



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.

"How Know We the Way?"

by T. Austin-Sparks

First published in "A Witness and A Testimony" magazine, Nov-Dec 1947, Vol. 25-6.

"Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" (John 14:5).

The chapter in which the above words occur is a chapter of questions. Mental perplexity prevails on the side of the disciples. Strange things are being said to them; things which represent the complete reversal of all their deeply rooted ideas; things which turn their world of expectation upside down. Disappointment, despair, disillusionment, and grief strive to submerge them. "We know not." "How know we?" "Show us." "What is come to pass?" These are some of their bewildered ejaculations. But they are only a very few of the many questions which are covered by the comprehensive answer. Indeed, a whole future life is embraced by what these questions elicit from the Lord.

1. Firstly, He makes it clear that the answer to their questions is not - in the first instance, nor in itself at all - a matter of teaching, doctrine, truths, or traditions, but union with a Divine Person; "I am"; "He that hath seen me, hath seen..." To have a living union with Christ in some indefinable way brings the answer to all questions. That is a statement of fact, and we shall wallow in our mental quagmire, and get deeper and deeper, until we come to know by living relationship through spiritual new birth that all-inclusive Person.

2. The next thing in the answer is that the Way is inside. "I come to you." "I in you." It is not a matter of precepts and legal systems imposed from the outside; but One dwelling within Who is the power of the Way. The Way, the How, the What is all answered by a Life Way, a Truth Way, Who governs from within, and just *makes* us know. This is not conscience. Conscience says different things to different people. To the conscience of one a thing is wrong; to another there is no trouble about that thing (see 1 Cor. 10:23-33). But Christ within will say the same thing to all, and everything becomes a

matter of obedience to Him. This may deliver from the bondage and tyranny of an imperfectly enlightened and instructed conscience, and all the terrors and misery suffered therefrom.

3. How do we know anything at all as to God's mind, as to right and wrong according to it? The answer here is: "I am the... life" (v. 6). "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you" (v. 27). In brief, it is by life and peace within, or the contrary. When we are in the will of God, when He has gained His place over our own will, there is a sense of life and peace. When there is conflict between our wills, our ways, our souls and God, there is unrest and inward death. The Lord in John 14 is speaking of the coming day of the Spirit (in which we now live) and He says, "He shall be in you." The Spirit witnesses to the will of God by life. We *know* God and Christ in terms of what they are - life; and where that life is dominant there is peace.

4. Then there comes the change from head to heart. "Love" - verses 23, 24, 28. "Heart" - 1, 27. A heart relationship, i.e., that of love: not a head relationship, i.e., that of question: is the key to spiritual knowledge. Love for Christ opens the door to His self-revelation and impartation.

5. The place of faith. Verses 1, 10, 11, 12. In effect the Lord says, If you will trust Me, trust My Spirit within you, I will see that you get where I would have you - "I *am* the way"; I will see that you come to know all that is necessary to realise the purposes of my Father - "I am the truth"; I will see that you do not go under but triumph - "I am the life," and "Because I live, ye shall live also."