

What Will God Do Next?

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the necessity for a new spiritual movement led by God, emphasizing the limitations of tradition and the call for deeper realization in Christ.

Scripture: Isaiah 43:19, Matthew 9:17, Ephesians 4:13, Colossians 2:9

Topics: "Spiritual Renewal", "Tradition vs. Transformation"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks explores the question of what God will do next in the context of spiritual movements throughout history, emphasizing that God often acts when spiritual conditions are shallow and traditional practices have stifled His work. He argues that past movements have been characterized by a return to the fullness of Christ rather than the addition of new elements, and warns against the dangers of allowing human traditions to dictate God's actions. Sparks suggests that a new divine movement may require breaking away from established customs and that those involved must be prepared for a transformative and often painful process. Ultimately, he calls for a deeper realization of the limitations of traditional Christianity and the necessity for God to do a new thing.

Transcript

This is an inquiry, not a prophecy. That a new thing needs to be done by the Lord is a growing conviction of many of His servants and people. But is there any reason why we should expect a new movement or further step on the part of the Lord? The answer could be given in various ways. From time to time in the world's history there have been definite and distinct movements in relation to spiritual interests. These movements have usually, if not invariably, been when conditions were very similar to those which exist at such a time as this. The tide of real spiritual lifestyle has run well out, and things spiritually had become very shallow and superficial. What there was of activity was work by its own motive-force. That is to say, it was carried on by human energy and interests, it was producing its own dynamic. By various and many forms of organized enterprise, with their interest, appeal, and propaganda, that which was called "the work of God" was kept going.

Then, the things of God had become very set. A tradition became established, and everything was according to the tradition, the accepted and recognized order, way, teaching, and means. There was no way for God to do what He would, because anything not according to the established custom was suspect. Thus He was fettered by the fixed traditions which governed His people's minds. The Lord was straitened in His people by their own finality of position, while at the same time they were aware that all was not well.

The result was that, in most instances, the new Divine reaction had to be made outside of the recognized order and system of things; and, for a long time, the living thing had to go on in face of a strong and serious opposition, not from the world, but from those who were supposed to stand for God on the earth.

This involves a matter of the most vital concern to our main inquiry - What will God do next?

God has never yet moved from any other standpoint and position than fullness and finality. Man's first day on the earth was the Sabbath, which was at the end of God's work. Man did not start with God in the fragments and bits of His work. When the new corporate Man came in on the Day of Pentecost it was upon a basis of fullness and finality in Christ exalted. The history of God's specific movements with the Church is not the history of His adding something, but of His bringing back to the primal fullness with which He filled His Son. Look at the epochs in the Church's history and you will see that they represented the recovery of something which had been lost. God can therefore never be satisfied with something which only represents an elementary, or more or less, degree of the fullness of Christ. Any movement of God which is taken hold of by man and made something in itself as an end, whether it be evangelism or a fuller message of life, and truth, or whether it be an advance in order or method of Church life and procedure, must sooner or later become a tradition and a legal system, bereft of life and heavenly fullness.

God ever seeks to carry His people on to "full growth" which, with Him, is the timeless fullness of Christ. If there is yet to be an advance made to a position beyond what has been, those (they may be comparatively few) who will make it will be brought to a deeper realization than ever of the failure and impotence of traditional Christianity as it exists. They may strain and strive and hurl themselves into it to try to improve it, but they will break themselves upon it, and will eventually, in the mercy of God, come to see that the old wineskin; cannot be given the new wine. God must do a new thing, and He must have a clear way for doing it.

So we ask, are we not being hedged up to something untraditional and extra to what has been? Is not God bringing much of that which has been used in the past under the hammer? We have to admit a question as to whether God is willing to revive that which has taken the mold of men's various and conflicting religious orders and systems, or whether He will not transcend all such and move apart from it. It will be a costly business for all who are a part of it, especially the instruments used for it, and they will have to be very broken and emptied vessels.

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