



The Online Library of T. Austin-Sparks

Published as a PDF by Austin-Sparks.net

Email: info@austin-sparks.net

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.

Things Which Will Be Shaken

by T. Austin-Sparks

First published as an Editorial in "A Witness and A Testimony" magazine, Nov-Dec 1952, Vol. 30-6.

With this last issue of the paper for this year (and it will not reach many of you until very near the end of the year) I feel a strong desire and urge to look back and on with you. For myself, it has been a very full year. So far as movements are concerned, the fullest year of my life. I have travelled by air alone twenty-six thousand miles, and quite a bit in other ways. This has involved *many* conferences, meetings, etc. so that there has been a very great deal given out. To this must be added all the ministries and labours of my colleagues and fellow-workers. This is not mentioned just as news or information, although it will show that "a great and effectual door" is opened to us. But I mention this because it will indicate that we are not spending our time up in some corner, imagining things, and ministering to hypothetical situations. We are in immediate and direct touch with the spiritual and actual situation as represented by a very large area. We have no hesitation, though much sorrow, in saying that the situation spiritually is very, very sad and deplorable. It is our well-considered and deeply-rooted conviction that some great and drastic judgment from heaven of Christendom is absolutely imperative. We are equally convinced that it has commenced and is moving obdurately and inflexibly across the world. Just as the Assyrians were the instrument under the sovereignty of God to sift Israel in the last dispensation, so it is most likely that the power moving over the earth today - a combination of Satanic forces with human instruments - is going to test the whole of Christendom as to its real spiritual measure. This may very well be the counterpart of what took place in the year 70 A.D. when Judaism was shaken to its foundations and fell. The Scriptures quite definitely foretell a tribulation coming upon "*the whole world*" to try them that are upon the earth". This is something much more than Jewry.

The words quoted from the prophet seem yet to be capable of a fuller-ranged fulfilment than even the above-mentioned 'shaking'. "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also the heavens". (Hebrews 12:26,27).

There is no doubt that the Letter to the Hebrews was a supreme effort to get Christian believers detached from an earthly form of Christianity, and attached to Christ in heaven. That effort had as one of its strong reasons the fact that a great shaking was foretold, foreseen, and imminent. That shaking was to be in two parts, an earlier and a latter; an entirely earthly, and later an earthly and heavenly combined. The effect of the shaking, and, indeed, the purpose of it, would be to test everything as to abiding values. The former and earthly shaking was Jewish, but it had all the elements in principle and type of the latter.

In the destruction of Jerusalem - toward which the Letter pointed - the whole earth was shaken so far as Jewry was concerned. The Temple, as the focal point of that whole world, crashed even with the ground. The priesthood, as gathered up in the high-priestly order, passed away. The temple service ended, and the nation ceased to be an integrate and unified people.

These were things capable of being removed. And yet how long they had stood! What forces they had withstood! What confidence there was that they could never cease to be! How assured they were that God was so bound up with it all that it could never be destroyed and cease to be! How they fought and clung to it to the last terrible extremity! But it was of no avail. God was no longer wanting the framework and earthly system, which had taken so much room, and energy, and expenditure, before the really spiritual was reached. The percentage of spiritual value was so small after all, and spiritual interests lay so far along the labyrinthine ways of religious machinery and tradition, that it was not worth while. The means to the end was not immediate, that is, there was far too big a distance between the means and the end. There was no *immediate* touch with the real Divine requirement, and there was far too much that was intermediate. And so it had to go, and, rather than preserve it, God Himself shook it.

What remained after the shaking was just that, and that only, which was Christ in a spiritual and heavenly way: Christ in heaven, and here by His Spirit, the gathering point, or occasion of assembling; Christ in heaven the High Priest and Sacrifice; the order of God's house here a purely spiritual and heavenly one - not formal, arranged, imposed, imitated, or material. Order grows out of life, and if that life is Divine, and unchecked, Divine order will be spontaneous.

The amazing thing is how blind and unbelieving Christian people are, and therefore how unwilling to seek to know the way of the 'unshakable'. In a *very small* part of our lifetime the phrase 'world evangelization' (from one part to another) has been rendered unusable, and all that mighty machine is having to be revised. Countries which were until quite recently the greatest spheres of 'missionary' activity are now closed as such. There is a feverish race to try to move ahead of the flood in other countries which are already encircled and undermined. In those overrun countries nothing but a true and living knowledge of the Lord is stemming the tide. The framework and organized structure of Christianity is gone. Deeply, stealthily, and irresistibly this sinister work is paving the way for swift and paralysing movements in all the rest of the world, as much in the West as in the East. The result will be the same everywhere, little as it may seem possible because of long traditions and strong establishments. It seems a terrible thing, even to think, but as we have touched so very much of what is called 'Christianity' we are bound to believe that, because vast numbers who call themselves Christian are in an utterly false position, and the system itself has become so largely an earthly,

traditional, formal, and unspiritual thing, this world-wide shaking is quite necessary and will be eventually justified. If we were writing a treatise, we could show that what is called 'Christianity' is really the greatest enemy of Christ.

It will be seen that it is not a matter of substituting another and better *system* for an old and poor or bad one. Some people seem to think that it is all or largely a matter of the order, technique, and form, and if we returned to the 'New Testament' form or order of churches all would be well. The fact is that, while certain things characterized the New Testament churches, the New Testament *does not* give us a complete pattern according to which churches are to be set up or formed! There is no blue-print for churches in the New Testament, and to try to form New Testament churches is only to create another system which may be as legal, sectarian and dead as others. Churches, like the Church, are organisms which spring out of life, which life itself springs out of *the Cross of Christ wrought into the very being of believers*. Unless believers are crucified people, there can be no true expression of the Church.

This brings us to our particular point. What is the pressing imperative in view of this oncoming flood of testing, which has already carried away very many of those who were called Christian, and even evangelical Christians?

Surely there is only one answer:- On the one hand, a ministry which has as its substance and object the "rooting and grounding", the establishing, the building up, of believers, the real increase of "the measure of Christ". This must get behind evangelism, so that the work is deep, not superficial; enduring, not transient; intrinsic, not general! On the other hand, believers must really take stock of their Christianity. Is it just a tradition, an assumption, an external system, the thing which is common acceptance - more or less? Or is it really "by revelation of Jesus Christ" in the heart? A real walk with God, and a *growing* knowledge of Christ, a life in the Spirit? God has said it: the things which can be shaken will be. What have we got that, being unshakable, will remain?

So, with our review and outlook, we gird up the loins of our minds, and feel that the small bit of this 'building' ministry committed to us must be pursued with greater devotion. How we wish that it were possible to gather the people of God together in every country and minister Christ to them, and more than we have done!

Dear friends, let us away with suspicions, prejudices, misunderstandings, and fears; these things which are such successful means and methods of Satan to defeat God's purpose in many lives - His purpose of the fulness of Christ; and let us pray much - as Paul besought the saints to pray - that "a door may be opened to speak the mystery"; that a mighty new movement of the Spirit of God will take effect in the direction of spiritual purity, strength, and reality. Oh, that such a movement might begin before this year closes, and the critical year - 1953 - be marked by a deep movement of the Lord's people toward Himself!

Make this a matter of prayer as to yourself, and then for all His own. Pray also for us that we may be very truly and faithfully led as to what the Lord wants of us, and where. Calls and needs are so many; our burden is so great! We do want to do that which will have the greatest measure of *intrinsic* spiritual value. You know that it is *not* a 'teaching', a 'movement', or any 'thing' that we are interested in or concerned with. It is truly "the measure of Christ" in His members and Body.

The Lord continue to make this ministry effective to His end.