

## 6. The Spirit and the Word in the Conservation of the Physical Universe

We are wont to speak of the universe in which we live as a Cosmos. Now this word derives immediately from the Greek word *kosmos*, which means primarily "good order," thus combining the two ideas of (1) order, or the harmonious action of all parts, and (2) goodness, or the perfect adaptation of means to ends. Despite frequent poetic fulminations to the contrary, it has to be admitted that the general framework of the universe in which we live and move and have our being is one of order. If this were not true, there never could have been a *science*, for a science is, in its ultimate aspect, a systematized body of truth (*i.e.*, of conclusions of human reason and experience) *describing* the order which prevails throughout a specific segment of the totality of things. All human science is, therefore, but the interpretation, or description, of the order which prevails in the natural Creation. Moreover, if our world were not essentially a world of order, we simply could not live in it. If men could not be reasonably sure that summer and winter, seedtime and harvest, sunrising and sunsetting, day and night, would come and go in regular sequence, in the future just as in the past, they could not plan for the future at all; indeed, not knowing what the next day or hour might bring forth, they would perish. As a matter of fact, neither man nor beast, nor even a plant, could exist in an unpredictable physical environment.

It is simply a matter of everyday observation, experience, and "common sense" that the framework of the physical environment in which we live is one of order.

In view of these facts, we have become accustomed to describe the world we live in—the Cosmos—as a world whose processes are determined by what we call "laws of nature" or "natural laws." But what is a "law of nature"? Take, for example, the law of chemical affinity (now called *valence*) according to which atoms of various elements combine in certain fixed proportions. Two atoms of hydrogen, for example, invariably unite with one atom of oxygen to form a molecule of water. Nor is there any variation from these proportions:

a variation, in fact, would not produce water, but some other substance. The big question is: *Why* do atoms always thus combine, that is, in such *fixed* proportions? What is this force which is exerted in different degrees between atoms of different elements, which causes them to enter into and remain in combination, to form new substances? Of course the force itself seems to be basically what we call *electronic*. But simply to give this name to it does not explain what it is, nor does it account for its manifestation of itself in inter-atomic relations in such definite ratios. It is the province of science, of course, to discover and to describe the *how* of these processes; the answer to the *why*, however, lies outside the sphere of science altogether. This reasoning, moreover, applies to all the so-called "laws of nature," whether in the realm of physics, or of chemistry, or even of biology.

Just what is *law* anyway? There can be but one satisfactory answer to this question, namely, that *law is an expression of will*. Law presupposes a lawgiver. The very word "law" includes the ideas of cause and force, that is to say, the general idea of efficient causality. This is uniformly implied in the etymology of the word: the Greek *nomos* derives from *nemo*, something assigned or apportioned; the Latin *lex*, from *lego*, something said or spoken; the German *Gesetz*, from *setzen*, something set or established; and the English "law," from "lay," which in turn derives from the German *legen*, something laid down. All these imply an authoritative will and an enforcing power. The essential elements of law are the following: (1) a lawgiver, or authoritative will; (2) subjects, or beings toward whom the authoritative will is directed; (3) a general decree or command properly promulgated, an expression of the authoritative will; (4) power, of enforcing the decree or command; and (5) a penalty for the violation of the law. Lacking either a penalty or the power to enforce the penalty, law would not be law at all, but only a sort of maxim or bit of good counsel. Therefore, in the light of this analysis, straight thinking would require us to conclude that the "laws of nature"—all of which are self-operative in the sense of imposing their own sanctions—have their root in, and derive their authority and power from, the Universal Mind and Will, the Will of God. All of which means that it is the Will of God that is the constitution of the Cosmos. It is just as absurd to think of law without a lawgiver as it is to conceive of thought apart from a thinker. *Being*

is the first of all categories of human thought. The phrase, "law of nature," when used simply to denote a mode of action or a mere sequence of events behind which there is assumed to be no directing intelligence or ordaining will, plainly involves a self-contradiction. It must be remembered that physics derives the term "law" from jurisprudence, not jurisprudence from physics. The first and primary use of the term is with reference to the relations existing between intelligent, self-determining agents, that is, between persons. Hence, scientists, by their very use of the term "law," implicitly confess that a Supreme Will has established general rules which control the processes of the universe. These rules are in fact precisely what scientists designate "laws of nature." In reality, they are ordinances of Nature's Creator and Preserver—God.

Hence, according to Scripture, I repeat, the Will of God is the constitution of the universe. And the Word of God is, of course, the expression or revelation of the Divine Will. The Scriptures affirm that our God, by the agency of His Spirit, through the instrumentality of His Word, brought into existence "the heavens and the earth and all the host of them." And they are equally positive in affirming that God, again by the agency of His Spirit, through the instrumentality of His Word (Decrees), conserves the universe in being and sustains it in all of its processes.

[Psa. 33:6, 9]: By the word of Jehovah were the heavens made, And all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. . . . For he spake, and it was done; *He commanded, and it stood fast.* [Psa. 148.1-6]: Praise ye Jehovah, Praise ye Jehovah from the heavens: Praise him in the heights. Praise ye him, all his angels: Praise ye him, all his host. Praise ye him, sun and moon: Praise him, all ye stars of light. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, And ye waters that are above the heavens. Let them praise the name of Jehovah; For he commanded, and they were created. *He hath also established them for ever and ever: He hath made a decree which shall not pass away.* [Psa. 119:89-91]: For ever, O Jehovah, Thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. They abide this day according to thine ordinances; For all things are thy servants. [Heb. 1:1-3]: God . . . hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds; who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and *upholding all things by the word of his power*, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. [Col. 1:16-17]: all things have been created through him [the Word, the Son], and unto him; and he is before all things, and *in him all things consist*,

that is, literally, "hold together." Back of all the order, beauty, and precision which characterize the natural universe which

we live in, there is an *efficient* conserving and sustaining Cause. That Cause is the Spirit-power of God, as exercised in conjunction with the Word-power or the Decrees of God. Hence, we are told in Scripture that when the Word, by the agency of the Spirit, shall be spoken to decree the termination of the whole temporal (historical) process, the heavens shall roll up like a parchment and the earth shall be folded up like a vesture. This universe of ours hangs upon a single thread, but that thread is as strong as Omnipotence Himself: it is the Word of the living God.

[Psa. 102:25-27]: Of old didst thou lay the foundation of the earth; And the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, And thy years shall have no end. [2 Pet. 3:3-13]: Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.<sup>1</sup> For this they wilfully forget, that there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, *by the word of God*; by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:<sup>2</sup> *but the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire*, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. . . . But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up. . . . But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. [2 Thess. 1:8-10]: at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day. [1 Thess. 4:16-17]: For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, *with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God*; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

1. Is not this precisely what is being said by our modern deists (with their "reign of natural law"), our materialistic evolutionists, our "naturalists," "humanists," etc.?
2. When God spoke the Word, *i.e.*, commanded it, "the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened" (Gen. 7:11), and "the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights" (Gen. 7:12; cf. Gen. 8:2).

This speaking of the last Word to mark the end of time is not infrequently described in Scripture under the metaphor of the sounding of a trumpet.

[Cf. especially 1 Cor. 15:50-54. Here the Apostle is answering the questions, "How are the dead raised? and with what manner of body do they come?" (v. 35), and he has in mind two classes of the saints: (1) those who shall have died in Christ prior to His second coming, and (2) those who may still be alive on the earth at His second coming.] Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. [The Apostle has already laid down the premise that as there is a natural body, so there is also a spiritual body; hence, that the saints must in some manner exchange their natural for spiritual bodies; they cannot take "flesh and blood"—*i.e.*, their animal life—with them into the next world. Now he proceeds to explain *when* and *how* this exchange of bodies shall take place, with reference to the two classes of the saints mentioned above. He says]: Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but *we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we [the living saints also, at that time] shall be changed. For this corruptible [the dead in Christ] must put on incorruption [by resurrection and transfiguration], and this mortal [the living in Christ] must put on immortality [by transfiguration only]. But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption [by resurrection and transfiguration], and this mortal shall have put on immortality [by transfiguration], then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*

[Cf. also Joel 2:11]: And Jehovah uttereth his voice before his army; for his camp is very great; *for he is strong that executeth his word;* for the day of Jehovah is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?

In a word, creations (absolute beginnings) at least are in the very nature of the case miraculous, that is, from our human point of view. But things once generated and set in motion continue in existence by processes determined by the Divine Will or according to the "laws of nature" (secondary causes). Living species are perpetuated, of course, by means of *seed* "after their kind" (Gen. 1:12, 21, 25). The first oak tree, for example, must have been a creation, in some sense of that term at least; but every oak tree thereafter came from an acorn (seed). So it has been with men. At the beginning, "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:27). But every human being from that day to the present has come into being through the process of "natural" generation; that is, according to the law of biological reproduction, through *seed*. Incidentally, the same thing is true in a general sense of the Spiritual Creation, the Body of Christ, the mystical living Organism of which Christ is the Head and the indwelling Spirit is the animating Principle. It had its beginning in a miracle—the baptism of the Holy Spirit conferred upon the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost

(Acts 2:1-4); but it has been perpetuated and enlarged from that day to this by the implanting of Spiritual Seed—the Gospel—in honest and good hearts, there to fructify in the obedience of faith (Luke 8:11,15; Gal. 3:2). Hence regenerated persons are said to be added to the Church, literally “added together,” by the Lord Himself, on condition of their acceptance of, and obedience to, the terms of the Gospel Covenant (Acts 2:38,41, 47).

All this adds up to one fundamental truth, namely, that insofar as the physical Creation is concerned, the abode of Spirit-power is the Natural Law (“laws of Nature”), and the activity of the Spirit is manifested in the operation of Natural Law in its manifoldness. Psa. 104:30—“Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created: And thou renewest the face of the ground.” Every year, in the springtime, the whole earth noiselessly blooms into radiance and melts into fragrance at the vivifying touch of the Divine Spirit. Throughout every year, seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, day and night, succeed each other in orderly unbroken sequence, as they have done from the very dawn of the Creation. From century to century, living species continue to live, to reproduce their kind, and then die and give way to the generation that takes their place upon the earth. All this bespeaks order, sequence, beauty. This universal order is but the never-failing evidence of the ceaseless activity of the Spirit of the living God. And Natural Law is but the expression of the Divine Will, as effectuated and realized by the eternal Spirit in accordance with the Divine Decrees.

Thus, in and through the “laws of Nature,” which His power makes efficacious, the Spirit broods over the Totality of Being, and will continue so to brood as long as the present age endures, that is, until the great Day of Cosmic Renovation. His continuous operation is necessary to sustain the Life Process in all its ramifications. As Elihu said to Job, “If God gather unto himself his spirit and his breath, All flesh shall perish together, And man shall turn again unto dust” (Job 34:14-15).

In the sense, moreover, that the brooding of the Spirit upholds every form of the Life Process, it can be truly said that in God “we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28); for “the God that made the world and all things therein, he, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is he served by men’s hands, as though he needed anything, seeing *he himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things*” (Acts 17:24-25).

And in the sense that Spirit-power thus pervades the Totality of Being, effectuating all physical and spiritual processes, every form of life in the Whole, the Spirit Himself is truly omnipresent. In the words of the Psalmist:

Whither shall I go from thy spirit?  
 Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?  
 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there:  
 If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou are there.  
 If I take the wings of the morning,  
 And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,  
 Even there shall thy hand lead me,  
 And thy right hand shall hold me.  
 If I say, Surely the darkness shall overwhelm me,  
 And the light about me shall be night;  
 Even the darkness hideth not from thee,  
 But the night shineth as the day:  
 The darkness and the light are both alike to thee.  
 For thou didst form my inward parts:  
 Thou didst cover me in my mother's womb.  
 I will give thanks unto thee; *for I am fearfully  
 and wonderfully made:*  
 Wonderful are thy works;  
 And that my soul knoweth right well.

(Psa. 139:7-14).

## 7. The Spirit of Beauty

*"And God said, Let there be light: and there was light."*  
 In all probability, this statement has reference to the birth of light generally in the world, whatever may have been the form in which it first existed. The Spirit of God is the Source of the Light that goes out from God. The Light, moreover, always emanates from the dark world-forms, but only after they have been energized by the Spirit of God as the formative Principle. This is true, both of the physical light which emanated from the primordial Chaos after the latter had been energized by the Spirit, and of the spiritual light which emanates from the faculties of the natural man when energized by the Spirit.

The entrance of light, at the physical creation, marked the beginning of the revelation of the Spirit in Nature (using the