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God's Idea of Manhood

by T. Austin-Sparks

Transcript of a message given at Halford House Christian Fellowship in Richmond, Surrey, England on 1 April, 1965. Words which were not clear are enclosed in [square brackets].

We will lay a foundation in one or two passages of Scripture, beginning right at the beginning: the book of Genesis with what may seem to you at the moment, a strange verse, but you will see the point presently.

Chapter 5, verse 2: "Male and female created He them, and blessed them, and called their name: Adam". Now right over in the New Testament in the first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 15:45 and 46: "So also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; *then* that which is spiritual."

The letter to the Colossians, chapter 3, and verse 9: "Lie not one to another; seeing that ye have *put off* the old man with his doings, and have put on the *new* man, which is *being renewed* unto knowledge after the image of Him that created him: where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all."

Finally, the letter to the Hebrews, chapter 2, verse 5: "Not unto *angels* did He subject the world to come... but one has somewhere testified, saying, What is man, that Thou art mindful of *him*?"

Not unto angels... *but...* man.

So, for a little while, we are going to dwell upon this great, very great matter of manhood in Christ according to God. The Bible is the story of God and man. Many other things are in the Bible, but these are the two which compass and embrace *all* that is in the Bible: God and man. In the beginning: God. That's how the Bible begins.

In the Beginning: God

And God being introduced, God is seen at work, at work in the universe, at work in the creation, progressively rising higher and higher in His work until He reaches the summit. And the summit is man. And when that point and peak has been reached, God rests from His work. Beholding all, He says, "Very good!"

From that time onward, through all the pages of this great volume, it is God and man. God and man. You notice that word which we read in Genesis 5:2, "Male and female created He *them*"? "And He called *them*, man" so that they're not two beings, they are not two, they are one. They called '*them*': man. The plural followed up in the singular and both go by the one name: man. Well, more about that presently.

We know what the Bible reveals as to that first man, what the apostle called the "first Adam". What a failure he was! And what a terrible exposure the Bible gives of him. And history supports the Bible in this, for all history is an *exposure of that man's failure, that man's terrible fall*. And no one with any real balance of mind and sanity today, after the history of the last few years as to what that man *can* do, what he is capable of, or even today, right up to date, they are still uncovering and bringing to judgment the terrible, unspeakable things that that man has done and can do.

Whoever can speak about the ascension of man, is not reading history straight. Millions upon millions tortured, done to death with the most ghastly horrors in this last great war alone, in the gas chambers, and the [torture] places and so on. And still more recently, the stories of these Congo atrocities; almost unreadable, indeed, they're not being put on record for reading. It just shows what this species is capable of, this man, and how great is his fall in spite of everything.

And although we may not expect very much more from those in the Congo in Africa, you might have thought to have expected something very much better from this *highly*, intensely educated and civilised Western world than really happened, almost at our own doorstep, during the war, showing that education and everything that goes to make up what is *called* "civilisation", does not really change this man. There he is.

Well, that's history, it's no exaggeration, indeed it would be impossible to exaggerate that of which this nature of ours is capable if put to it. There it is. There's the story, and the Bible just recounts the terrible story of the *first* man, but it does not leave it there, thank God. We are talking about *God* and man.

God and Man

So the Bible is also the record of God's *reaction* to all that. What a tremendous "all that" it is! How abysmal, vast, unspeakable. *What* a situation God *had* to meet to deal with, to cope with. Speaking in

our human way: what a problem was set for God! But with all, with all that He knew and all that has come to light, God reacted to it in one all-comprehensive and perfectly satisfactory way. How? By what means? A Man! That's all. And what a great all! To that vast man, God reacted with a Man. This time spelt with a capital 'M'. A representative Man - God's idea, God's idea of Humanity incarnated in One.

All this other is not *God's* idea, we'll agree with that. But God's idea, His final idea, His eternal idea as to man and humanity, incarnated in this One. *All* that belongs to the perfection of man, is included. That's a great statement. All that belongs to the *perfection* of man is included in one Man. Your perfection, my perfection, the perfection of the whole humanity that *will* accept God's reaction in His Son. All that belongs to our perfection of humanity is included in this one Man. The final type of Humanity is realised in Him.

The Final Type of Humanity

Humanity is an eternal thought. Mankind is an eternal thought. And finally, God will have a Humanity, and this one Man is its type. In Him it is realised.

Jesus stands in a unique relation to the whole human race. A unique relation, that relation has never yet been satisfactorily defined. All that's ever been said and written about the Lord Jesus, about Christ and His relation to the human race, never yet has there been a satisfactory definition and explanation of what that relationship is. You and I, if we seek all through our lives to understand that, will never have finally, fully understood it. Eternity alone will make us fully understand what the relationship of Jesus was to mankind. But we are here to learn something of this.

I don't know how it is with you, you may be able to understand and corroborate as I mention it, but does there not seem to you to be a strange distance and space, growing between the *historic* Jesus and the Jesus of our hearts? I mean is this, (perhaps it's not true in your case, I don't know) there was a time, a time perhaps in the lifetime of some here, not so much in those who are younger, when books on the life of Jesus on the earth had a great vogue. How we used to go for any new life of Jesus that was published! Oh, Dr Farrar's "Life of Christ", how we, we *loved* the stories of Jesus here on the earth in Palestine, going about the country, doing His miracles, and preaching and teaching. And so many books on the life of Christ were at one time published and enjoyed. And everybody's greatest ambition was to go to Palestine and visit Jerusalem, and Nazareth, and Galilee and so on. A lot of people like that, you know, of course.

But do you notice a strange widening of the gap between that kind of thing and the felt *need* of our time? The stories of Jesus which we tell to the children, still belong to a children phase of life; very nice, good, interesting, perhaps instructive in many ways, but there's something that has come about with it. We feel that that's just not what we need, we need a Jesus that comes nearer to us than 2000 years ago, a Jesus that fits into our life *today* in a way that the earthly story does not just fit. Do you understand what I mean?

We've come to a time in the world's history when the *merely* historical doesn't just help us. Life makes demands beyond being met by that kind of thing. We want another *kind* of Jesus, if I may put it that way. If I said we need a *spiritual* Jesus, perhaps that doesn't help very much, but you know what I mean: coming to the heart, coming to the deep, sometimes grim reality of our own personal life inwardly. But we don't go to the bookshelf and pull down a life of Jesus when He was here on the

earth to answer our problems. I say there's this gap and distance between the historic Jesus of the few miles of Syrian soil, and our own innermost and sometimes terrible need. There's a gap between them.

It's this matter: it's another Man and yet not another the same, the same, but in another way. We need to know that Man, not as history, but as experience. Not as far off objective out there, good, perfect, wonderful as He was, but nearer than hands or feet, or breathing. Now, *that* is God's reaction to us in what we are, in relation to the old man, the first Adam. That is God's *reaction* to humanity as it is. His reaction is: bringing in another Man.

I don't want to confuse you, or make things difficult for you, or get into a merely mental realm, I want you to understand when I say that it is *not* by the earthly birth of the Lord Jesus that we are saved. It is by His resurrection that we're saved. It's His resurrection that represents a transition from flesh to spirit, from the outward to the inward, from the historic to the experimental. It's the *risen* Christ that God has given to us as His *answer* to the need of our broken down humanity. We're going to look at Him and understand better as we do, what we're trying to say.

You read the words, "*Put off* the old man and we have *put on* the new man who is being renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created us." Being made anew - made anew: put on the new man who is being made anew *after* the image of Him that created him. One has been put off. And you know that the figure in the original language is simply of a man divesting himself of his clothes, going away and saying, "I've finished with those. I no longer want that suit of clothes, I'm done with that and this one is what I want and what I put on. I put off that old man, like a worn out and no longer of any use, suit of clothes and I put on this *new* suit which is to be my garment forever. I've put off the old man with his doings, and have *put on* the new man who is being *made anew* after the image of Him that created him."

And the summing up is: "where Christ is all and in all - not unto angels," so don't see any more, say any more, or long any more, to be an angel. The children sing it, "I want to be an angel..." alright, but you're called to something better than that, "Not unto *angels*" - wonderful, wonderful beings as they are, read their story in the Bible, wonderful deeds. But *not unto angels*, but man, *man!* Greater than the angels. Called to something greater than the angels have ever been entrusted with: man! Well, here's this Man, this unique Man.

Unique

I've often reminded people (forgive me if I've said it here before, and forgive me if it sounds as though I'm implying any ignorance on your part) but I so often hear people say, and read in books about, "almost unique" or "very unique" when it's quite a grammatical error to speak like that. There are no degrees of uniqueness. The word "unique" is unique! It stands alone. It cannot be 'almost' or 'very', it is just: unique! Nothing toward it, nothing after it, it's there in solitary isolation of perfection, of completeness; that *is* uniqueness. Now be careful how you talk in the future! But here, you see, this Man is unique in God's universe and in His relation to the human race, different; utterly, completely different.

Well, let us for a few minutes look at Him. We'll not get very far, but far enough, I think, to indicate what it is we are really saying. What *kind* of a man is this Man who is God's answer, God's reaction?

What *are* His characteristics? The characteristics which are, by this making anew after His image, are to become *our* characteristics; what are they?

Well, we can begin with our Genesis 5:2 if you like: "Male and female created He *them* and called *them* man"! So in "man" are combined all characteristics of male and female in one complete man. Now look again at the Lord Jesus. Look again at this representative Man and you will see in Him as one, as one, in *Him* the most perfect combination and balance of the attributes of both sexes.

You speak of man, and when you think of man, the masculine, you expect, at any rate, to find strength. That's where you look for strength. You speak and say, "He's a man! Every bit a man!" and what you mean is that there's strength there - not only physical strength, but moral strength, strength of character, something noble about him in this, that he's not cringing, contemptible, mean; "He's strong", we'd say, strong. That's what you expect to find when you speak of man. We use the word on that side: strength.

When you speak of women, woman, you expect (you don't always find it) but you expect to find *tenderness*, don't you? Tenderness. You do! You feel that's right, that's how it ought to be where a woman is concerned. It's truly characteristic of her: there's a real gentleness, tenderness, kindness, and sensitiveness.

Look at our Man. Can you really put these two things in watertight compartments where He is concerned? See His strength! My, there's a strength there sometimes that makes everybody cringe, draw back, and *feel* when that strength is moved by righteous indignation, wrath because of violated principles and God's rights disputed. You'll find strength here, won't you? His words sometimes are very strong: "Ye hypocrites! Ye hypocrites!" Well, you find the Man there.

And what about the tenderness? Well, no little child is afraid of Him, the smallest child will come without fear, and their mothers, the women, don't feel that this is an awful being to be afraid of. But tenderness, kindness, sensitiveness, even with sinful people, "Doth no man condemn thee? *Neither do I*, go in peace, sin no more..." over against all that of which she was accused.

So we could go through the gospels again and see the perfect balance of these two sides of man called "them" - man/them - both together in *One*. Now look again. I've given you plenty to study, read and think about, and meditate upon.

Go back to your Bible, pick up these men who were associated with Jesus and see their strength on the one side, but what kind of strength it was! What kind? A poor woman had a daughter, *sorely* afflicted, harassed, distraught. She came after Jesus, and cried to Him for His help for this poor girl. What did these men do? They said to Him, "Send her away! She crieth after us!" He passed through a town and the people were suspicious, afraid, and did not show Him hospitality - violated the law of their race in the matter of hospitality - "did not receive Him", it says. What did the men say? "Shall we call down *fire* from heaven and consume them?" That's a kind of masculine strength if you like, but wait. I could enlarge upon that, as you know, there's plenty more of it. Plenty more.

Go over to later. My, what a difference in these same men! These same men, what they will do *for* the people who persecute and despitefully use them, and cursed them! What they will do for them: lay down their lives.

And take a great, later representation of that Humanity in the apostle Paul. See that man before the Lord laid hold of him: masculine strength, if you like, *fierce, terrible, vehement, passionate, deadly!* And note, it says, "Having received authority he cast into prison, he bound and cast into prison those of this way, men *and* women." *And* women! Not much sensitiveness there, is there? The women were treated as the men in all this - terrible! Passion. Hatred.

Hear that man presently, speaking of himself in relation to those converts who were not treating him very well at Corinth, you know, not very kind to him, saying some very unkind things to him. And what does he say? That he "yearned for them as a nursing mother" - his actual words - as a nursing mother. What's happened? It's the feminine that has come into this masculine, and made a balance, hasn't it? Man on two sides is united here, is changed.

They're all changed on this very matter. They're still strong, but it's a different kind of strength and they are now having that strength marvellously balanced with sensitiveness, "as a nursing mother": sympathy, considerateness, heart. Another *Humanity* has come in here, hasn't it? A different *manhood*: balanced, being renewed after the image of *Him*.

Now, you see, that's very good in the Bible, it's good of Paul, Peter and the rest, isn't it? No, but it's here, it's here: it's the challenge to you and to me, whether there has entered in the power, and nature of another Manhood, another Humanity, that where we are wrongly weak, we are made strong; where we are wrongly strong, we are made weak. Where we are unbalanced, where we are unbalanced on the masculine side, unbalanced, we are made balanced by the *tenderness* (and that's a New Testament word) the tenderness of Christ.

Now, this is practical politics, friends, this is Christianity, this is the Gospel. This is what you and I are brought into! This is what it means to have put off the old man and *his* doings, and put on the new man, "renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created him, where Christ is all, in all."

The man. Unbalanced, may be all judgement, the man balanced by Christ doesn't know this. The *right* characteristic of judgement, but it is balanced with mercy: "the male and the female made He them" - judgement and mercy, equally proportionate. Severe? Yes, *rightly* severe at times on principle; it's very difficult, of course, to always keep it pure on principle, this severity of ours, without letting some personal feelings and interests come in. We are severe; and we hide behind this word: *righteous* anger. The Lord only knows that there is a right severity. Listen to Christ, listen to Paul: "If I come to you with a rod..." he said. In effect he's saying, "You'll know all about it if I do!" A *right* kind of severity, yet balanced by *compassion*, for the man who spoke about coming with a rod, was the man who is speaking to the same people about his compassion, great compassion.

We think of man and we expect to see in man leadership - his gift to lead, his call to lead. God help the man who is devoid of real moral leadership. I use the word 'moral' in its largest sense.

Leadership

He is called to be the leader, and yet and yet... while that is true and must *remain* true, the balance of leadership is a sense of dependence, it's the feminine dependence, isn't it? Masculine leadership but feminine dependence. Dependence!

So it was with the Lord Jesus Himself. What a leader! And yet how *always* speaking about His *dependence* on His Father. Paul: what a leader, what a leader, and yet always ready, even *eager*, to confess and acknowledge his dependence: "When I am weak, then I am strong... I glory in my infirmities". Sounds feminine, doesn't it? No, it's the balance of a strong man. Dependence in a leader. And anyone who tries to be a leader without a sense of dependence upon God, is an unbalanced sort of person.

Well, there you are, the unity of the two in the name: "man". Well, we could go on, again looking at this One, and remind you of His racial life. What was it? Well, you see, historians, historians speak about Jesus the Jew. The Jew; Jesus was a Jew. That's how they speak of Him, he belonged to the Jewish race, He was a Jew.

In a sense I suppose that's true, but think again: "Where there *cannot be* Jew and Greek" in Christ. They cannot be Jew and Greek, but Christ. The Jew and Greek go out when Christ comes in. There's a racial connection. I wish it were recognised today in this day of storm in racial matters. You *cannot* just tie the Lord Jesus down to this Jewish race any more than you can tie Him down to any other!

Isn't it *remarkable*, that it doesn't matter where you go, *all* the races that occupy this earth, all of them, *all of them*, Jesus just fits into their life. He does! There's not a race, not a man or woman of any race, who cannot find the answer in Him to their deepest need. Isn't that true? That's the marvel, isn't it, of the Gospel, the marvel of Jesus Christ. It is not true of any other race. They just fit in.

I, as you know, sometimes go to America, I've been a good many times now. And what do I find? What a conglomeration of races! On the east, just in perhaps one state, in New York alone, what will you find? Well, you find Chinese, Japanese, British, all the Scandinavian races like Germans, Italians. Oh, I don't know what you wouldn't find! You find them all there, but they've all hived off: Harlem with their coloured people, you see, it's an area. They're all just living their own separate life. And while they have, on business grounds, to interchange and so on, nevertheless, there they are. And you know all the trouble that's going on now, don't you? This. Well, there it is.

But go to *any* of them and *all* of them with the Lord Jesus, and He just fits in where they are, and how they are. What is the answer to the coloured question, as it's been raised today? We here have nothing to do with it, we wouldn't countenance it. Why? What is the solution? The Lord Jesus! The Lord Jesus gets in and becomes Lord and takes pre-eminence in the most widely diverse, national temperament and make up and setting. If the Lord Jesus gets in and takes pre-eminence, they'll come together, they'll have a Life in common, they'll be able to get on. That is true isn't it?

In Gospel areas where the Gospel has prevailed, it's the only answer. He *is* the only answer, as He *is* the answer. God answers this *humanity* situation with a Man. With a Man. If there was ever a rabid Jew full of bigotry and prejudice and would not, would not sit down to a table or abide in the same room with anyone of another nationality, that was Saul of Tarsus. Jew of the Jews, he spoke it of himself, "A Hebrew of the Hebrews" - gloried in it. Here was *this* man, the apostle of the Gentiles! *This* man! This man!

[You name a sole dimension,] we wrongly use the word "Catholic", we always think in religious terms when we use that word, but it really means, "all-embracing, everything, universal". There was never a greater "catholic" after Jesus Christ, than the apostle Paul. The race problem is solved in Him, isn't it? So it is.

I could go on, but I must stop. I must end this and remind you that Jesus overstepped all the bounds of time. Some people, men, live for their own age and their own time, they are, as we say, men of their day. Huh! You can't say that of the Lord Jesus, can you? Not a bit of it! He was for that day and every day since: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever!" No time affects Him, or changes Him.

Well, let me close there without proceeding further to many other directions and connections, and say again: dear friends, this Christ, this Man is supposed to be *in you* if we are true believers and we are truly the Lord's! He is *in us*, this *kind* of Man, and there ought to be this progressive making new, this progressive balance, so that if there exists preponderances on any side of our make up, they're being modified and balanced by their opposites. If we are naturally bad tempered, Christ in us is attending to that, attending to that and making us less and less bad tempered; thoughtful, considerate, gentle, patient, or whatever it may be - doing that! This is the meaning of Christ.

Now, our brother phoned me yesterday - at about yesterday afternoon, evening - about coming over this evening and having a word. So I went to bed, "Now Lord if You want it, wake me up with a word, when I wake may there be a word just alive in me". Well, I'm not a good sleeper, so my wakings up were a few, but the final one, in the very early hours, the final one as I came into consciousness, there was a phrase. A phrase! But it was full of those things, you know, that live. You know that it's not just something mental [like that] and the phrase was this: we are *born*, we are *regenerated*, into a *Man*. Then it came. That's your word tonight: *regenerated into a Man*. That is the Christian! We are *regenerated*.

It's not just some abstract thing that has happened, it's *into* a Man, a kind of Man, this Man, so that eventually we shall not be what we are by nature, but what *He* is as God's idea of manhood. And if you look again at your Bibles you will see that they're all about this conformity to the image of His Son. What's it all about? What's it all for? All this teaching, all this exhortation, all this truth, all this here that's being applied to us? *What is it?* One thing only: the realisation of *this* Man in all of His own.

Shall we pray? We can only say to Thee, Father, in the presence of this which is so much beyond us, to make us like Christ. May Christ be fully formed in us. May that Man, Son of Man, have a larger and ever larger place in us. Like Him, we would be. We thank Thee that that day *will* come when we shall be satisfied because we awake in His likeness. Keep Thy Word alive in our hearts and every day may it govern us, affect us, hold us, for Thy name's sake.