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Natural Orders

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THERE IS ORDER in creation in spite of much seeming disorder, wrong, confusion and catastrophic events. These terms would have no meaning if they were not set in comparison with order.

We find neither time nor space to discuss the complicated history of the idea of natural law or order as it could be traced throughout all philosophies and religions. Nor are we particularly interested in the insights that modern thought has given to the problem of existence as it is related to cosmic order. We have an advantage in every discussion on the subject of Law and Order, since we are Christians who have a revelation concerning the Creator and creature that goes beyond that knowledge of the law of which Scripture gives evidence that it is written "in the heart of man".

There ought to be no debate about the validity of God's laws or orders. The fall of man meant the loss of the image of God and has brought about all moral confusion. Man, now *is* a sinner by nature. As has been aptly said by Anselm of Canterbury: "While in Adam the person made nature sinful, in us our nature now makes the person sinful." It is a basic confession that we say "I am by nature sinful and unclean", and the following phrase "and have sinned in thought, word and deed" is simply stating the fact that my being a sinner becomes evident to me and others as well as, of course, to the all-knowing God by my sinful thoughts, words, and deeds.

Fallen man however still has a quality given to him originally which makes him "redeemable." Where man cuts himself off from God by his disobedience, God still pursues man and calls him to account. While the fallen Adam cannot but tremble before God, he has not that knowledge of God he had before the fall, otherwise he would have fallen at the feet of his Creator and cried: "Father forgive me!". God's gracious promise of redemption raises him back into a dignity no other creature has. As God loves man, God will for good reason not have him in "the garden" east of Eden, but will have him in Paradise by the power of His Son's redemptive love.

We who accept this incomprehensible love of God know that we are now again children of God and heirs of everlasting life by the act of the Seed who crushed the Serpent's head and has raised among men the "word of reconciliation." We, who know, believe and confess this, know at the same time that as new creatures we should walk in newness of life. But this newness of life is a walk in and through this world, and we find our guidelines not in what is a new code of behavior but a new spirit of love and service. We who know that Christ came to serve and give His life seek to serve and love Him who first loved us. And in looking to Him who is our Lord we find that He points us back to the original orders. In His

answers to problems of ethics or behavior He repeatedly refers to the beginning. In one case it seems He may actually have said: *Bereshith* it was not so." That might be saying: Read the rules of created orders in the first book of the Bible. And indeed, once we occupy our minds with the story of creation as revealed to us in Genesis, we there discover the place of man before God and in the world.

God created the world for man. When He created light, He had the eye of man in mind, when He created trees, He had the need of man in mind, and thus all through the creation story till the whole magnificent cosmos is ready to be occupied by man, who is not, properly speaking, the crown or top of the pyramid, but who is the ruler, lord, occupant and in a sense God's viceroy. God puts all things under his feet, but not so that he can do as he pleases with anything he can reach. No, indeed, having been made in the image of God and having been given ears and a mouth, having been endowed with speech, man is to be able to hear God and answer God.

Anthropologically speaking, man is made able to respond as a person. He is made a responsible person. He is able to answer and therefore *answerable* to God. God having given man life, or rather LIFE, since it is everlasting, has established the order of life, we might say. This order of life presupposes all other order. Man has now a living and responsible relation to all creatures. The ruling and subduing power he is granted bears no danger of misuse as long as man is in God's image. Even after the fall God still makes man responsible for every thought, word and deed. The question: "Adam, where art thou?" continues on through history of man, even as it echoes in the question put to Cain: "Where is thy brother Abel?" . .

At this point we turn to the question of the responsibility of man for man. God made man, as is sometimes said, "a social" being. It is not good for man to be alone. God gave man an helpmeet for him. The creation of Eve is simultaneously the establishment of the order of matrimony as a source of coming human life and existence. Now Adam is placed into an order of relation to another person. We ask, might this not also be a part of the image of God in a wider sense, that man now is given an object of love? Now Adam can love as God loves, not as an equal of God, but as an image of God reflecting God's love toward him in a love for a fellow human being. To the order of life is added the order of love, and to the order of love is added the order of service. We who are fallen men can only barely imagine the bliss of such an existence, where the shining love of God illumines and pervades the whole existence of man.

Only in loving service can man realize his blessed status. But this status too is ordered by the Creator: Eve is Adam's helpmeet and Adam is to recognize her as his own flesh and blood. Adam is to consider this union and order as one that transcends all other human relations. A man shall leave father and mother and cleave unto

his wife. The order of matrimony needs really no extra chapters beyond the beginning chapters in the Bible.

Now within this order our attention is called to what might be considered station or rank. The New Testament constantly points to the Genesis record. Adam, who was first made and given dominion, which of course Eve was to share, since she too is created in the image of God, is told, after the fall, that his mistake was to listen to the voice of the woman. Because he thus relinquished his leadership he is to find that he can no more rule in the way he did before the fall. The sin of both is disobedience, but Paul calls attention to the fact that the attending circumstances of the fall point to Eve as the "adjutrix Satanae," the agent of Satan. Eve usurped first the Lordship of God by taking matters into her own hands, the second step was almost a natural consequence, she now also entices Adam to be obedient to her or Satan.

There is in the words addressed to her by God that "poetic" justice that woman shall forever be drawn to man desiring a companion and shall ever be disappointed in finding a ruler or master over her. The history of mankind, not to say of marriage, has shown the truth of this word. Ever since that time Eve's position is one she cannot escape because she still is woman.

At the same time we must read all of the words of God spoken immediately after the fall as a gracious presentation of how it is going to be in this fallen world. Man, strictly speaking, is not cursed. In fact the curse, if we call it that, spoken over Eve and Adam is already a blessing because of the promise of the final conquest of the Serpent. Eve will live, indeed she will live in the ordained order and station God has given her: she will be wife and mother. All difficulties, pain and anguish of becoming Mother, have the fruit of life. For Adam too the sentence is commuted to life and even the thorns and thistles, the sweat and sorrow of his life cannot really dim the fact that he lives, and that there will be a conquest of Satan. So the orders of life, and love and service are not abolished. Rather, the child of God the more anxiously will look to them for divine regulations in a confused and disarranged world.

The child of God has the great advantage because he knows the real dignity and honor of man, namely, that God so loved the world, that God redeemed man from all trouble by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Man now living in this world as a child and believer in Jesus Christ can and does appreciate the original orders of God as a boon for his existence between Paradise lost and the Paradise to come. A Christian sees God's providence and guidance in that God has preserved unto mankind the sacred orders that give, maintain, and protect life. These are marriage, the family, government, etc. We know that where these orders are not maintained there not only the very existence of man is threatened but also the Church, the sum of believers is in danger.

For that reason there is no community or association of men on earth that should be more anxiously concerned in maintaining and protecting God's natural or created orders than the Church. The Christian who knows of the Creator and Judge of all Mankind, knows that where God's laws are ignored disaster threatens sooner or later.

We have here for the first time used the word 'law'. Whereas Law and Order are often named in one breath, many people do not know the real connection between law and order. The orders of God for man have been forgotten, ignored, blurred, blunted since the original creation of man. For that reason the orders of God have been restated, especially by the Ten Commandments, by the Decalogue. But these Commandments are mainly a number of examples given by God to show that man should guard and protect the natural orders. The order of life and the sanctity of human life is not established but reconfirmed by the Commandment: "Thou shalt not kill." Just so the order of matrimony is not established by the sixth Commandment, neither does the seventh Commandment nor the eighth establish the rights and the dignity of the individual. All these orders exist from creation and in creation, but to the people of Israel were the Commandments given, that they among all nations should be the leaders in the protection of the orders of their God.

Today believers have more than ever the duty to be light and salt of the earth in testifying to the world concerning God's created orders. Naturally the world does not beat a path to the church to ask for this information and advice. If there is any path worn between the church and the world it is the one beaten by the feet of so-called church members that inquire what the world considers the proper order or rule for the day. Who does not know what the world thinks of God's created orders? At times it seems that any insistence of Christians on divine orders and the dignity of His institutions makes them ridiculous. All the disintegrating trends in the area of marriage and sex, law and order, love and service, have, so it seems to some of us, finally dissolved anything that is not held together for pragmatic and utilitarian reasons.

We could speak of almost any facet of human life and existence today and deplore the lack of Christian ethics even among those bearing the name of Christ. But let us take one example.

What is the dignity and honor of women according to God's original creation? To be wife and mother. This is true from a simple biological, social, practical point of view. The great honor and dignity of man is to be what God wants him to be. God created Eve to be wife and a mother of all living. Where Eve forgets the role, she loses her crowning glory and must be ashamed of what she has become. Adam the same. Where the man does not know for what purpose he lives, he knows nothing of his dignity and honor. Luther simply says it in the Christian question and answers: "Here consider your station according to the Ten Commandments". Station is position, in honor and dignity. Whenever the place where God

has put me is not recognized by me as the place where I ought to be and do my duty, I lose. I lose myself.

In the discussion about equality of man and woman as well as in other discussions of like egalitarian problems, it is often forgotten, that being equal is not necessarily being alike. Woman can never change places with man. When Churchill was asked by an irate woman in his audience to tell what the difference between men and women really amounted to, he scratched his head as if puzzled and said: "I can't conceive." It is part of an immutable order of God that it takes a man and a woman to "create" a child. The role between the two partners cannot be reversed. As little as the father-son relation can be reversed. A son who lords it over his father is out of order. A woman who sees her rights and her dignity of being a human being as violated by the "obey" clause in the marriage ceremony probably has never calculated the honor and dignity of being wife and mother worth the price of the loving service she owes her husband. Of course, the same holds true of the husband's attitude, when he does not in love accord his helpmeet the honor due to her as his wife and the mother of his children.

The Christian Church that knows of the relation of Christ and the Church to be a sacred reflection and picture of marriage as God wants it, will guard the dignity of the women in the church not by withdrawing privileges of one or the other kind, but by extolling the orders of God in which Eve and all her daughters play the glorious and honorable part of service in love and in giving of life. Wherever the women in the church find opportunities for service in functions that neither diminish their dignity nor militate against the created orders of God there the church will benefit greatly in the application of the special gifts granted to them, who are the more tenderhearted and motherly members. On the other hand, where duties and obligations tend to diminish or forget the orders of God, there woman's dignity and honor is not served or respected by assigning stations and rank to women that even though not directly contradicting the orders, yet tend to put more distance between the established, assigned divine orders and the station women occupy. The world and the secularized churches will not readily recognize or admit it to be a danger against which the apostles warn, for the utilitarian and egalitarian motivations dominate most of the so-called situation ethics of our day. It is therefore necessary that the congregations of the Lord's Church know of their responsibility to teach again and more positively on the created orders. Not the "Thou shalt and thou shalt not" came first but rather the orders God gave and blessed. It is true that such orders needed additional enforcement and sometimes amendments for the life of men after the Fall. Christ, however, does not approve when he says that Moses "For the hardness of the hearts" allowed certain arrangements.

Recognizing that in the world, emergency measures are taken to preserve this world for the sake of the Gospel, nevertheless the

communion that lives of and by the Gospel will always remember that this is not God's original plan and order. It might be that under unusual circumstances, brought about by man's own fault, at times the orders of God are not so clearly seen or so strictly observed, but the believer will not see in such measures progress, but a creeping disintegration and entropy which will finally be ended when the God and Judge of the whole earth puts an end to the world by fire. The sins of Sodom and Gomorrah were sins against God's sacred orders, and the fire that came was as much an eschatological judgment as the decline and fall of ancient and modern civilizations and nations.

Wherever the Church has opportunity to counteract disorder it should count the appellations that mark it as old-fashioned, pietistic, unrealistic, out-moded and worse to be distinctions and honors. Being not conformed to the world is the Christian Church's honor and it is the duty of all its members to show the attitude by the distinction of being distinct and different.