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God's Mind About the Church

by T. Austin-Sparks

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Extract from ["He That Is Spiritual" - Chapter 3.](#)

In the Divine scheme of things it is the Church which is the intermediary, that which stands between and has the ultimate effect in the spiritual realm, I mean that individual Christians, though they may be born again, as individuals will not get very far in touching that outer-most realm of spiritual forces. There, a real registration has to be a corporate one.

It will be the Church eventually which will be the instrument of Divine government in this universe. So it is necessary for us to spend a few minutes with the Church before we come to the churches; and of course we are continuing to keep before us the matter of spirituality. Here spirituality means what the Church is *in God's mind*.

When we come to contemplate the Church in its wholeness and entirety, of course, we come mainly to the letters to the Ephesians and to the Colossians. There we find God's mind about the Church. We must realize the necessity for our seeing and apprehending what the Church is in God's mind, not as we find it in the churches, not as it actually is here; and we must stand on that ground, or we shall be helpless in this matter of spiritual impact. I mean that if we are going to accept what we find in the New Testament as to the churches as being the expression of all there is, we are very soon going to give up the fight, and shall not get very far.

Dr. Campbell Morgan has remarked that there is often heard the word - Oh, let us get back to the New Testament church! But, he said, God forbid! - and went on to say that you will look a long way today for a Christian church that will wholly correspond in its defects to the church in Corinth. When you come to think of it, there is some truth in that. A church in which there is incest and all that you

find in Corinth! - God forbid that we get back to the New Testament church if that is it! God forbid that we should say that we have made no progress from that!

If we are going to accept that as the standard, we are going to be crippled, and the measure of our spirituality will be very small indeed, and therefore the measure of our impact likewise. The Apostle who was mainly responsible for these churches coming into being, repudiated their condition, would not accept it, was fighting against it. Why? Because he had seen God's mind; that was his position, his vantage ground, his strength. If he had never seen God's mind and only saw this, what a disheartened, disappointed, despairing man he would be! He had seen God's mind about it.

It is the Church that is in view in these epistles, and spirituality in Ephesians and Colossians means first of all an inward revelation of God's mind about the Church. It is a tremendous thing for spiritual strength, for spiritual power, for spiritual ministry, for spiritual impact, for spiritual food - yes, for every spiritual value - to have really had a heart revelation of God's mind about the Church; not simply to have studied Ephesians and Colossians, but for it to have broken in upon your heart, to have seen it in an inward way. I say that is spirituality with an impact, it is spirituality with a dynamic; and what a dynamic it is!

Look at the Apostle, He looks out at the end of his life over the churches. He knows them intimately; and he has to say - "all that are in Asia have turned away from me" (2 Tim. 1:15); they have repudiated Paul to whom, under Christ, they owed everything. He looks out; and what a spectacle, what a heartbreak! And the man in his circumstances of imprisonment and isolation and limitation, looking out on that, might well have died of a broken heart, or have sunk down into the uttermost despair and written his life off as a failure, and all his work as for well-nigh nothing. But this man is not down there, he is in triumph, he is delivered, he is saved, he is emancipated from all that. The facts are true and real, and yet he is triumphant. Why? Because he sees God's mind about the Church and he knows that, if God ever had a mind about a thing, He is going to have the thing like that; and, no matter what appearances say, in the end God will have His Church like that. God has not conceived a thing and projected it, to be cheated of it. There it is and it will be!

When you have grasped that, you are able to get closer to these letters and see the value of spirituality in general and in particular. In general, like that. A true spiritual apprehension is an emancipating thing. The spiritual is not the unreal, it is the most real of all. It is far more real than the temporal and visible. The eternal - they are the real things.

You do not see this Church here on the earth; it is not seen, but it is there in the unseen with God, and it is the eternal thing. If only we saw the invisible - that is an extraordinary statement, "he endured as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27) - if only we saw the invisible meaning, if only we saw in the spirit what can never be seen in the flesh with our natural eyes, it would be a tremendously emancipating thing, because we should see that that is the eternal thing that must be. When all else passes, that will be. Spirituality buoys you up.

There is so much disappointment in the churches, in the things seen, that you might give up in disgust, close down your work and go and do some other job; but you do not do that if you have really seen. You may tell yourself that you are a fool not to face facts, that you are simply putting on blinkers, not taking account of realities; but because of something that God has done inside you cannot accept that, you must go on. You cannot accept the total ruin theory, if you have had a revelation.