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## From Heaven or From Men?

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

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*(Matthew 21:25)*

We do not propose to discuss the subject raised by the Lord in connection with this interrogation; that is, "the baptism of John". Nor do we concern ourselves here with the dilemma which He created for those interrogated. It is this alternative with which we are concerned - "From heaven, or of men?" It is something which arises definitely on more than this occasion in the New Testament. On one occasion the Lord rendered a sound rebuke to Peter, saying: "Thou art a stumbling-block unto me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men" (Matthew 16:23). The wise and astute Gamaliel warned the Council that "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will be overthrown: but if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them; lest haply ye be found even to be fighting against God" (Acts 5:38,39).

In handling the complicated, confused, and carnal situation at Corinth, the Apostle Paul attributed the divisions to this very thing: "...for whereas there are among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal, and do ye not walk after *the manner of men?*" (1 Cor. 3:3). It is quite clear from these passages alone that what is of men is forbidden in the things of God, and this is of very wide and varied application.

The two things are not complementary, they are inimical. They are two sources and natures set over against each other. They belong to two worlds. The springs are totally different.

1. They represent two systems of thought and mentality. It is not only in specific instances when a mistake is made, a wrong judgment is given, a questionable decision or course is followed. It is the very constitution, basic and fundamental, which governs those concerned. The natural - just what

we are by nature - is set over against the spiritual, that is, what God is, and what we are basically by being born of the Spirit.

2. This represents two governments. Heaven's standard of values is quite different from that of this world. This world governs entirely horizontally. It is just flat, earthly. Christ's government in His life was wholly vertical; always upward. He judged "not after the seeing of his eyes", neither reprov'd "after the hearing of his ears". Too close a touch with this earth involves in its contradictions, and confusions. Never was He in confusion. "Of heaven" was the watchword of His life. "Of man" is too often the realm and nature of our judgments.

3. The divide between the two is the basic effect of the Cross. The Cross cuts clean between the natural and the spiritual. We have only to mark this fundamental difference in the disciples before and after the devastating experience of the Cross and the Heaven-opening experience of the Resurrection and Pentecost.

It is because we men, in what we are naturally - not necessarily viciously, or of evil intent, but just plain nature - have insinuated ourselves with our judgments, ideas, standing, conceptions, strengths, etc., into the things of Heaven, that there is so much confusion and frustration in Christianity. In Paris there is a pair of scientific balances so delicately poised and finely balanced that even the warmth of a human body near the glass case in which they are kept sets them oscillating. We get too near to the sensitive things of the Spirit. With our heat we often disturb the spiritual balance.

Our great lesson is to learn how to stand back in the flesh from the things of the Spirit.