



# The Online Library of T. Austin-Sparks

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## Not Now But Afterwards

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

*First published in "Toward the Mark" magazine, Jan-Feb 1972, Vol. 1-1. Edited by Harry Foster.*

*"Who is there among you that will give ear to this?  
that will hearken and hear for the time to come?" (Isaiah 42:23).*

Without considering the context of these words, we use them to ask ourselves if we really believe that there is a time to come. Do we believe that the time to come is a bigger time than now, that the afterward is much greater than the present, that there are ages of ages before us, and that however long it may be, our whole lifetime here on earth is only a small fragment of a dispensation? Do we believe that our service in "the ages to come" is far more important than in this age?

We do not thereby rule out the importance of this life in which we should buy up every opportunity and redeem the time, but even so our life is but a span which will soon be completed, and we depart just when we are reaching a condition of being able to help others. No sooner have we learned something which might be of value to other people than we are called away. What a problem, what an enigma life is!

"For the time to come." That was the perspective of the apostles, one of whom wrote, "I will give diligence that... ye may be able after my decease..." (2 Peter 1:15). This is the real test - whether we want always to be in view, interested only in what we can do in our own lifetime, or whether we are content to wait for the values of "the time to come".

The question arises as to whether you would be prepared to go to serve the Lord in India or Africa, and within a few weeks lay down your life, either in martyrdom or in sickness. Would it be worth it? If you think so, then it can only be in the light of the afterward, the "time to come". You believe that it would be worth while to go out to India for just a month and die, do you? If you do not, you have no right to go.

Let us always have "the time to come" as a real motive in living. The fruit of our lives cannot be immediate, for only a small part of its meaning can be in our days, the total value will appear in the afterward. We have to live not only for this time, for though we live right up to the limit in our own day we cannot do or be much, and I doubt whether the outcome here is worth the cost. The cost, however, is not just for our lifetime; the Lord has in view "the ages of the ages".