



THE DIVINE STRUGGLE FOR “I” AND “THOU” III: Command

THE UNIVERSE does not exist by accident. God created the universe out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) because he had no other option. Furthermore, God necessarily created by command: “For He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast” (Psalm 33:9).

From God’s commands emerged all the fundamental properties of the universe – for example, time and space, matter and energy, waves and particles, atoms and molecules, as well as all cosmic objects, such as asteroids, planets, stars and galaxies.

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Furthermore, God necessarily commanded life into existence, ranging from microbiota to plants and animals and, finally, humans. With the creation of human beings, God extended his commands to their essential personal and social needs. Furthermore, God maintained his supportive commands in the face of the responsive “free process” that he granted Creation.¹ Otherwise, all Creation would have become extinct.

Life, and particularly human life, therefore persisted in spite of the “free-process” disasters and diseases of nature and despite the predatory behavior associated with so many living species. Over recent millennia God further intervened to command the moral behavior of human beings. His biblical encounters with Noah, Abraham, Moses and the Chosen People illustrate this intervention by command (Genesis 6:13ff; 12:1ff; Exodus 3:2ff; 20:1ff).

Although divine command was necessary, obligatory obedience to command involves submission. That is why command does not permit free, willing and loving relationships, ultimately manifested in “I-Thou” relationality. Nevertheless, this is the very relationality for which God himself has longed and has been struggling to achieve.

Conclusion

While command indeed has limitations, we can be thankful that God continues to use it — at least in nature² — as we journey toward the ultimate manifestation of “I-Thou” relationality. Meanwhile, let us rejoice that God is our Author, Maker and Sustainer. The universe would not and could not exist without him. Furthermore, let us rejoice that God made this universe not only for himself but for all humanity.

Endnotes

1. “. . . [T]he problem of physical evil (disease and disaster) . . . needs what I have called the ‘free-process’ defence, appealing to the divine gift of freedom to *all* of the creation, not just to human kind alone.” — John Polkinghorne, *Reason and Reality: The Relationship between Science and Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Trinity Press International), p. 84.
2. While God’s command restrains nature from ultimate extinction, extermination, etc., he allows “free process” as an eternal pedagogical tool to assure the ultimate, final and unconditional safety and freedom of the universe.

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