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Torrance's Doctrine of Creation I

Order as Contingent

The concept of order is a dominant theme in every aspect of Torrance's thought and serves as an integrating motif for much of his work. Torrance draws upon the concept to develop his understanding of God ("divine" or "trinitarian order"), creation ("contingent order") and humanity ("mediators of order") and the goal toward which human activity in history is to be oriented ("the order that ought to be"). We will use it later in this project to understand the nature of culture as a reality that arises from the ordering activity of human persons as stewards of creation. For these reasons it deserves careful definition and development.

The idea of order, because it is a fundamental assumption of rational inquiry and interaction with the world, is a difficult one to circumscribe. In fact, the very examination of it presupposes it. In an essay entitled "The Concept of Order in Theology and Science"[1] Torrance notes that "order is not something that we can ever prove, for we have to assume order in any attempt at proof or disproof." Consequently, order "constitutes one of the ultimate controlling factors in all rational and scientific activity."[2]

This is certainly true of Torrance's theological work, not only because he describes his work as "rational and scientific," but also because the concept of order has played a fundamental and regulative role in his published work from its initial appearances[3] and throughout the

1. This essay may be found in Torrance, *Christian Frame of Mind*, 17–34.

2. Ibid., 18.

3. One of his earliest essays exploring the significance of order for the Church and its ministry is "The Meaning of Order," in Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, 2:13–30. The publication of this essay took place at the same time Torrance was

entire range of his thought on matters biblical, theological, scientific, ecumenical, ethical, cultural, and aesthetic.[4]

Richard S. Kirby, in his doctoral research on the concept of cosmic disorder in Torrance's thought, notes that the twin concepts of order and ontology are central in determining the underlying "grammar" or "syntax" of Torrance's thought irrespective of the subject.[5] Though Kirby thinks that Torrance has not taken proper account of the reality of sin in relation to the created order and the scientific enterprise, the importance of the concept for Torrance's thought remains.

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delivering his 1959 Hewitt Lectures at Andover Newton Theological School under the title *The Nature of Theology and Scientific Method*. These lectures were then substantially expanded and published ten years later as *Theological Science*. It would appear that the origins of Torrance's interest in the significance of order for the church arose in tandem with his interest in the concept of order as a presupposition of scientific methodology. Therefore it serves as an important integrative concept for the entirety of his thought. Another essay considering the implications of the biblical term *oikonomia* for a concept of order, and in particular its implications for our knowledge of God, is Torrance, "The Implications of *Oikonomia*." The idea of *oikonomia* serves as a springboard for Torrance's earliest reflections on the concept of order.

4. Other developments and applications of the concept in the various fields just mentioned may be found in Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, vol. 1. This entire volume draws upon the concept of order to address ecclesiological and missiological issues. Torrance begins to develop his theological anthropology around the concept with his March 1978 acceptance speech, for the Templeton Prize, titled "Man, The Priest of Creation" published in *Ground and Grammar of Theology*. His most extended treatment of the theme, directed primarily to scientists, but laden with implications for theologians, appears in *Divine and Contingent Order*. The concept of order remains just as prominent, but less technically discussed, in *Christian Frame of Mind*. Of particular interest are the essays "The Concept of Order in Theology and Science," and "Man, Mediator of Order," where the conceptuality of priesthood and creation in his 1978 address are exchanged for the conceptuality of mediation and order. The concept of order is drawn into nearly all of Torrance's ethical discussions. See in particular Torrance, "The Atonement: The Singularity of Christ and the Finality of the Cross"; and "The Ought and the Is." In terms of aesthetics and order one might consider the final pages of "The Transfinite Significance of Beauty in Science and Theology," where Torrance reflects upon Barth's appreciation of Mozart, and "The Social Coefficient of Knowledge," in Torrance, *Reality and Scientific Theology*, 98–130 where the reflections include other facets of contemporary culture. On the relation of order and law see in particular *Juridical Law and Physical Law*.

5. Kirby, "Theological Definition of Cosmic Disorder," 96: "[Torrance's] method emphasizes the ordered nature of the contingent creation, and his ontology emphasizes the relational nature of being. . . . Thus, to do justice to the 'grammar' or theological 'syntax' of Torrance's thought on any subject, it is reasonable to give a thorough account of these essential elements of his theology." See in particular chapter 3: "Christ and the Cosmos: Order and Ontology."

In the light of Torrance's publishing career and Kirby's observations it would not be reckless to conclude that the concept of order not only functions as a central integrating motif in Torrance's work, alongside that of the *homoousion*, but surpasses it in many ways, as it is a concept used to explicate the very significance of the incarnation itself. For Torrance, the incarnation is an event that binds together the created order with the divine order, redeeming the fallen order and inaugurating an eschatological order whereby the actual (fallen) order of the world is driven towards the "order that ought to be," realized partially in this world and consummated in the *eschaton*.[6] Indeed, the concept has received a breadth and depth of treatment[7] not extended to the concept Torrance is known best for advocating—the *homoousion*.

However, it should be added that Torrance's concept of order, or the way in which he has nuanced and transformed it, arises from theological forces that are grounded in the assumption of the *homoousion*. Torrance's particular concept of order has been formed through a thinking together of the doctrines of creation and incarnation—the main fruit of this being his development of the idea of contingence.[8] It is this thinking together that has given Torrance's concept of order a distinct identity and differentiates it from more generic and stereotypical conceptions that see the concept as inherently static, closed, and inflexible and, as such, one that suggests a homogenizing impact upon the diversity and particularity of the created order.

Presently, we will examine what the concept of order refers to and what differentiates one order from another in Torrance's thought. As we will discover, Torrance talks of what appears to be several kinds of order: created, contingent, divine, redeemed, fallen, eschatological,

6. See the essay "The Concept of Order in Theology and Science," in Torrance, *Christian Frame of Mind*, 17–34.

7. We refer here to the extended treatment given to the concept in Torrance's *Divine and Contingent Order*.

8. With reference to the fundamental role of a doctrine of creation, "Contingence and order are assumptions of that [unprovable] kind, yet we do not derive them from natural science but from a fundamental outlook upon the nature of the universe that is the correlative of a distinctive doctrine of God as the Creator of the universe" (Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order*, 27). See also Torrance, *Christian Frame of Mind*, 20: "This is the concept of order in which Christian theology seeks to think out by relating the Incarnation of the Word of God in Jesus Christ to the creation which was brought into being from nothing through the creative power of that Word."

and moral. But what is the nature of the order that all these adjectives describe?

Approaching Torrance's doctrine of creation through the concept of order as a noun, as opposed to that of contingence as an adjective, will grant us a better understanding of the various "stages" or "conditions" that qualify the created order[9] and the personal and historical relations that are significant to these transitions/conditions. The concept of order becomes an important entry point for asking the following questions:

- What distinctive qualities, or what kinds of change, require the concept of order to be qualified in these different ways?
- What distinctive kinds of agency characterize these differing forms of order, and in what way are they involved in the move from one quality of order to another?
- What kind of continuities and discontinuities are there between these different forms of order?

The Inner-Logic of Order

As mentioned earlier, the concept of order is a difficult one to circumscribe, let alone concisely define. Torrance himself refrains from any concise definitions or treatments of the concept, preferring to let the significance and boundaries of the idea unfold through his use of it in various contexts. Consequently, the most appropriate way in which to unfold the contours of the concept is to draw upon material from throughout Torrance's work where the concept is actually put to use. By so doing we will be able to develop a comprehensive account of the term's meaning and the dynamics that underlie it.

As a first step toward this comprehensive account, we will have to lay down the basic grammar of the concept by reading between the lines of Torrance's work. In doing so we are looking for what Torrance has elsewhere described as the "inner-logic" of the concept. We here inquire after the essential components of meaning inherent in the term

9. Even if the transition from stage to stage, or condition to condition, has much to do with how the contingent relation between God and the world is defined and its dynamics effected by sin and redemption. But, our point here may not be valid as contingency is a characteristic of the created order even in its fallen, redeemed, and eschatological states. It is the character of the created order that changes, not its essential nature as contingent.

as Torrance uses it by asking what order is *prior* to it being characterized as fallen, redeemed, eschatological, moral, etc.

Perhaps the closest one will get to capturing the many themes and overtones of meaning inherent in Torrance's use of the concept in one citation is in the opening paragraphs of his essay "The Meaning of Order."[10] The citation is a long one, and many further points of expansion and clarification are made subsequent to it, but it will serve as a helpful point of entry to the broad contours of the concept in Torrance's thought. It will also provide a necessary foundation upon which to further develop and integrate Torrance's other uses of the term.

> Apart from the ordering activity of God's creative Word the world is without form or void, but into the ordered cosmos there has broken the disorder of sin. It belongs to the very nature of sin to divide, to disrupt, to be anarchic—sin is lawlessness, *anomia*. The opposite of all that is order, harmony, communion. When God made the world He made it in order and everything was set in its due proportion. But through the lawlessness of sin the world fell out of proportion, out of order, and was threatened with sheer chaos. Were it not for the persistent fact of God's purpose of love the world would destroy itself; but in His covenant mercy God holds the world together in spite of its chaos, and to that end He has promulgated His law which restrains and contains disorder (as long as it is obeyed) and chaos, and reduces it to a measure of proportion, even while it is in the grip of *anomia*, or lawlessness. But God's Covenant contains the promise of a new order, of a new creation when all things will be restored to their obedience and perfection in the divine Will. Meantime wherever there is *anomia* it is met by the divine *nomos*, and there is conflict between disorder and order.[11]

We will condense this statement by making five general points about Torrance's specifically Christian concept of order:[12]

10. This essay can be found in Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church* 2:13–30. As further testament to the centrality and flexibility of the concept in Torrance's thought he here uses it as an integrative motif to clarify and relate the ideas of creation, fall, covenant, redemption, church, economy, and *eschaton*.

11. Ibid., 13.

12. For an even more generic concept of order one could replace God with any agent and still retain the basic dynamic described here: order presupposes an ultimate agent, and any given order reflects the character of that ultimate agent and his/her presuppositions about the world. The Christian understanding of the concept adds that our cultural ordering of the world should be congruent, not only with the particular

- Order is a *theological* concept in that it arises through the agency of God's creative Word and derives its essential character from that Word.
- Order is a *relational* concept in that it has to do with the establishment of unique relations between things based upon the nature and purpose of those things.
- Order is a *teleological* concept in that the nature and purpose of those things are ultimately grounded in God's loving purpose and design for them and for the created order in general.
- Order is a *cultural* concept in that God's loving purpose for the created order is to be embodied in, and reflected through, the socio-cultural structures of human life.
- In light of the four points above a fifth follows: Order is a *multi-leveled and integrative concept* in that lower levels of order refer beyond themselves to higher levels of order and higher levels of order, while implicitly present in the lower levels, cannot be reduced to them.[13]

Using these five points as a guide, a tentative theological understanding of the concept of order in Torrance's thought might run something like this: Order refers to a particular way of organizing created reality by establishing flexible relationships between different aspects of that reality in accordance with their particularity and purpose and with reference to a transcendent design so that those interrelated spheres of reality reflect in a creaturely way the divine intent for the world.

These statements and definition will serve as an adequate starting point for the further development of the idea in Torrance's work as they

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agent/s and their particular purposes for the world, but ultimately with God's. Human orders are not ultimate but penultimate reflections of an ultimate order established by God and revealed in the divine economy.

13. There is no explicit mention of this point in the citation we have just noted; however, it becomes an important factor in the overall dynamic (inner-logic) of the term as Torrance develops it later through his engagements with natural science and his interaction with the work of Michael Polyani. We include it here at the outset of our discussion due to its centrality in Torrance's later expositions. Torrance refers to this elsewhere as "ontological stratification" where "the universe in its immanent structure comprises a hierarchy of levels of reality which are open upward but not reducible downward" (Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order*, 20). This is an inherent implication of Torrance's understanding of "contingency" that we will explore later.

capture the inner-logic of the concept in such a way that little alteration of it will be necessary as we proceed. With the essential and identifying structure of the concept in place we may now embellish it; teasing out the implications inherent in the inner-logic of the concept and by drawing in complementary concepts Torrance has developed elsewhere. It is hoped that by so doing we will further clarify the essential structure Torrance has put in place, even while it is tailored in such a way as to be useful for the development of a theology of culture.[14]

As we move through an explication of Torrance's concept of order we will also be considering the many stages, forms, or qualities of order that Torrance refers to, specifically, created, fallen, redeemed, eschatological, and socio-ethical/cultural. We will consider the continuities and discontinuities between these stages and the personal and historical relations important to each. In closing, a number of inter-connected statements will be made so that the many strands of the concept may be woven together and its central dynamic exposed.

Order as a Theological Concept: The Ground and Purpose of Order in God the Father

When we speak of order in Christian terms we speak of something that arises fundamentally from God's creative initiative and is sustained due to God's ongoing providential activity. To reiterate the words of Torrance: "Apart from the ordering activity of God's creative Word the world is without form or void."[15] Order is a concept that carries with it an ultimate reference of some kind, and for Torrance that ultimate reference is the triune God. It is not enough that order refers generically to some ultimate ground of order, for Torrance this ultimate reference must have concrete content—it must be *theological* and therefore trinitarian. Any other ultimate reference will have significant consequences upon how we conceive of order, how we investigate and manipulate it, and how our ordering of the world subsequently forms and manipulates

14. This process is not much different from the way the jazz improviser works, for such a person does not pick notes out of thin air, but expands upon the essential structure of a piece of music—drawing out its inherent potential while adding nuances of his/her own that are context specific. See the work of Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz*; and Monson, *Saying Something*.

15. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church* 2:13.

us.[16] For Torrance order arises from the agency of the Word of God and "has its ground in the love of God, for it is ultimately God's love which is the power of order in created existence."[17]

For order to be understood theologically, it must be properly qualified and thus differentiated from ways of conceptualizing order that are not theological. It is for this reason that Torrance introduces and develops the idea of "contingence" in the way that he does and rarely discusses order apart from it being explicitly qualified as contingent.[18] For that reason a brief introduction to the concept is in order. We will then go on to develop two particular aspects of contingence that make it a distinctive qualifier of Torrance's overall understanding of "order."

Contingence: Introducing and Defining the Concept

As with the concept of order so with the concept of contingence—it is another fundamental assumption of all rational inquiry that cannot be proved but must be assumed if scientific inquiry is to proceed.[19]

For Torrance, contingence "is to be regarded as a basic and essential feature of the universe, a constituting condition of its reality and actuality."[20] With this statement, the importance of the concept in Torrance's thought seems self-evident. However, as a "basic and essential feature of the universe" it does need some development and clarification in order to find its appropriate place in our project.

16. See in particular Torrance's critique of determinism in Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order*, 1–25, where he notes that "deism and determinism go together" (10). The way the ultimate ground of order is construed holds significant consequences for how human beings understand themselves and their relations to one another, God, and the world. Torrance uses the history and philosophy of science to exemplify the theological, social, and scientific consequences of our misconstruals of "God" as the ultimate ground of order. While Torrance's emphasis has certainly been upon the scientific consequences, the dynamics of his thought are readily applicable to other spheres of human culture as well.

17. Torrance, *Christian Frame of Mind*, 19.

18. In fact, for Torrance order cannot be anything other than contingent, for it arises solely through the agency and creativity of the divine Word.

19. "Contingence must take its place among the ultimate normative beliefs with which science operates, along with order, rationality, simplicity, etc." (Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order*, 28).

20. Ibid., 37.

The irreducible kernel of the concept is provided by W. Jim Niedhardt in his "Introduction" to the second edition of Torrance's 1985 book *The Christian Frame of Mind*. Very simply, "contingency refers to the fact that a physical entity is never haphazardly formed but *exists as one of many possibilities*."[21] Consequently, that which is contingent is "neither necessary not eternal"[22] and therefore, contains no intrinsic reason why it should exist or why it should be what it actually is.[23] This kernel of meaning may be faintly detected in two descriptions of the term offered by Torrance himself—one for "contingence" and the other for "contingent order":

- "By contingence is meant that as created out of nothing the universe has no self-subsistence and no ultimate stability of its own, but that it is nevertheless endowed with an authentic reality and integrity of its own which must be respected."[24]
- "By contingent order is meant that the orderly universe is not self-sufficient or ultimately self-explaining but is given a rationality and reliability in its orderliness, which depend on and reflect God's own eternal rationality and reliability."[25]

For Torrance, contingency carries with it many of the same components of meaning found in his use and understanding of "order"—perhaps this is why the terms are so often found complementing and even standing in for one another. Contingency implies purpose, design, dependence, and relation even if that which is contingent is the actualization of only one of many possible choices, and in fact need not have been actualized at all. As a result, that which is contingent is neither necessary nor eternal, but neither is it random or chaotic.[26]

21. Torrance, *Christian Frame of Mind*, xxi. Italics mine.

22. Torrance, *Ground and Grammar*, 53.

23. Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order*, 36. This has important implications for Torrance's response to natural theology.

24. Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 217.

25. Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order*, viii.

26. Some, such as Roland Spjuth, in his excellent treatment of Torrance's thought, contend that Torrance has so circumscribed the idea of contingency that it has been expunged of the elements of chance and chaos that are meant to characterize it. See Spjuth, *Creation, Contingency and Divine Presence*, 105–16.

As with the concept of order so with the concept of contingence—the content of the term is filled with meaning through the thinking together of the doctrines of creation and incarnation. Of particular importance is the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, which Torrance refers to in order to outline the central implications of the concept of contingency for Christian thought about the created order.[27]

In its creation out of nothing the created order has had freely conferred upon it:

- A *contingent rationality/intelligibility* of its own derived from (not participating in) the uncreated rationality of God, yet transcendentally (not ontologistically) grounded in it.

An implication of this facet of contingency is that the created order is a rational unity of form and being and a singularity of an open structured nature. "The universe constitutes an essentially *open* system with an ontological and intelligible reference beyond its own limits."[28]

- A *contingent freedom* of its own derived from (but not as an extension of) the self-sufficient freedom of God, yet transcendentally (mediately, not immediately) grounded in it.

An implication of this facet of contingency is that the created order is characterized by flexibility and multi-variability that is due in large part to its open structured nature in allowing God's interaction with it and our manipulation of it.

- A *contingent stability* of its own derived from the eternal faithfulness of God. The stability of the created world is therefore maintained through God's loving interaction with it, not through immutable laws immanent within it.

An implication of this facet of contingency is that the created order, while being open structured and flexible is nevertheless bounded, directed, and upheld by God toward a determinate end.

Torrance has elsewhere referred to these as the "three masterful ideas" of the Early Church[29] and it is the combination of these qualities

27. See Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order*, 21.

28. Ibid., 36.

29. See Torrance, *Ground and Grammar*, 52ff.

in the created order that give it its "remarkable character."[30] Much of the responsibility for the "remarkable character" of the universe must be firmly laid upon the shoulders of Torrance's conception of contingence. There are two features in particular that must be developed further as they are central to the meaning and function of the concept in Torrance's thought: 1) the interlocking nature of contingency and 2) the reflective purpose of contingency.

Contingence: Its Interlocking Nature and Dynamic

We noted above that the kernel of the concept of contingency has to do with that which is neither necessary nor eternal. However, that does not render contingent realities inherently random or chaotic, as products arising from God's arbitrary willing or out of coincidental processes in nature. By discussing contingence in relation to a doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* Torrance affirms both truths and singles out the idea of dependence as being central to his understanding of contingence. Contingent realities are dependent upon the God that brought them into being out of nothing and in accordance with his free pleasure and will.

Yet in the two descriptions Torrance gives of his understanding of contingence he notes that while contingent realities are *dependent* upon God for their being, intelligibility, and freedom they nevertheless have a reality in utter distinction and *independence* from him. Contingence therefore carries within it an inner-logic of its own that centers around the interplay between the dependence and independence of the created order in relation to God. Torrance describes this as the "two-fronted character" of contingence or "its orientation toward God and away from him, its radical dependence and independence."[31] This *dynamic* is absolutely central to Torrance's conception of contingence and makes the concept a difficult one to understand and draw boundaries around. As Torrance himself notes: "What makes contingence so baffling is the peculiar interlocking of dependence and independence that it involves. The independence of the world depends entirely upon the free creative act of God to give it being and form wholly differentiated from himself,

30. Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order*, 21.

31. Ibid., 40.

but that is then an independence that is delimited by the dependence that anchors the world beyond itself in the freedom of the Creator."[32]

In short, "the independence of the universe is both grounded in and limited by its radical dependence."[33] The interlocking of dependence and independence that characterizes the created order gives the created world its unique *form* and enables it to fulfill its distinct *purpose*. However, it is this same interlocking that is the most difficult facet of contingence to understand and keep in balance.[34]

The constitutive relation thus established between God and the world needs careful articulation if the elements of dependence and independence are to remain properly balanced in such a way that the integrity and character of each is not compromised, or the purpose of their relation subverted. Torrance makes three points of clarification in this regard. The constitutive/contingent relation between God and the world may be described as:[35]

- *Asymmetrical*, in that "the world needs God to be what it is but God does not need the world to be what he is." Creation is an act of pure liberality and grace on God's part and was not motivated by any necessity whatsoever.
- *Irreversible*, in that "there is no statically continuous and logically compelling relation between the being of the creature and the being of the self-existent Creator." The existence of any form of *analogia entis* is ruled out and conceptions of natural theology are radically questioned. Knowledge of God cannot be necessarily derived from reflection on the created order.[36]

32. Ibid., 35.

33. Ibid., 36.

34. When an overemphasis is placed upon, either the dependence of the created order *on* God, or the independence of the created order *from* God, a Christian doctrine of creation is lost, and a deterministic relation takes the place of a free and contingent one. For a fine statement of the proper balances necessary in order to maintain the integrity of contingence as a description of the world's relation to God, see ibid., 21.

35. See ibid., 34–35 for the following points.

36. See Torrance's reflections on the proper role of natural theology within the bounds provided by revealed theology in "The Transformation of Natural Theology," in Torrance, *Ground and Grammar*, 75–109; "The Status of Natural Theology," in Torrance, *Reality and Scientific Theology*, 32–63; and, with particular reference to Karl Barth, "Natural Theology in the Thought of Karl Barth," in Torrance, *Karl Barth: Biblical and Evangelical Theologian*, 136–59; and Anderson, "Barth and a New Direction for Natural Theology," in *Theology beyond Christendom*.

- *Personal*, in that the world is "correlate[d] so closely with himself [God] that it is made to reflect and shadow forth on its contingent level his own inner rationality and order" even while being upheld in its creaturely otherness and particularity. This intimate and sustaining ontological relation may be "theologically traced back to the free, ungrudging will of God's love" which creatively imparts to the created order a rationality of its own "which is not incongruous with God's rationality."

This final point leads us to a consideration of the second central feature of the concept of contingence: its reflective purpose.

Contingence: Its Reflective Purpose

The *inner-logic* of contingence, though difficult to pin down and balance, is appropriate to the *purpose* of contingence. Contingency enables a given order distinctively and faithfully to fulfill its *telos* by reflecting the will/design of its Creator through its own creaturely particularity. It can only do this within the dynamics of its own dependence and independence in relation to God.

Though it has been created to reflect the will and purposes of its Creator it does not contain within itself divine principles, nor is it the home of immanent divine forces.[37] In the words of Robert Jenson "that God creates means there is other reality than God and that it is really other than he."[38] However, more must be said, and for that reason we introduce two additional concepts that will be useful in developing the implications of Torrance's thought for a theology of culture without blurring the qualitative distinction between Creator and creation that he has been so careful to develop. The first will be Torrance's understanding of "the legislative activity of the transcendent God"[39] and along with it a Christian conception of natural law, which is for Torrance equiva-

37. The order that characterizes the world is not the embodiment of divine principles, but rather the place for the working out of the divine purpose. It is not the body of God, but the sphere of his loving activity. It is not an organic part of God's being, but cannot be divorced from him. We might say that the micro-ordering of our sociocultural worlds takes place within the boundaries of God's macro-ordering presence in and to the world.

38. Jenson, *Systematic Theology* 2:5.

39. Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order*, 37.

lent to his understanding of contingent order.[40] The second will be what Torrance has variously referred to as a "temporal analogue," "social coefficient," "created correspondence" or "empirical correlate."[41]

The Creation of the Powers: The Legislative Activity of God

An extended quote is in order here as means of both introduction and orientation:

> The Christian conception of law relates to the legislative activity of the transcendent God, who does not embody his own eternal Logos in nature as its universal law, but who through the unifying power of his Logos creatively imparts to the world as he creates it a pervasive rational order on its own level subordinate to himself on his transcendent level, as its determinate ground. The creation of the universe as an autonomous reality distinct from God while dependent upon him *also involves the endowment of the universe with autonomous structures of its own*. Natural law, thus understood, refers to the God given normative patterns in the universe and has to do with the intrinsic truth or objective intelligibility of contingent being.[42]

This is a helpful passage as it directly connects Torrance's conception of law and natural law with his understanding of contingence, thus making law a contingent reality with a dual reference and orientation both towards God and away from him. The connotations of law as something that is rigid, inflexible, necessary, and eternal is replaced with a conception that is dynamic and multivariable—open towards completion and intelligibility beyond itself, but with a rationality and integrity of its own that must be respected.[43]

40. Torrance, *Juridical Law and Physical Law*, 34ff.

41. The most recent label for the concept can be found in Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 220, where it is described as "a differentiated analogical correspondence."

42. Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order*, 37. Italics mine.

43. Two authors seeking to address the stereotypes of the past in order to rehabilitate the concept of natural law for the present are Braaten, "Natural Law in Theology and Ethics"; and Porter, *Natural and Divine Law*. I believe they would be in general agreement with the way Torrance has modified the concept, and the broader framework he places it within. See also Torrance's treatment of natural theology in Torrance, *Ground and Grammar*, 75–109.