, Are you in Christ? If not, more or less makes no difference. God's intention, God's proclamation is that all things are in His Son. Are you in Him? Why not? The basis of judgment is very simple. It is all gathered up in a Man, and what is in that Man of God for us. That is the basis of judgment. It all comes back to the very simple, and yet comprehensive and blessed truth, that it is

what Christ is that satisfies God, reaches God's end, and meets all our need. It is all summed up in a Man, "the Man Christ Jesus."

The Lord continue to open our eyes to see His glorious and Heavenly Man, Who is also the Divine Servant.

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