

Harmony

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the importance of divine order and the need for believers to come under the rule of heaven, where all things are brought together in perfect harmony and unity.

Scripture: Psalm 119:89, Matthew 6:10, John 17:16, Romans 8:29, 1 Corinthians 14:33, Ephesians 1:10, Philippians 2:15, Colossians 1:20, 1 Peter 2:9, Revelation 5:9-10

Topics: "Divine Order", "Harmony in Christ"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes that the Bible reveals God's nature as one of order, contrasting it with the chaos brought by Satan. He explains that Christ embodies divine order and that the church is called to manifest this order in the world. The ultimate goal is to restore harmony and glory through Christ, who reconciles all things to Himself, bringing heaven's order into our lives. Sparks encourages believers to recognize their role in this divine purpose and to seek conformity to Christ, the embodiment of heavenly order. The message highlights the importance of living under God's rule to eliminate discord in our lives and communities.

Transcript

To those who have a knowledge of the Bible it is evident that the whole of the Scriptures open up along the four lines that we have indicated; namely that

1. God is a God of order;
2. Satan is the prince of a world under divine judgment, and the nature of that judgment is confusion;
3. Christ, in Person and work, is the embodiment of divine order;
4. The church is the elect vessel in which, and through which, that divine order is to be manifested and administered in the ages to come.

The end of God is glory as against chaos, and the Bible shows - comprehensively - that glory is inseparable from order; divine order is the way to glory. The Bible should be read in that light. On the contrary, confusion always leads to shame. This, then, is the great issue of the Bible.

Perhaps you are wondering, or asking in your mind: What does this mean where we, simple believers, are concerned? It is all very wonderful, very great, but here we are, a little company of Christian people - how

is this a message for us? Will you be patient, dear friends? This is of most vital account to you and to me. We are a part of a great whole. We are not just fragments that have shot off into space, with an independent and unrelated life. We are called by the grace and sovereign will of God into a great purpose. And what is true of the whole is true of every part. You and I are going to learn, if we learn anything about Christ, that we are a part of the disruption of the divine order, and that grace, grace, in its deepest and grandest interpretation, is to bring order out of our chaos, is to introduce heaven into us and us into heaven, and is to conform us to that which obtains in heaven. Oh, yes, we are going to learn in many, many different ways that what God is doing with us, and has called us into, is just: to conform us to the image of His Son. But that is not only conformity to a Person, it is conformity to a divine order. His Son is an order of God, the order of heaven.

I do not know how you read the four Gospels. Perhaps you read them as the life of Jesus here on earth, what He did and what He said - purely as a historic record. I suggest to you that you go back to those Gospels with this one thought: Here is the embodiment of another "order" of things, in constitution and in behaviour, in ways of life and in laws and principles governing the life. Here is heaven in evidence. Here is heaven in control. Here is another world embodied: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" - here is another world that has come in in this Person. Read the Gospels in the light of that, and you will begin to see that He does not do and speak as the people of this world would, even the wisest of them. He is getting everything from heaven; He is getting every word from heaven; He is governed by heaven. That is the meaning of the so-oft repeated phrase: "the Kingdom of heaven" - the rule of the heavens. "The Kingdom of God" - the rule of God. As we learn Christ, so we pass more and more from this world in our inward life, and find ourselves more and more in conflict with it, and incapable of accommodating ourselves to it or being at home and happy in it. It becomes more and more a "far country" - something to which we do not belong. That is true in the consciousness of the true child of God, but growingly so. The true child of God, as he or she goes on in this inner, spiritual change of knowing Christ, will often ask the question: "What is happening to me? I used to be able to do this and that, but I cannot now. At one time I had no qualms or difficulties, but today I have a question." I think if we stayed here long enough we would find this world an utterly impossible place to live in spiritually. We could only live in it as heaven came down to help us stay here at all. Well, that is a way of putting things - we are just "going home" all the time.

Now, to refer again to our great interpreter of these things, the man Paul who had such a full and exact knowledge of the Scriptures in the first place and, added to that, the one to whom was given that peculiar and that so great revelation of heavenly things, especially of Christ. To that man the great issue of all things was this very thing - the recovery of a lost divine order in this universe. He has stated that. Here is one fragment of that great statement: "... unto a dispensation (an order, an economy, a government, a rule) of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth" (Ephesians 1: 10).

Here we are faced with a tremendous statement. There is a word here which is almost an unspeakable word in our language. In the Greek it requires no less than nineteen letters! It is a compound which is translated "to sum up", but in its original meaning is this: "to bring back and centre in One, all things". To bring back, to recover, and to centre in One, all things. To gather up all that which has been lost and focus it, embody it, in Christ. First of all, the implication is that there was an order once obtaining in God's universe - a perfect order.

Secondly, that that order has been lost; a great disruption has taken place in the universe. And thirdly, the re-gathering, the recovery, the restoring of that lost order in Christ. That is what Paul saw to be the significance of Christ. What a range! What an interpretation of everything! What a word! To gather up all the fragments of this shattered vessel, all the parts of this disrupted and confused universe, to repair the damage and make of it all one beautiful expression of heavenly order!

That is the work of the Person of Christ in redemption. Paul uses a word so often - "to reconcile all things unto Himself" - to reconcile, implying that the situation is such as to find God not in a state of conciliation with it, and it not in conciliation with God. Everything has gone to pieces, and is under a terrible strain where God is concerned because things have broken down - the divine order has been shattered. This One, Jesus Christ, came into this world, in the first place embodying in His own Person that which He is going to recover, objectively.

He cannot be deflected from that for a moment on any consideration, by any bribe, or by any suffering. He is going through with what He calls the Will of God. And, dear friends, while we use that phrase, sometimes glibly, sometimes seriously, we do not always recognize - if we ever do - that the Will of God is the expression of this perfect order of God. "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." If only we knew how things are done in heaven we would see a beautiful harmony, a complete accord, and the utter absence of any janglings, confusions, contradiction or inconsistency.

That is God's will. He came for that. It could only be, as we shall see later, by the Cross, in which He had to take hold of this enormous force of disruption and confusion, and break it for ever, and produce, or reproduce that order, which we find commencing in the New Testament. We must leave that for the moment.

To rightly understand and know Christ is to see that He stands related to this of which we are speaking - this universal, beautiful order of God in the creation. Christ Himself is the Seed of that order. You take your seeds, or your bulbs, and if you get the bulb of the hyacinth and place it in the earth, you do not expect a cabbage to appear! Within that small organism there is the order of hyacinths. That is the nature, the life, the species, the kind of thing that is there. So it is in every organic creation. Every seed has its own life, producing after its own kind. That is Scripture, is it not? - "after its own kind". Christ is the Seed of a heavenly order. In Him is implicit that order of God: the life is in Him; the order, or the "form" is in Him; the "nature" of that is in Him. The order requires a kind of nature. A disposition, the kind of Person that He is. He is so different! We are always crying and praying to be "like Christ"! Yes, in Him is the nature which, when it becomes universal, will be seen in a certain perfect harmony and order. He is the constitution of everything. Paul finds himself beggared for words in this very thing, and he is a master of language and languages. He speaks about Christ "filling all things", and "all things filled into Christ". You cannot grasp that? It is just this. He is going to be the constitution of everything, and that "everything" is to be an expression of this "mind of God", how things should be, what things should be, and how they should behave. You and I behave as we do because we have a certain constitution. We are made like that. Make the whole creation like Christ and it will behave like Christ, the nature, the constitution of a great divine system.

God is a God of order. If there is one thing that the Bible reveals about God, it is that. On the other hand, the Bible is a tremendous testimony all the way through against disorder. If you want to see what it is all about, what it means, why this and why that, it is this conflict between a divine order, and a disorder. It is like that all the way through, and that is the battle.

And I say again, before we are through it has got to come down to our own lives in a very intimate way. But take the great truth, for it is capable of having a tremendous effect upon us. We must make it our business - if this is the business of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the meaning of the Cross - to come under the rule of heaven, the rule of Christ, the rule of the Holy Spirit, so that all the discords and conflicts go out of our individual life and of our collective life; that we are more and more an expression of Him, whose life, character, work and ways have no inconsistencies, no contradictions and no conflicts in Himself. He is the sum of this beautiful harmony.

Do believe this, amongst other things and whatever else it means, that when that great Song about which we read in the Book of the Revelation is sung by a great multitude out of every language, every tongue and nation and kindred and people, the one thing about it will be that there is not one discordant note! It will be the most marvellous harmony. Why? Because the Centre of it all is one Person, who pervades all. It is the Lamb. His work is done; He has redeemed by His Blood out of every nation. He has brought together all the broken pieces, all the shattered plan of God, and here it is, redeemed. And the mark of His work is this: that out of all the divided peoples of this earth, divided by language, divided by colour, divided by temperament, divided in a score of different ways, He has made one harmonious whole, singing one song, with no discord. It is the mark of "order" that is the mark of His redemption "Babel", which means confusion, is undone!

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