

How much Niebuhr's theology suffers from an inadequate distinction between creation/emancipation, on the one hand, and consummation/redemption, on the other, becomes apparent from passages such as the following: "Nothing is quite so difficult, yet so genuinely Christian, as to remember that in all political struggles there are no saints but only sinners fighting each other, and to remember at the same time that history from man's, rather than God's, perspective is constituted of significant distinctions between types and degrees of sin. It is well to know that God judges all men and that in [h]is sight no man living is justified. But we are men and not God. We must make historic choices" (*Reinhold Niebuhr on Politics*: 196).

Niebuhr's intentions, clearly, are sound enough. But the way he puts it encourages the serious misconception that God's judgment, being morally indiscriminate, or undiscriminating, is morally irrelevant; or that the moral distinctions, discriminations, and choices that, from our perspective, are urgent are, from God's perspective, insignificant. The truth, of course, is that God's judgment is both indiscriminate in its judgment of *all things* as they actually are and discriminate in its judgment of all things *as they actually are*—its former aspect being the judgment of God *qua* Consummator/ Redeemer, its later aspect being the judgment of God *qua* Creator/ Emancipator. Consequently, just as our perspective can be rightly understood only insofar as it is understood to be informed by remembering the indiscriminate judgment of God, so God's perspective can be rightly understood only insofar as it is understood to include God's moral discrimination of things as better or worse. This means, as pertains to the difference between God's perspective and ours, that, although both perspectives do and must include *two* essentially distinct, even if integrally related aspects, God's perspective alone defines how things *really* are, while ours allows always and only for a *claim* (right or wrong, true or false) as to how they are.