



THE DIVINE RESOLUTION I: **Pre-Creation**

In the beginning was the Word,
And the Word was with God,
And the Word was God.

— John 1:1.

Before God spoke his first words, “Let there be light,” the word that began the making of the world, what was he thinking? What was he thinking during the eternity of silence when “the earth was formless and void, darkness was upon the face of the deep . . .” (Gen. 1:1)? In its opening words, the Gospel According to John consciously echoes the opening words of the Book of Genesis — “In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth” — but establishes its own beginning at a time *before* that famous beginning. Back then, it says, is when *this* story really began. . . .

What was God thinking? The thought that he entertained in silence before he . . . spoke any other reality into existence, John says, . . . was the all-encompassing thought of himself. This is the Word that was with God and *was* God at the beginning before the beginning. All God’s subsequent self-revelations, everything that he has said or done, made happen or allowed to happen, the whole of history and reality since then — all of these later words, John suggests, derive from the great Word of primeval divine self-consciousness.¹

In his primordial self-consciousness God was fully aware that he was alone. There was nothing, no one, no “other” beside himself. However, in his divine love God profoundly longed for an “other” to whom, for whom and with whom he could give himself. God also was fully aware that genuine love is mutually *relational* rather than *possessional* and that such reciprocal love can only be given *freely* rather than *commanded*. Thus, hopefully the “others” would ultimately give themselves back to God and to each “other” willingly and uninhibitedly.

*In his divine love God
profoundly longed for an
“other” to whom, for whom
and with whom he could
give himself.*

Only the free and reciprocal exchange of love between and among “others” would assure mutual life. Nevertheless, because such love can only exist in the context of freedom, it could only emerge and be manifest if the “others” had the right and freedom to reject, exclude and eliminate God and all “others.” Since God had been alone, then the “others” also must have that same right.

Before embarking on the creation of “otherness,” God thus recognized the loving necessity of granting free process to emergent Creation and free will to self-conscious human beings.² If he was to launch a created universe with infinite possibilities for eternity, God also recognized that the negative possibilities should be freely granted their manifestation. Furthermore, such negative possibilities should preferably come at the beginning of eternity rather than later. This would ensure the pedagogical knowledge of the negative — of evil. The consequences of such an early, instructive manifestation would therefore protect eternity from future collapse.

It was in this context that God determined to “form light, and create darkness . . . [to] make peace, and create evil . . .” (Isaiah 45:7). It was in this setting that God proposed to place the metaphorical “tree of knowledge of good and evil” in Paradise (Genesis 2:9, 17). It was in this framework that God would later declare, “Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil . . .” (Genesis 3:22).

In his initial design and purpose, God took a further step: “. . . according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world . . .” (Ephesians 1:4). Because God foresaw that Creation would use free process and free will to be, to become and to effect evil by repudiating “otherness,” he promised to intervene to redeem the world. God himself would become the rejected “Other.” He himself would pay the ultimate price. That is why God as the sacrificial Lamb was “slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8).

Endnotes

1. Jack Miles, *Christ: A Crisis in the Life of God* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), pp. 15, 16, 249. The purpose of this quotation is to focus on the divine self-consciousness that preceded Creation. It is not to imply a “prior conflict in the character of God.”
2. “. . . [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: Trinity Press International, 1991], p. 84).