

“Salvation” – *Sacramentum Mundi* vol. 5 (1970)

A selection of claims and ideas from Rahner’s contributions to the article:

I. Universal Salvific Will

- Human freedom is “comprised within the sovereign will of God” (405). Moreover, the free creature doesn’t simply choose between two equal possibilities (salvation in Christ or perdition): “the world as a whole is ‘conquered’” by God’s love (407).
- Ongoing questions:
 - Place of predestination and God’s antecedent and consequent wills (406).
 - How is God’s universal salvific will serious in cases where explicit faith / baptism are, inculcably, impossible? Fate of unbaptized infants? (406)
- Grace available widely (*LG* 16). We’re obliged to hope for the salvation of all (407).

III. History of Salvation: Old Testament and New Testament Periods

- Old Testament: here concerns the “ancient covenant” rather than Scripture (420).
 - OT as “the irrevocable prehistory of the definitive revelation of God in Christ” (420). Grace in OT same as in NT: OT “bore the [NT] hidden within it” (422)
 - OT “closed by the new covenant in Christ” (420); “preliminary, preparatory function”; not yet clear “that the pardon of God and not man’s refusal has the last word”; “everything in it was still ambiguous and a revocable promise which could be made void”; “merely external legality and...bondage,” could not give “participation in God’s self-communication”; (421-22); “fulfilled” and so “ended,” “cancelled,” “abrogated,” “swept away”; Summary: “OT has been annulled yet incorporated” into NT (422).
- New Testament periods: (i.) Jesus & apostles (primitive Church) and (ii.) until Parousia (423)
 - Jesus is *the* Revelation of God; scripture is the “inspired testimony” to it (423)
 - Exists in both discontinuity/“opposition” to and continuity with the OT (423)
 - Jesus’ death “ends history” (423). History is “already decided, in favour of the love of God,” though still open on the individual level (424).
 - Church as the “sacrament” of the world’s salvation (424).

IV. Theology: Redemption, Satisfaction, and Soteriology

- Redemption
 - What are we redeemed *from*? Our incompleteness, ambiguity, and suffering. Should *not*...
 - Reduce suffering to material, biological, or social dimensions. (Guilt!) (425)
 - Lament irremediable absurdity (finite freedom comprised w/in God’s love!) God’s love endures our No (i.e., sin), persists in Self-communication (425-26).
 - The *need for* redemption is the condition for understanding Christian soteriology (426).
- Objective redemption: “the constitution by God of that concrete historical situation of freedom in which the will of God to forgive and save is exercised and manifests itself as an offer made to the freedom of man, historically and in eschatological irreversibility; it constitutes the situation on the basis of which and in which alone man can accept in freedom the proffered forgiveness.” Can’t be reduced to “transcendental forgiving will of God” (427).
- Supralapsarian perspective: don’t harmfully divide grace’s elevating & healing functions! (427)

- Also, don't harmfully separate Christ's person and work! Can't forget the cross (incarnation only) and can't reduce incarnation to a precondition (rather than being saving itself). God saves by assuming a human nature "working in freedom toward its destiny" (428).
 - Models of atonement: evaluates recapitulation, ransom, satisfaction, moral influence (429-30).
 - Principles: avoid "mythology"; make clear that salvation *originates* with God's saving will (not propitiated); the cross *causes* our salvation (without changing God's mind).
 - Why not reducible to an abstract, "forgiving will of God?"
 - Saving history not just independent, autonomous agents. *United*, mutually dependent.
 - Has a direction toward a goal, a *causa finalis*, which supports the *whole history* of divine self-communication (via *Realsymbol* / sacramental causality) (431-32).
 - Jesus not just *exemplar* of conformity to God's will; established *in him* irreversibly (431).
 - Soteriology (methodological considerations for a treatise on the topic)
 1. "the whole of theology [is] a soteriology – since the doctrine about 'God as he is in himself', 'theology,' cannot be adequately distinguished from the history of salvation" (435). See converse point: the *content* of salvation simply "is God's himself" (437, 408).
 - Supralapsarian point: shouldn't reduce soteriology to "forgiveness of sin."
 - Even "the grace of the state of original justice was the grace of Christ" (435).
 - God permitted sin in view of universal saving activity; economy not a plan B. Sin wasn't a "surprise" to God – R warns against asserting that eliminating sin would require God to likewise eliminate freedom (435-36, see 427 also).
 2. Don't divide soteriology from Christology! Best procedure: "we come more easily from a soteriology to a Christology than vice versa" (436).
 3. Hamartiological soteriology: it is, among other things, about forgiveness of sins
 - Don't reduce this forgiveness to simply "satisfaction," though
 - Don't *just* proceed from original sin (kerygma: personal change) (436)
 4. Cosmic soteriology: Christ's objective redemption shapes us (just as intrinsically as original sin) from the beginning as an "existential," even *before* we freely ratify it (437).
 5. One humanity: salvation of "all" isn't sum total of individuals but "the one whole race of man as such" (437).
 6. As "Self-Liberation": no false choice between "self-deliverance" and "rescue." God is the cause of salvation but acts so the world moves to self-transcend (437).
 - Link "objective" and "subjective" redemption. Note: "objective" situation of our redemption was established by Jesus' own "subjective" act (death) (437).
 - Not just human "mind" in eternal life, but transformed body & world (437).
 7. Subjective appropriation: "man has not just to seek the forgiveness of God vertically, so to speak, from on high, but that by the nature of this search for forgive-ness he must hope for this redemption horizontally, so to speak, in history" (438).
 8. Jesus' death not just one possible mode of salvation: transforms our own deaths (438)
1. What does Rahner's theology here tell us about the social dimension of salvation?
 2. How has this piece aged after 50+ years? Does it have insights which haven't been fully appreciated? Does it have blind spots? Areas to build on?
 3. How does Rahner's theology of salvation relate to other dimensions of his thought?