

The Force

Romans 11:23

by Ernest O'Neill

Do you remember the catechism that you used in Sunday School? The first question in ours in Ireland was "Who made the world?", and we all knew the answer. Except that the answer is not strictly right. Most of us would say, "God made the world." But loved ones, it isn't exactly right. Look at John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God;" then the important verse: "all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made." If you want to know what the Word was, look at verse 14: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father." Then verse 17: "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

That's who made the world: all things were made through Jesus and without him was not anything made that was made. In other words, Jesus was with his Father even before the first star was created. God made the world through Jesus. It's actually not fair to say that Jesus made the world or created the world, but that he began to create the world. I don't know if you know how Genesis 1:1 runs. Most of us think it runs "In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth", but actually the Hebrew word is "breshiyth" and it is the construct state in Hebrew. It means "in the beginning of God's creating the heavens and the earth." If you look at the footnote in the RSV under Genesis 1:1 you will see they tried to translate the Hebrew more literally. It says, "When God began to create." Actually it is truer to say that Jesus began to create when he made all the people and all the things that we see around us. Then he, by the energy of his own uncreated life, continued to hold the fabric of the psychological and natural world together while he himself actually continued to create. That is, he continued by the energy of his life to activate a higher set of spiritual laws beyond the natural laws that you and I are familiar with. So in a real sense Jesus is still creating today.

Four thousand years ago he came to an old man who was one hundred years old and his wife who was ninety. Jesus came to them with this creating power that he had and that he was continuing to exercise. You will see what happened if you look at Genesis 18:1: "And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men stood in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the earth, and said, 'My lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant.'" Then in verse 9: "They said to him, 'Where is Sarah your wife?' And he said 'She is in the tent.'" Obviously the Lord was one of the three men. "Then the Lord said, 'I will surely return to you in the spring, and Sarah your wife shall have a son.' And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, 'After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?' Then the Lord said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh, and say, "Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?" Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, in the spring, and Sarah shall have a son.' But Sarah denied, saying, 'I did not laugh'; for she was afraid. He said, 'No, but you did laugh."

Obviously it is somebody more than an angel because Jesus himself says, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Yet God intended us to realize that it was somebody different from himself, because you see how he refers to himself in the previous chapter, Genesis 17:15. It doesn't say, "And the Lord

said to Abraham" but "And God said to Abraham". Though the names are interchangeable in other places here you can see why the two names are used differently: in this case Jesus was able to be seen as a man by Abraham. Of course we all know that if anybody looked on God himself they would have died, so it was Jesus who came to Abraham and Sarah. And actually by the energy of his uncreated life he was able to transform the tissues of Sarah's body and the blood that ran through her veins so that she was able even at the age of ninety to have a child. That is what she did; she had a child, Isaac.

Jesus continued to create in Abraham and Isaac's children because you remember that Isaac's son was Jacob, and his name became Israel. When the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness Jesus continued to create in the midst of purely created elements that they dealt with in their life; Jesus continued to pour in this supernatural set of spiritual laws. When they were absolutely dying of thirst he became a rock that actually gushed with water. That continued through out their lives. By that means God was able to continuously express himself in the world, to show himself alive among the people. The rest of the human beings on the earth continued to try the old frustrating, defeating experience of manipulating the world so that it would do what they wanted, while they saw this strange people walking through the world continually acting with third-dimension power. This power was able to deal with the molecules of the Red Sea so that the sea actually stood up in walls and these Israelites walked down through the middle of it.

This all happened because Moses, their leader, really believed that God was able through Jesus to do these things. He did whatever God told him to do and he did it whether it was striking the sea with a rod or striking the rock with his staff. Once he did it and exercised faith, then the creative life of Jesus was able to change the closed universe in which these people lived. That's the way it went on, loved ones. So there was an immense contrast in our world between the rest of us human beings who were always involved in trying to manipulate the elements of the physical, created life to do what we wanted them to do, and this people that walked with supernatural power continually acting upon the created life in which they found themselves. There was just a great difference between them and the other people in the world.

There is the situation of the fiery furnace: the fiery furnace plus Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego equals a heap of ashes. Except that the fiery furnace plus Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego — plus a fourth person that appeared walking with them in the furnace (and this fourth person, the historical account says, was like the Son of God) brought about a change in the very power of the fire to destroy their material bodies, so that in fact they walked through the fire and remained untouched by it. Loved ones, that continued right throughout their lives: the solid walls of Jericho plus the few weak Israelites wandering around them equaled defeat and disaster, but the solid walls of Jericho plus the few weak Israelites plus their faith in the power of this supernatural Christ-life to act upon solid walls resulted in a victory and a complete advance of their conquest in Canaan.

That was the experience; Jesus continued to act upon the elements of our created world because he was able to change them and he is able to change them. If we can talk about speeding up the protons and the neutrons in our bodies, how much more is the person who created those protons and neutrons able to do? That is the way it works; the only three conditions that needed to be fulfilled were the conditions fulfilled by people like Moses. First of all, the human being involved had to accept that this world exists to express the love and the power of the person who made it, not to express the love and power of the human being himself. It was essential for the human being to see the big picture, to see why we are all here upon the earth and to see that this earth is here to set forth God's beauty, God's love, and God's power; not our beauty, love and power.

The second condition that was necessary was for the human being to believe that this creative power of Jesus' life-spirit was as real a contributing factor in the situation as the other elements that he could see and touch with his other senses. In other words, it was essential for the human being to believe that this life was a real power in the world that could change things.

The third condition was always fulfilled when a fellow like Moses took the rod and struck the water: you had to be prepared to do what God was guiding you to do even if it only made sense in the light of the existence of Jesus' spirit-power. In other words, you had to be prepared to do things that would seem stupid outside the possibility of God's power being released. It would look dumb for Moses to go to the water and strike it; it would look dumber even when he struck that rock with his rod. You had to be prepared to do things that made sense only if, in fact, God's power was able to be released.

Now the Israelites continually had trouble with those conditions. In fact, the Israelites as a nation never really did get hold of those conditions and never really did get hold of the idea that this supernatural life that walked with them was actually the Son of the Creator of the universe. The only reason they received any benefit from it was because of the outstanding leaders that God gave them — leaders like Moses, and prophets like Isaiah and kings like David that enabled Jesus' life to be released. It was those men that had the faith.

About 2001 B. C. God stopped giving the Israelites leaders like that, and the result was that the Israelites themselves stopped believing that this life-power of God was with them. As they stopped believing that they sank, first of all, to the level of the rest of us, and then they went on to a lower level, much like Great Britain. Great Britain was powerful for many reasons but one of those reasons was undoubtedly her colonies and the resources that she got from them.

As the colonies one by one were lost, Britain discovered that she had been living in the midst not only of pride but of complacency, and so she began sinking not only to the level of all other powers, but right into the level of a third rate power. So it was with the Israelites; once the supernatural power ceased that was able to reorganize and recombine the elements of fire on Mount Carmel so a fire was able to be created by the faith of Elijah, they became not only as weak as all the other nations of the world, but even weaker.

What happened about nineteen hundred years ago was that Jesus came to earth in his own personal body. He continued to exercise this creative power -- that's what happened with Lazarus: his body was lying in the grave actually so rotted that there was a smell. Jesus came into that situation and was able to act upon the protons and the neutrons of Lazarus' body and recombine and reconstitute them so that actually the blood began to flow again and the rotting and corrupting process was reversed and Lazarus came back to life. Jesus himself died physically and then came back to life, and at that time he explained to the people who followed him, "You are going to experience something that nobody else in the world has ever experienced because I'm coming back to this earth, but I'm not coming as a visible presence as I was with the Israelites. I was a pillar of fire by night, I was a cloud by day, I was a rock to them when they needed water out of a rock, and I was manna-bread to them when they wanted food in the wilderness. I'm not coming back as a visible presence like that. I'm not even going to come back as you see me here with my own personal body walking about as a physical person known as Jesus of Nazareth. I'm going to come back and infuse myself as a spirit into you. My Father is going to graft you into the tree of my uncreated life, this uncreated life that is able to transform the created elements around you so that you can exercise this power in your life here on earth." That's how he explained it.

Then God through Paul gave this promise that we are studying today in Romans 11:23. "And even the others," that's the Jews "if they do not persist in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again." Even the Jews themselves can be grafted in but only as the rest of us -- as individuals. What came home to all the people who watched the Israelites in those early days was this: this is the way we are meant to live -- we aren't meant to live without this supernatural power that transforms situations that we cannot change.

Gradually people began to see this is the only way the Israelites could ever have existed. This is the only way they could ever have survived. This is the way all people were meant to live. We were not meant to live trying to do our best with this world by the manipulation that we could exercise upon it.

It comes home to all of us: without this power you are left juggling the numbers aren't you? You are left moving the chessmen around the board. You can't actually affect anything or change anything; you can't add anything to the created life around you. All you are left is the opportunity to manipulate and fiddle with it, so most of us end up doing just that. We offer carrots to the children to get them to do something until we eventually run out of carrots. They come of age and don't want any more carrots and still want to do what they want to do. What they need is change, but we offer them carrots.

Eventually we run out of refuges to run to from our domestic unhappiness. We actually don't need that kind of experience, we need the situation changed, but there is no power to change it. We keep backing away. We do the same in our international affairs; we establish foreign policy that is based on the self-interest of each nation until eventually the self-interest of each nation, encouraged by receiving more and more bait day after day, lines all the nations up opposite each other at the final Armageddon. In other words, if you tackle this present life just from the point of view of trying to manipulate the things that are given, you eventually end up in defeat; you end up painting yourself into a corner. You come to a point where there isn't another human instinct

left to play against the wrong human instincts. You have no room left because all you are doing is trying to rearrange the elements of this created life to try to bring about what you want. We weren't meant to do that. Jesus did not finish with creating, he just began. When he gave us these bodies, when he gave us the money and the cars, when he gave us the dust under our feet, the wind in our faces and the birds in the air, he continued to live in this world and he is able, as a catalyst, to change those elements; to recombine them in such a way that our life goes the way it was meant to go and this world is developed the way God meant it to be developed. Loved ones, if you don't have that power in your life, it is just a life lived on the edge of desperation because you can't actually change anything; you can simply manipulate what's given.

I want to ask you: do you live your present life in a closed universe or under an open heaven? How do you tackle each day? Do you have the attitude, "I know the people in the office; I know what they are thinking. I know what the boss is thinking. I know how that car is going; it is not going well, and I know what those tires are like. I know what my bank account is like. Well, I'd better get to it: I will try to make what I can of it this day." Then you get to the end of the day and you say, "Well, another day, another dollar. I made it through. I'll get some sleep and get started tomorrow." Is that it? That is pitiful. It is hideous. Do you see that the way we were meant to live was to get up each morning and say, "Lord Jesus, I thank you that you are here. I thank you that your Spirit is here in me and that I've been grafted into you. I thank you, Lord that you are not in the business of letting me face this day on my own. You are still in the business of creating. Lord

Jesus, look at the things that I have to face. Now Lord, what do you want me to do in these situations? Where do you want to change the thing?" Then as you go through the day, be on the lookout for Jesus indicating to you, "Strike this rock with a rod." Sometimes it is the person who has been criticizing you at the office, expecting you to come at them sarcastically and show resentment to them. They don't expect you to strike the rock with the rod. Sometimes Jesus prompts you to forget all that, just to love them, be kind to them, and show them that you care about them. That's striking the rock with the rod. So be on the lookout through the day for things that Jesus tells you to do that make sense only of his power to act and change the situation.

Then loved ones, you walk in faith; exercising faith that this life of Christ is an actual contributing factor in your situation... more powerful than the other factors that you can assess by your own common sense. That is the way we were meant to live. Now I don't know about you, but I lived for years never doing that: I never saw any change because I never exercised faith. I was always like Hannah Whitall Smith says, "Looking for faith inside me" thinking that faith is something that I'll see inside me that will rise up and exercise itself. Forget it! It doesn't do that! You exercise faith just as the Israelite did. This Jesus-life of the Spirit is still operating in this world and he can actually change situations that you are involved in if you will exercise faith in him the way Moses and the Israelites did -- but you have to exercise the faith.

So would you think about it? Because you must admit that on our own, most of us are just ameliorating the situation to make it bearable; we are not actually changing it. There is only one way that we can change it and there is only one plan that God has for us changing it, and that's our exercising faith in the power of Jesus' life to stop the rotting of withered flesh to make people alive when they are dead, to make water stand up like walls. He is still able to do those things but he will not do them just for our amusement or just to prove that he is real. He will only do them when you really believe that he is still alive and can do them. How do you find out? Try it. Try it -- you'll like it!

Let us pray. Dear Lord, we thank you that that is the way you meant us to live. Father we thank you that's your plan for us; we've been struggling away here because we refuse to believe in anything invisible and yet the wind works wonders every day and yet we've never seen it. Lord, we're just irrational over this and we see that we are. And Father, we intend to begin living the way you intended for us to live: exercising faith in you Lord Jesus – that man that approached Abraham and Sarah when they were 100 years old; that man, who was able by his power to enable them to have a baby. Lord Jesus, we intend to exercise faith in you in our own life situations so that you can begin to change them and so that our lives will begin to set forth the power and the love of our maker. We commit ourselves to you for this purpose and for your glory. Now the grace of our Lord, Jesus, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us now and evermore. Amen.