

## *On the Works of God Ad Extra*

Should we not speak of the works of God *ad extra* as, primarily, creative and consummative and, secondarily, emancipative and redemptive?

In *Faith and Freedom*, I make clear that it is illuminating to speak of God's creative work as emancipative (88 f.). But while I also speak there of God's redemptive work, I do not employ the concept of God's consummative work at all. Upon reflection, however, it seems clear that God's consummative work could be said to be redemptive analogously to the way in which God's creative work can be said to be emancipative. But just what way is this?

God's creative work can be said to be emancipative insofar as God's setting the fundamental limits of natural, or cosmic, order establishes the optimal limits of all creaturely freedom and thus sets all creatures free to create themselves and one another (89 f.). But although God's emancipative work thus extends to *all* creatures, and *all* creatures can participate in it insofar as their own creative decisions realize the intention lying behind God's work, this work bears uniquely on human creatures who have the distinctive kind of metaphysical freedom that we call "moral freedom," and who therefore can participate in God's emancipative work in a correspondingly distinctive way. If any being as such is in some way creative, any being as such is in some way emancipative. But where there is the unique emergent level of freedom properly called "moral," there is a unique capacity for creative and therefore emancipative activity (112). Given this capacity, the divine intention in creating and emancipating can be realized intentionally.

Correspondingly, one could argue, God's consummative activity, in the sense of God's incorporation of all creaturely lives into the divine life, is redemptive insofar as such incorporation delivers the creatures from their bondage to decay and thus from the meaninglessness of not making any difference to anything or anyone more enduring than themselves (84). But although God's redemptive work thus extends to *all* creatures, and *all* creatures

can participate in it insofar as they are incorporated into the divine life, this work bears uniquely on human creatures having the distinctive kind of metaphysical freedom properly called “moral,” and therefore being able to participate in God’s redemptive work in a correspondingly distinctive way. Given the unique emergent level of moral freedom, there is a unique capacity for consummative and therefore redemptive activity. With this capacity, one can so love others as to bear witness to God’s love for them.

Actuality as such, we may say, is self-creative response to other self-creativity, which as thus responded to is also creative of others, or other-creative. Relatively, then, to the antecedent self-creativity to which its self-creativity responds, any actuality is consummative and as such, redemptive, just as relatively to the subsequent self-creativity of which it is other-creative, any actuality is creative and, as such, emancipative. But, then, the uniqueness or unsurpassability of God as *the* Creator, and hence *the* Emancipator, on the one hand, and *the* Consummator, and hence *the* Redeemer, on the other, lies in the universal scope—the “modal all-inclusiveness” (Hartshorne)—of God’s self-creative response to all other self-creativity, and all other self-creativity’s response to God’s self-creativity. Although we both create and consummate, emancipate and redeem, we do so always in a radically fragmentary, non-all-inclusive way with respect to *some* things only. By an infinite qualitative difference, God both creates and consummates, emancipates and redeems, *all* things in a radically all-inclusive, nonfragmentary way.

But while God’s emancipative and God’s redemptive work both bear uniquely on human beings, who can participate in them in a correspondingly unique way, both are in their respective ways *God’s* work in which human beings cooperate. *Salvation*, by contrast with both emancipation and redemption, is not thus cooperative or synergistic, even if it is not exactly monergistic, either. Because we are saved *by* grace, *through* faith, the proper formula for salvation is “by grace alone but not without ourselves.” Thus salvation is the process initiated by God’s redemptive work and actualized by our faithful response to

that work. This response involves in turn, then, our unique participation in the emancipative as well as the redemptive work of God.

As for God's providential work, I understand it to comprehend all of God's works *ad extra*, from creation and emancipation to consummation and redemption. But, again, it has a unique bearing on the emergent level of human freedom, because human beings have the capacity both to experience God's providence toward themselves and thus to cooperate with it, whether in the form of God's creative and emancipative work or in the form of God's consummative and redemptive work.

Thus, if Macquarrie can speak of a *threefold* work of God in creating, reconciling, and consummating (occasionally adding a providential working as a kind of fourth phase or aspect of the one divine activity of letting-be), I should prefer to speak of a *twofold* work of God in creating and consummating, withal making clear (1) that God's creative work is also emancipative, even as God's consummative work is also redemptive; and (2) that all of God's working is providential.

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