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## CREATIVITY

God alone is creative. He alone brings that which was not into being. Nothing exists that has not come forth from the hand of the Creator, from his mind, in his design, and for his purpose.

And even though, through the created fact of our existence, we may alter and diminish our world, and our selves, his purpose is wise enough and powerful enough to finish the perfection of what he began.

And thus our part in the created order may be negative. Given the truth that God alone creates, St. Augustine said the only thing we create is sin. But even so, God takes whatever is there, whatever we have made of our selves, and molds us to his infinite purpose. His is the property and the power to have mercy and to grant new birth and to instill new life.

On the other hand, our part may be positive. And if it is positive, it is so because we have found our selves given to the purposes of truth and love. These are the energies of the mind and the heart that render the human being truly human. These are the activities that bring pleasure to the soul in the apprehension of beauty.

If we may begin at the beginning, we should take into account that God has made us in his image. In this act he has done two things, at least. He has made us like himself, we exist, we know, and we love. But beyond this, our capacity to be, and to think, and to love, is given primarily that we may seek the Giver of our life, the Principle of the image we are, the God whose being and knowledge and love are the infinite meaning and delight of truly human life. And so while we may have pleasure in what we are and in what we can imagine and fashion in our world, our supreme pleasure lies in him whose consummate beauty fills all things and stretches beyond our experience into eternal splendor.

It is then of the utmost importance that we realize our stature as creatures, created beings of a certain kind. We have been given power over the rest of creation, the privilege to name the animals and to tend the garden. But for our part we have done much that is hurtful, much that has diminished what God has made, contradicting the reasons he has placed us here on this earth. We have tarnished our world.

And yet we have not tarnished it by corrupting its essence, its form

which remains unsullied in the mind of God who will bring his purposes to their perfect end. We have altered this world's qualities, the purity of this earth's water and air, the sweet order of her flora and fauna, and at the center - the very character of mankind.

That power to name and to tend had been given to us as creatures, and now that we have made much of our part negative, hurling our world toward the abyss of non-being, the whole of creation groans with the intuition of her integrity.

We should ask the question what this world would be like if we had not sinned, if we had not turned to worship our own power over nature. And surely we can see some indication of this through our dark glass by the singular attachment we have to beauty.

No one loves the ugly. It affronts the beauty we know. And so we look past the ugly to remember the undefaced form, and we take into consideration the surroundings of the ugly, its potential and possibility, and there we dwell in a perspective of wholeness, with notions merciful and hopeful.

Beauty is more than the object of our peculiar energy. Beauty is something that we live for, not just an occasional fascination, not just a taste or smell or tune or picture, but a state of being that speaks clearly of a world beyond corruption and somehow already known in the fathom-less treasuries of our heart. Beauty is what we are made for.

And if this is so, if beauty is that for which we are made, as we are made for God, then it is necessarily true that the energies of our mind and heart, the capacity to be, and to know, and to love, has as its end the pleasure of beauty.

In this life we meet instances of this, moments of articulated participation in which God reaches into the depths of our intuitions and makes them known and loved. We meet them in people we know, in humble circumstances, and in the undeniable radiance of Michelangelo, Bach, and Shakespeare, and those who with them are evidence of another world.

Still, these remarkable figures, whom we belittle by calling them geniuses, are only hints and guesses of the beauty beyond and above. God gives us glimpses of himself in figures who do not themselves fully understand the beauty they communicate.

There is indeed only one who has ever lived upon this earth who knew, or at least grew into the knowledge, of this beauty. He was the one Dostoyevsky called "the most beautiful man that ever lived." And as God would have it, he never spoke of the beautiful as did the poets and philosophers. Instead, he lived beautifully. It was the power of beauty, which until him we have seen mainly in its object, in which we somehow participate, that he began to show forth in his person.

Through him we learned that beauty is also in the subject. The glory of beauty is not only its sheer integrity, the perfection of its form, its undeniable pleasure that excites the mind and caresses the heart, beauty is also that which makes beautiful, which gives of its beauty and the pleasure of it.

It was not enough that God should create and make us for the sphere of his beauty, as the image of his glory. To have him as our beautiful end, he had to reach down in the power of his mercy to recreate us. His creativity fell once again upon tarnished space and time, and in this new way wed to himself this nature of his making. The beauty that we are made for has reached out to remake us, now not just in his image, but in one glorious and beautiful union with him, in joy and happiness inexpressible, as inexpressible as the infinite beauty which he is. And so we call him not only Savior, but Lord, sweet Jesus.

**The Rev'd. Dr. Michael L. Carreker**

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