

Princeton was, for the most part, successful in showing how careful thought about evolution did not betray the biblical narrative about God and God's providential role in creation. However, in the early quarter of the twentieth century, a renewed angst toward evolution arose from within the fundamentalist movement. With the death of people like B. B. Warfield and the departure of other Princeton scholars who were open to considering the positive nature of evolution, Gundlach outlines the "highly polarized situation of the 1920s uncongenial to the Old Princeton views of science and religion" (p. 273). He describes the multitude of underlying issues that pressured Princeton's faculty into taking a more conservative stand as the Scopes Monkey Trial neared. Gundlach concludes by recounting how, by 1929, the battle plan which began in 1865 was forcibly ended by the restructuring of the seminary by the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America over concerns about denomination strife due to theological error.

Process and Providence excels at elaborating the underlying issues of each time period as well as introducing the individuals who were important contributors to the discussion. These nuances help the reader understand the significance of the discussions that took place as Princeton sought to deal with evolution in a thoughtful, welcoming, but theologically critical manner. Gundlach also succeeds in allowing the historical record of the Princetonians to define and answer the question of evolution at their institution. While Gundlach abstains from offering simplistic answers or a systematized presentation of opinions from the highlighted faculty, it was obvious that despite there never being a clear consensus at Princeton on the question of evolution, the concern for all was finding a balance in the relationship between process and providence. However, even with a close reading of the text, the narrative was, at times, difficult to untangle. To clarify the intricate web of relationships, Gundlach would have done well to include a summary of this information in a series of tables.

Process and Providence is a dense read in terms of quantity of material, which could make reading it overwhelming for the historically, biologically, or theologically uninitiated. While this text would be best suited to those with a specific interest and background in one or more of those three topics as it relates to the question of evolution, it is nevertheless accessible enough to the more generalized reader who wants to explore the topic in greater detail. Furthermore, it could serve as an encouragement for those, like myself, that have found themselves in the middle of what has too often has become a one-side-or-the-other debate. Gundlach reminds us that we can stand on the shoulders of a cloud of witnesses who did

not sacrifice their belief in God's providence in order to accept the possibility of natural processes.

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FROM NOTHING: A Theology of Creation by Ian A. McFarland. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014. 212 pages. Paperback; \$35.00. ISBN: 9780664238193.

In a memorable episode from the hit television series *Seinfeld*, Jerry and George are presented with the daunting task of pitching their pilot for "a show about nothing" to the executives of NBC. One suspects that Ian McFarland may have had a somewhat easier time convincing the editors of Westminster John Knox Press to publish his book, because in attempting to retrieve the classic doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* (from nothing), he has actually produced a book about everything that is and the God who freely creates out of the plenitude of the life that has been eternally shared between the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit.

From Nothing: A Theology of Creation is a work of "systematic theology" in the best sense of the term. McFarland draws upon a chorus of voices from across the Christian theological tradition (e.g., Irenaeus, Maximus the Confessor, Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, Karl Barth) to present a nuanced and compelling defense of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. The symmetry and elegance of the book's organization reflect something of both the marvellous ordering of creation and the book's central material conviction that the doctrine of creation from nothing is best understood within the context of the doctrine of the Trinity. The book is divided into two parts and, fittingly, each part is divided into three chapters. The first part is given the superscription *Exitus* (out-flow), as it is primarily concerned with the rootedness of creation within the life of God. The three chapters in the first part are devoted to unpacking in succession the component parts of the statement, "God creates from nothing." Part Two, *Reditus* (return), marks a "shift from creation's rootedness in God to the contours of its existence under God" (p. xiv) and includes chapters entitled "Evil," "Providence," and "Glory." The two parts are bookended by a substantial introduction and a brief conclusion; the latter is followed by a thorough bibliography and helpful scripture and subject indices.

Following an introductory chapter that outlines some of the exegetical, historical, and contemporary challenges associated with the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, McFarland turns in the second chapter to the question of the identity of the God who creates from nothing. McFarland's recourse to the doctrine of the Trinity at this point will seem relatively uncontroversial to those

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trained in theology following the great Trinitarian revival of the twentieth century. However, this identification of the Triune God as the Creator and the corresponding implications of this identification are frequently overlooked or obscured in debates surrounding creation and the relationship between faith and science as they play out at a more popular level. While the doctrine of creation from nothing affirms that God was under no compulsion to create, the affirmation that the Creator is Triune God, who is intrinsically living, productive, and present, allows one to see that there is a certain fittingness to God's creative work, which helps to counter charges of divine arbitrariness and divine determinacy.

The existence of creatures called into being from nothing by the Triune God is characterized by a contingency marked by movement and place. The radical dependence of each created being upon the Creator is the great ontological equalizer, as reflected in the refrain of John of Damascus, which recurs throughout the book: "All things are distant from God not by place, but by nature." Echoing the diversity in unity which marks the life of the Triune God, God's desire to create naturally results in a glorious diversity of created beings which, in faith, can be perceived as participating in a larger and harmonious whole. This Trinitarian construal of creation from nothing allows McFarland to acknowledge the distinctive role assigned to human beings in the divine economy in a way that does not diminish the integrity and value of the nonhuman creation. The first part of the book concludes with a chapter that stands as the outworking of the Trinitarian commitments articulated in the second chapter through the lens of Christology.

If God is in no way limited in his creative work, as the doctrine of creation from nothing affirms, how then do we account for a world, which, as scientific evidence suggests, has been characterized by suffering and death from long before the first human beings appeared on the scene? The second part of the book begins with an exploration of this question. While McFarland contends that theodicies (attempts to provide a solution to the problem of evil) are mistaken, he does find in the biblical books of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes three distinct and mutually enriching accounts of evil from within the context of the doctrine of creation.

God's resistance to evil in the present for the sake of the creatures' attainment of their proper ends has historically been treated under the doctrine of providence and is the subject of chapter six. McFarland draws upon the scholastic categories of *conservatio* (preservation), *concursus* (accompaniment), and *gubernatio* (direction) to explicate God's providential activity. McFarland's exploration of the issues raised as a result of a wholehearted commitment to *both* divine sovereignty *and* creaturely

integrity may make this the most interesting chapter of the book for readers of this journal. For example, in his treatment of *concursus*, McFarland stresses that a proper understanding of the doctrine requires the recognition of the metaphysical discontinuity between God and creation. Recognition of this discontinuity allows for a noncompetitive understanding of divine and creaturely causation that allows us to speak of primary and secondary causation. This distinction can be brought to bear on Einstein's famous dictum that God does not play dice with the universe. In terms of primary causation, Einstein's assertion is obviously true, since all that exists depends upon God for its continuing existence. But from the perspective of secondary causation, God could very well play dice with the universe by bringing about created effects in the absence of any created cause, or what modern science has identified as the truly random event.

Since creation has been created for an end that lies beyond its inherent capacities, namely sharing in the life of the Triune God, McFarland includes a brief chapter devoted to the topic of glory. The glorification of creation is not merely an event that awaits us in the future. Even now, a part of the creation—heaven—is transparent to the glory of God. Eastern iconography and the Eucharist also serve as case studies for exploring a vision of glorified matter and the presence of glorified matter in the midst of the not-yet-glorified earth, respectively. As a result of this investigation, it becomes apparent that "the point of glory is not to negate the present form of creation but to perfect it" (p. 180).

At the very outset, McFarland makes clear that his intent is to provide a theological account of the doctrine of creation from nothing. As a result, he has very little interest in staking out a position within debates surrounding temporal origins. According to McFarland, the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* is not the description of a process, but fundamentally "a proposal about the character of God's relationship to the world" (p. xiv). However, this does not mean that McFarland has no interest in the fruit of scientific exploration. At various points in both the body of the text and perhaps even more frequently in the footnotes, he is informed by and drawn into dialogue with the findings of various scientific disciplines. In fact, one of his major emphases in the book's conclusion is that a commitment to scientific investigation into the conditions of creaturely flourishing is a necessary correlate to the affirmation of creation from nothing. The reader lacking theological training may find *From Nothing* to be demanding reading, but for those who persevere, the theological payout is far from nothing.

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