



# The Online Library of T. Austin-Sparks

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## The Positive Ground of the Church

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

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There is one thing that is giving me a good deal of anxiety and apprehension. In this time when a twofold movement is taking place on a wide scale: that is, on the one hand the great movement towards union (not unity), as in the World Council of Churches, on the policy of the combine and monopoly, with all the necessary compromises and sacrifice of distinctiveness of message; and on the other hand the unrest, dissatisfaction, and loosening of ties with the established system of churches and institutions, resulting in many leaving their old associations and either meeting in groups or drifting without anchorage in their disappointment - my disturbing fear is that there will be a movement, or some movements, towards the formation of another undenominational or interdenominational denomination, this coming about also by policy, expediency or seeming necessity. Such a movement would only be another tragedy and incipient sectarian calamity, which history would show had not been of God but of man, although with the best of motives. May the Lord save us from this so serious mistake! It would be a starting at the wrong end; a trying to form something instead of an organic growth from a living illumination, a revolutionary encounter with an unveiling of the true nature of the Church. For this latter God would have to lay an apprehending hand on a man or body of men, and by a devastating showing of the true, universal, and spiritual significance of Christ, as effectively emancipating them from all the historic accretions of Christianity as the Apostle Paul was emancipated from historic Judaism. The growth of this organism would be as other emancipated men sprang from the essential root, and not just adhered or sponsored. The power of such an organism would be the all-conquering life of resurrection: "the power that worketh in us." There is nothing artificial, imitation or manufactured about this, and it requires no propaganda. The Holy Spirit is the great Propagandist of what is of heaven.

The above is written out of a very deep concern; a longing and a fear. It should be remembered that when God made His "new thing", His "new cruse" as the foundation of this dispensation of the Spirit and the Church, He did so with a nucleus of men who had been broken by the Cross and reunited by the Resurrection. These two things were wrought deeply into their very constitution and were the ground upon which the Holy Spirit built in every place. This is the only positive ground for the Church and churches. Anything other will be negative. They were men who had seen! It may be that if the Lord is to have such a spiritual impact as was then made on the world, it will be necessary to sift down to that basis the conglomeration of the man-made and start - or go on - with the small but intrinsic seed plot.

This may be like a "voice crying in the wilderness", but perhaps some wind of God would carry it as a guide or warning where it is needed... as things are, it is becoming more and more evident that God must "do a new thing" if His full end is to be reached. May He raise up His Prophets to "show the House to the house of Israel", that they may be ashamed, and may some Josiah, personal or corporate, arise to lead to such a taste of the real thing as to result in the leaving of all that is false. We can only resort to prayer!