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CONTENTS

MAY 22 1995

CORRESPONDENCE.....2

ARTICLES

Bible Hermeneutics and Modern Linguistics

By Mark e. Sell3

The Uniqueness of the Christian Scriptures: The Scriptures in the Context of History

By Arnold J. Koelpin13

Entrance into the Biblical World: The First and Crucial Cross-Cultural Move

By Dean O. Wenthe19

"Inklings" by Jim Wilson.....24

The Authority of Scripture: Luther's Approach to Allegory in Galatians

By Timothy H. Maschke25

The Language of Faith

By Burnell F. Eckardt Jr.32

Creation ex Nihilo: The Way of God

By William C. Weinrich37

The Christian Philosophy and the Christian Religion

By Martin R. Noland.....43

A Call for Manuscripts48

COLLOQUIUM FRATRUM.....49

Orval Mueller: Following Dr. Marva Dawn's Lord

REVIEWS51

Review Essay: *RECHTFERTIGUNG und Schöpfung in der Theologie Werner Elerts*. By Sigurjón Arni Eyjólfsson

Dying to Live: The Power of Forgiveness. By Harold L. Senkbeil, and *Dying to Live: A Study Guide*. By John T. Pless

Worship: Adoration and Action. Edited by D. A. Carson

Counseling at the Cross: Using the Power of the Gospel in Christian Counseling. By H. Curtis Lyon

Are All Christians Ministers? By John N. Collins

Battling for the Modern Mind: A Beginner's Chesterton. By Thomas C. Peters

Not of This World: The Life and Teaching of Fr. Seraphim Rose. By Monk D. Christensen • *Becoming Orthodox and Coming Home*. Edited

by P. E. Gillquist • *Anglican-Orthodox Pilgrimage*. Edited by F. Billerbeck • *An Introduction to Western Rite Orthodoxy*. Edited by Fr. M.

Trigg • *Dancing Alone: The Quest for Orthodox Faith in the Age of False Religions*. By F. Schaeffer

Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*. Translated by J. A. O. Preus

C. F. W. Walther, *American Lutheran Pastoral Theology*. Translated by John M. Drickamer

BRIEFLY NOTED

LOGIA FORUM.....71

The Word Made Flesh • Straw Epistle or Hermeneutical Hay? • Dogma and Probability

Doing Without Truth • Dotty About Women in the Church • Penance for Returning Warriors

Public Absolution • Frederick Manfred and the Hospital Chaplain • The Culture of Interpretation

Early Church VBS • An Anthology of Reu's Sermons • Should Confessions Condemn and Exclude?

Ordaining Women: Has the Time Come? • Liturgical Hermeneutics • Unfinished Business

ELCA: Concerning the Confession • The Scent of a Flower We Know

Creation ex Nihilo: The Way of God

WILLIAM C. WEINRICH



Toward the end of the second century, Galen, the philosopher-physician, wrote an anatomical treatise, *De usu partium*, in which he takes the occasion to compare Moses with Plato. Galen marvels at the order and harmony of the parts of the human body, even of those parts that seem the most insignificant and useless. While discussing the uniform length of the eyelashes, Galen notes that the demiurge had chosen "the best out of the possibilities of becoming" and had therefore made the eyelashes to be of equal length and erect, because "this was better." Galen explains that precisely concerning this point his own opinion "and that of Plato and of the other Greeks who follow the right method in natural science" differ from the view of Moses. For Moses "it seems enough to say that God simply willed the arrangement of matter and it was arranged in due order; for he [Moses] believes everything to be possible with God, even should he wish to make a bull or a horse out of ashes." "We, however, do not hold this," continues Galen. "We say that certain things are impossible by nature and that God does not even attempt such things at all but that he chooses the best out of the possibilities of becoming."¹

Here, as clearly as one could wish it, is expressed the confrontation between Christianity and Greek paganism, which formed the matrix and context for the church's assertion that God created the world *ex nihilo*, "out of nothing." The dominant culture in which early Christianity arose and achieved its first development was pervaded by a cosmology classically adumbrated in Plato's *Timaeus*. According to Plato, God was a "worker," a "demiurge" who acted upon pre-existing matter. God was like a carpenter or an artist who brings order out of chaotic, disorderly matter, beauty out of dissolution, harmony out of disharmony.² Greek philosophy was interested in the "cosmos," the ordered, harmonious universe. The world's absolute existence was taken for granted. What required explanation was its beauty, its functional orderliness. Indeed, for Greek philosophy the cosmos in its sheer materiality was a necessary postulate of philosophical reflection. Greek thinking wanted to account for the

order that characterized the cosmos; it did not strive to account for the very existence of the cosmos. For God to "create" meant that he arranged into orderly and meaningful patterns. Matter itself, therefore, pre-existed and was eternal.³ What was true of the demiurge of Plato was similarly true of the Unmoved Mover of Aristotle or of the Logos of the Stoics. God is the ultimate ground of the beauty, harmony, and order of the world.⁴

As such, God guaranteed providential regularity and purpose through order and inherent laws of nature that expressed the potentialities inherently existent within the material on which God worked. God was not free vis-à-vis the eternal, pre-existing matter. He was rather limited by the possibilities inherent in the matter, much like a bricklayer is limited by the potentialities inherent in brick. A bricklayer may make a beautiful wall, for that is potentially possible with bricks, but a bricklayer cannot make a snake from bricks, for that is not potentially possible with bricks. As Galen said, "certain things are impossible by nature." "It would not have been possible for him [God] to make a man out of a stone in an instant, by simply wishing it."

This pervasive Platonic point of view did possess its legitimate interests. From Galen it is clear that a divine will wholly independent and autonomous of nature's own limits appeared to be arbitrary and to introduce irrationality and disorder into the world. For the Greek, to be able "to make a bull or a horse out of ashes" was not a divine virtue. The Epicurean philosopher Lucretius noted the practical importance of the Platonic viewpoint. People are fearful when confronted by the arbitrary will of the gods, who are then understood to be and are experienced as fickle and unstable. People are not encouraged to exercise virtue when there is no correlation between what humans do and what the gods may do in return.⁵ If the gods have an unrestrained and arbitrary will, human reason and human responsibility have no status. Limited by the potentialities of the material principle, deity was a guarantee for a rational, meaningful, and orderly life. Unlimited by the potentialities of the material principle, deity became capricious, inconstant, and wayward.

Despite his opposition, Galen was correct in his description of Moses as one who "believes that everything is possible with God." For the biblical writers and the early Christians had other concerns than that of explaining the orderliness and harmony of the world. Christian thinkers were aware that Platonic idealism did not and could not invest the individual and the particular

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with intrinsic meaning and significance. Individual appearances may be part of an overarching order and harmony, but they have no intrinsic meaning apart from that ordered whole. For the ancient cosmologists, individual and particular existence was essentially ephemeral and shadowy. It had no purpose, and it had no destiny. Particular existence, considered in relation to the ordered whole, was considered insignificant and could even take on tragic proportions. Faced by impersonal forces and merely a member of an ordered nature, particular existence, strictly speaking, had no future. Having no intrinsic being, particular existence was given to death and corruption. Characterized by absolute "becoming," individual existence experienced death as naturally as it possessed life. Given to change, it was in perpetual corruption. It is no accident, therefore, that the Epicureans came to the conclusion that the world was a random movement of atoms and possessed no inherent purpose. Nor is it accidental that Greek philosophy, when confronted by the more pessimistic philosophies of the Near East, developed into Gnostic and Manichaean denials of the goodness of the material world.

The assertion of the creatio ex nihilo is not primarily a statement about the first moment of the world's existence.

It is a matter of some debate whether biblical and intertestamental texts provide an unambiguous assertion of the *creatio ex nihilo*. It is sometimes asserted that 2 Mc 7:28 makes such a claim, but that may be doubted.⁶ The Wisdom of Solomon, while writing against the fatalistic view that the world was created by chance, nonetheless can still make use of Plato's formula that God created the world from "formless matter."⁷ The Jewish philosopher Philo never transcends a pure Platonism in this question. Second-century Christian apologists, such as Justin Martyr, also make ample use of Plato's *Timaeus*.⁸

In confrontation with Platonic dualism and its understanding of the relationship between God and the world, however, second-century Christian thinkers are clearly developing an explicit doctrine of the *creatio ex nihilo*. Their primary interest is to assert the omnipotence and freedom of God. God created the world and all that exists "from nothing," and this he did by will and command. It is important to note that in this the Christians did not merely proffer an alternative explanation of the world's origins and its order. They were not describing how the world came into existence, so that the world, as effect, might be understood by its cause, God. Were that the case, the Christians would simply have remained within the parameters of Greek philosophy, which sought to explain the operations of the world by delineating the relation between the effecting active principle and the effected passive principle.

It was perhaps Tatian who first expressly asserted that God originated matter. God brings forth the unformed matter of Plato; it is the Logos who gives form and order to this material

chaos.⁹ In Theophilus of Antioch we find an explicit counterpoint to Plato. The sovereign will of God alone is the basis of creation. Had God simply made the world out of pre-existing matter, he would be no greater than a mere handworker. But God's power is manifested in that he makes what he wills "out of nothing."¹⁰ It is evident in this argument of Theophilus that the "unformed, pre-existing matter" upon which the Platonic demiurge works has been replaced by the will of God. While the Greek demiurge created "out of unformed matter," the biblical God created "out of nothing," that is, by his will and command. For Theophilus, this willing into existence of that which was in absolute non-existence establishes the monarchy, the singular rule, of God. God's sole rule is manifested in that he alone is "unbegotten" and calls all matter into existence. More explicit yet is Irenaeus. He excludes any notion of pre-existing matter by saying that God took "from himself the substance of the creatures, and the patterns of things made, and the type of all the ornaments in the world."¹¹

Clearly to be noted in all of this is that the assertion of the *creatio ex nihilo* is not primarily a statement about the first moment of the world's existence. It does not merely indicate that the world, having had absolutely no existence, was once brought into existence. *Creatio ex nihilo* is not pure protology, a statement about the world's beginning. It is first and foremost a statement about God and how he relates to the world at all times and in all places. *Creatio ex nihilo* is also a statement about the nature of the creature and how it relates to God the Creator at all times and in all places. In short, the *creatio ex nihilo* makes the necessary distinction between God and the creature, especially man. Irenaeus makes this precise point: "While men, indeed, cannot make anything out of nothing, but only out of matter already existing, yet God is in this point pre-eminently superior to men, that he himself called into being the substance of his creation, when previously it had no existence."¹² Luther would later make the same point: "He [God] and he alone made all things from nothing."¹³ Let us expand upon the importance of this point.

The Scriptures begin with the one almighty God of grace. We are told that "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gn 1:1). In biblical usage, the word for "create" (סָרַף), always has God as its subject. It lays special emphasis on the totally free character of God's creating. This "interest" of the word סָרַף corresponds to the interest of the early Christian doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, which likewise intended to proclaim the absolute freedom of God vis-à-vis the world. God created "from nothing." This "nothing" was not thought to be some kind of void into which God placed a positive and material existence. This "nothing" was not thought to be some kind of something outside of God from which or upon which God acted. This "nothing" was simply thought to be the sovereign will of God. To say that God created *ex nihilo* was to say that he created by will and command. Nothing preceded God's will to create; nothing external to God moved him or required him to create. God freely willed to create the world, and the world came into existence and exists purely on the basis of God's willing command, "Let there be!" God himself, therefore, is utterly autonomous and independent of the world and relates to the world only as the one who wills to create it. God relates to the world, not as Highest Being—that is Greek thought.

God rather relates to the world as Highest Will—that is biblical thought. Indeed, wholly in line with his patristic predecessors Theophilus and Irenaeus, Luther can write that God's sovereignty lies in his will and power to create. In fact, in his *Bondage of the Will* Luther simply asserts that "Free Will" is a divine name.¹⁴

This sovereignty of God, however, does not imply that God is arbitrary and capricious, as Galen and the Platonists feared. That God wills to create purely "out of nothing" apart from any constraint to do so manifests rather a will to give and to bestow. Since God's bestowing is on that which is nothing and has nothing of its own, God's will to create reveals a will to love by the free giving of himself and all that is his. God, precisely as the absolute Creator, relates to the world essentially as the gracious Giver. This was, in fact, the determinative interest of the early Christian assertion that God created "from nothing." Steeped in the Scriptures of Israel, which tell of the election of Israel, although it was the least among the nations, and of the repeated reconstitution of Israel in the face of more powerful neighbors; steeped in the apostolic proclamation of the birth of the Savior apart from human intervention and of his resurrection from the dead; the early Christian writers perceived in these things nothing other than that selfsame Free Will that had called the world itself into existence. This explains as well that astonishing fact that in the face of their martyrdoms early Christians did not so much confess a belief in the resurrection but a belief in him who had created all things visible and invisible. The utterly free and unconstrained will of God to create manifests a gracious and loving God whose proper work is to give life and all the things necessary to secure and to support that life.

The *creatio ex nihilo* is, therefore, a confession that God is such a God that he gives and supports life willingly, freely, that is, graciously, from himself alone. As the Wisdom of Solomon had already put it: God made all things to exist (1:14); he had made man "unto incorruptibility" (2:23).¹⁵ Irenaeus put this view into classic Christian form: "In the beginning God formed Adam, not as if he was in need of man, but that he might have someone upon whom to confer his benefits."¹⁶ Luther, as we have noted, understood God's sovereignty to reside in his power to create. It is not surprising, then, that Luther easily relates God's power with God's goodness: "You see that God has created all things by his goodness (*bonitate*) and has ordered all things for goodness and utility . . . so that in all things both his power and his goodness may be highly esteemed (*magnificetur*)." ¹⁷

It deserves to be made explicit that the doctrine of creation from nothing makes God Sovereign and Servant from the beginning and in such a way that God's sovereignty is placed precisely in his servanthood. God's will for us exists in his giving of good gifts, of life and all that is necessary to support and to sustain it. He who from all eternity was alone and possessed all things, willed to give gifts of his manifold goodness to that which is nothing and possesses nothing. In sum, he who is Lord of all is the Servant of all. The configuration of God's creating wherein he who possesses all things bestows freely upon that which is and has nothing is no different from the configuration of the gospel itself whereby the Father, without merit or worthiness in us, yet freely, graciously, gives us himself in the person of his Son.

It was on this basis that Irenaeus argued against the dualism of Marcion who believed that the God who saves was another

God than the one who creates. Salvation unto eternal life in the resurrection of the dead, argued Irenaeus, is the bringing to completion of the creation wherein God began to give good gifts to men. It is not incidental that in his explanation to the First Article of the Creed Luther too speaks the language of the gospel. To believe that God is the Creator is to believe that God has made me and all creatures and gives daily all that is required to maintain my life, and that this he does "out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me." Similarly, in his great Confession of 1528 Luther summarizes the doctrine of the "divine majesty," that is, of the Holy Trinity, in words taken from the doctrine of creation: "These are the three persons and one God who has given himself to us all wholly and completely, with all that he is and has." Luther then continues: "The Father gives himself to us, with heaven and earth and all the creatures, in order that they may serve us and benefit us."¹⁸

The doctrine of the creatio ex nihilo establishes first and foremost that God is omnipotently free in his relation to the world.

The doctrine of the *creatio ex nihilo*, therefore, establishes first and foremost that God is omnipotently free in his relation to the world and that this all-powerful freedom manifests itself and subsists in the gracious will to give and to sustain existence and life. God's sovereignty does not lie in some sort of abstract transcendence that absents God from the world. Rather, God's sovereignty exists and is known precisely in his creating, that is, in his gracious giving of good gifts to his creatures. As Lord he is Servant.

The doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, however, also establishes what is the nature of the creature in its relation with God. In his instructive and helpful book *Maker of Heaven and Earth*, Langdon Gilkey gives three implications of the *ex nihilo* doctrine that have had enormous significance for Christian understanding of creaturely existence. First of all, creaturely existence is intelligible and purposive in itself because its source and origin lie in the will of God. Combined with this is the apprehension that all creatures are dependent for their existence on that which is outside themselves. No creature possesses self-sufficiency but is by nature transient and contingent. Unless held in existence by another, the creature dies. Second, since all creatures have their existence only as a gift, nothing in creation is worthy of man's ultimate worship and allegiance. The doctrine of creation is the basis for the Scriptures' pervasive resistance to all idolatries. Finally, since God is the source of all that exists, no creature or aspect of creation is intrinsically evil. All things may be used for good purposes even as they may, given sin, be used for evil purposes. Nonetheless, the doctrine of creation provides for a human freedom over against the things of the world, and—importantly—it lays the basis for our belief that no evil is beyond repentance and forgiveness.¹⁹

These three points are certainly significant and indeed have played important roles within Christian theology and the development of those cultures most influenced by Christian thought. I would like to address more specifically, however, what it means to confess that God is the Creator, and to do that we must focus more centrally on the human person in the world, that is, on that human person who lives in the particular concretions that make up his life. If God the Creator relates to us as the Highest Will who freely, that is, by grace gives all things to us, then man is pre-eminently the one who receives his life and all that constitutes it from God. As the one who possesses nothing in himself and therefore can give nothing to himself, man's natural relationship to God is receptivity, that is, faith. Man as pure creature trusts God perfectly and completely, for he receives all things that make up his life and perceiving in them the en clothed creating presence of the good Creator, he accepts them as good gifts.

It is as difficult to confess that God is the Creator as it is to confess that God will raise up the dead on the last day.

To confess that God is the Creator, however, is not merely to recognize that God providentially cares for the world and all that lives within it. It is also to acknowledge that "I" am a creature and that God is creating and preserving my life precisely in and through those things that constitute and make up my concrete existence. Especially in his explanations to the First Article of the Creed, the Fourth Commandment, and the Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer, Luther gives lists of those things in and through which God is Creator for me. What especially characterizes these lists is the broad, comprehensive scope of those things that Luther understands to constitute and support our individual, particular, and personal existence. Not only those things that individuals confront directly each day, such as family, work, food, and clothing, but also the whole range of social, international, and even cosmic arrangements are understood as supporting "my" life. When explaining the promise attached to the Fourth Commandment—that one should obey parents and masters so that one may live long on the earth—Luther notes that "long life" means "not merely to grow old but to have everything that pertains to long life—health, wife and child, livelihood, peace, good government, and the like, without which this life can neither be heartily enjoyed nor long endure."²⁰ Especially in his catechisms Luther makes clear that all those arrangements that order human life, from the smallest and simplest to the largest and most complex, are God's creative activity for the preservation of "my" life. To confess God as Creator, therefore, is to receive these as blessings with thanksgiving and not to disdain them or attempt to bring them to ruin.

This, of course, all seems well and good until we actually have to receive these things and live with them as good gifts from the good Creator. For it is not by sight that we see in our wasting

bodies the vehicles of life; nor is it by sight that we perceive in a government not of our liking, or in a wayward child, or in a complaining wife, or in a negligent husband, or in an unwanted child, the very masks under which God the good Creator comes to us to give us life and to sustain it. In the reception of these things the "pure fatherly, divine goodness and mercy" of God for which it is our duty "to thank and praise, to serve and obey him" is not readily apparent. Here we must take seriously the comment of Edmund Schlink in his *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions* that it is as difficult to confess that God is the Creator as it is to confess that God will raise up the dead on the last day.²¹ What does it mean for a blind man to confess Luther's explanation of the First Article, that God has made me and has given me my eyes and still preserves them? What does it mean for one who is mentally ill to confess that God has given reason and all senses and still preserves them? What it means—easier said than done—is faith, the posture of life that receives all things as from the hand of him who creates from nothing, that is, blesses through that which is without its own intrinsic worth and merit. As such, to confess that God is our good Creator in the midst of our own death and corruption or in the midst of those who hate and abuse us is finally nothing other than to believe that in the crucified Savior God is creating *ex nihilo* by giving life to the unworthy and to those without merit. For as Luther put it, "He is able to build up those who are destroyed, to console the despondent, even in death itself. For because he is God, this is his proper office: to create all things from nothing."²²

We are, of course, already well within the whole issue of man's vocation in the world. But we wish to address a little more the question of man's task in the world. The question of man's vocation begins with God who creates from nothing. We have noted that God creates from nothing precisely in his giving to us our life and all that sustains it. But we have also noted that God's creating from nothing is a creating by will and command. God's will to create is a will to give good gifts to that which is nothing. When Luther says at the beginning of his treatise on the *Magnificat* that God continues unchanged to work even as he did in the beginning when he created from nothing, Luther indicates that when God is Creator he is exercising his vocation. God's vocation determines man's vocation, for when God creates by giving us all that we are and have, he hides himself in the things of our life so that *in* those things we meet God's will and command and are given *therein* our own proper work and task.

The will of God for our lives is not, so to speak, imposed upon us as a legalism from the outside. The will of God is given to us in, with, and under that life which God has given to us and in fact is ours. The demands of God are implicit in the creation itself. Each human person is given a time and a place. He is set within the world and within a particular society of human persons. It is in this context and in no other that man is called to live out his life, that is, to exercise the vocation that is God's own, to give what we are and have for the benefit of the neighbor. As God gives all things that support our life, so man too is to be ordered to the needs of his neighbor. Similarly, as God is faithful as the good Creator and never ceases to give good gifts to men, so too man is to be constant in his own service of love and charity toward the neighbor.

In this context Luther often speaks of man as the coworker and cooperator of God. As God creates "out of nothing," so too does the person who as God's coworker lives his life within the demands of his life. "Vocation and the man who fulfills it are used as tools and means for God's continuing creation, which occurs 'out of nothing,' that is, under vocation's cross."²³ In this context as well, Luther often speaks of the necessity for constancy and faithfulness in our various vocations. As God faithfully and without surcease continues to give his good gifts even to the sinner

If we cannot proclaim the gospel to the actual lives lived in our midst, it will be lost as another snakeoil, which, to be sure, has its buyers but is finally not satisfying.

and the unjust, so we too are to continue faithfully in our various vocations toward those whom God has given us to serve, even if they are unjust and troublesome. Indeed, the creation *ex nihilo* forms a way of thinking that allows Luther to see in all useful human work the good hand of the good Creator, so that no work

is intrinsically more valuable or more meritorious than any other work. "If you do not have as much as the burgomaster, do you not rather have God the Creator of heaven and earth, Christ and prayer? Yes, the emperor does not have more. Remain in your station in life, be it high or low, and continue in your vocation."²⁴

This is a word for our day. For at a time when yuppie, upwardly mobile occupations are advertised as the best means for human fulfillment; at a time when gender warriors advance their cease-fire proposals in the form of denials that the concrete particularities of maleness and femaleness have any intrinsic meaning and significance; at a time when the gift of a child is too often experienced and regarded as an alien imposition and an intrusion; at a time when human persons flee at will from the place and time in which God calls them to serve vocations as spouse and parent; at a time when religious entrepreneurs, TV evangelists, and assorted spiritual hacks give vent to the view that God is especially present in the extra-ordinary moments of ecstasy and escape, it might just be time—and I am suggesting that it is time—for the church once more to place the doctrine of creation at the center of its theological interest, reflection, and preaching. For the gospel to be good news "for me," it cannot merely be confined to my inward parts, nor can it be thrust into the "not yet" of a future moment. The gospel must be for the "me" who actually lives in the flesh and among others in the flesh who make up the moments of my life. If we cannot proclaim the gospel to the actual lives lived in our midst, it will be lost as another snakeoil, which, to be sure, has its buyers but is finally not satisfying. **LOGIA**

NOTES

1. Galen, *De usu partium* 11.14. For Galen and his views, see R. Walzer, *Galen on Jews and Christians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949), pp. 11–13, 23–37.

2. For example, Plato, *Timaeus* 30A: "For God, wishing that all things should be good and not evil to the extent that it was possible, took over all that was visible, that which was not at rest but in a discordant and disordered motion, and brought order out of disorder, thinking that the one was better than the other."

3. Quite typical is Plutarch: "For creation does not take place out of what does not exist at all but rather out of what is in an improper or unfulfilled state, as in the case of a house or a garment or a statue. For the state that things were in before the creation of the ordered world (*kosmos*) may be characterized as 'lack of order' (*akosmia*)." From *On the Creation of the Soul in the Timaeus* 1014B, quoted by John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: A Study of Platonism from 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (London: Duckworth, 1977), p. 207.

4. A good example of the Greek view is Pseudo-Aristotle, whose god is much more distant than the demiurge of Plato but is nonetheless the cause of the world's order. Pseudo-Aristotle (*De mundo* 5) extols the harmony of the world that is made of disparate and opposite elements. He concludes that "harmony is the preserver of the cosmos which is the parent of all things and the most beautiful of all. . . . And everything that is beautiful takes its name from this, and all that is well-arranged; for it is called "well-ordered" (*κεκοσμησθαι*) after this "universal order" (*κόσμος*)." This order finally "keeps the whole system safe, eternally incorruptible."

5. Lucretius, *De nat. rerum* 1.160: "Nothing can ever be created by divine power out of nothing. The reason why all mortals are so gripped by fear is that they see all sorts of things happening on the earth and in the sky with no discernible cause, and these they attribute to the will of a god. Accordingly, when we have seen that nothing can be created out of nothing, we shall have then a clearer picture of the path ahead, the problem of how things are created and occasioned without the aid of the gods." Lucretius here adduces the classic Greek axiom that "nothing comes from nothing," an axiom directly countered by the early Christian *creatio ex nihilo* doctrine.

6. In 2 Mc 7 a Jewish mother is exhorting her seven sons to remain constant unto death in the face of cruel martyrdom under the Greek rulers of Antioch. She refers to the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, and then exhorts her sons to "know that God did not make them from what already existed." This language may only mean that God made something that previously did not exist. See Gerhard May, *Schoepfung aus dem Nichts. Die Entstehung der Lehre von der creatio ex nihilo* (*Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte*, 48 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1978), pp. 6–8. May refers to Xenophon, *Memorabilia* II.2.3, where very similar language simply means the procreation of children by their parents.

7. Wisdom 11:17: the "all-powerful hand" of God created the world "out of formless matter."

8. For example, Justin Martyr, *I Apology* 59.1.

9. Tatian, *Oratio* 5.3. See May, *Schoepfung aus dem Nichts*, p. 153.
10. Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicum* 2.4: "But if God is uncreated and matter is uncreated, then according to the Platonists God is not the Maker of the universe, and as far as they are concerned the unique sovereignty of God is not demonstrated. . . . The power of God is revealed by his making whatever He wishes out of the non-existent, just as the ability to give life and motion belongs to no one but God alone." In *Ad Autolyicum* 1.4 Theophilus states the *creatio ex nihilo* view explicitly: "God made everything out of what did not exist, bringing it into existence."
11. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 4.20.1: *ipse a semetipso substantiam creaturarum et exemplum factorum et figuram in mundo ornamentorum accipiens.*
12. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 2.10.4. Also *Adv. Haer.* 4.11.2: "And in this respect God differs from man, that God indeed makes, but man is made" (*quoniam Deus quidem facit, homo autem fit*).
13. WA 39²:340, 20: *solus est et solus ex nihilo fecit omnia.*
14. WA 18:636, 27-29: *sequitur nunc, liberum arbitrium esse plane divinum nomen, nec ulli posse competere quam soli divinae maiestati* ("it follows that free will is clearly a divine name, since it is not suitable to any other than to the divine majesty alone").
15. Wisdom of Solomon 1:14.
16. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 4.14.1.
17. WA 14:101, 24-27. Luther is commenting on the words of

Genesis 1 that God saw that the things he created were "good." Luther simply identifies this goodness with the Holy Spirit, "who vivifies, maintains, and preserves all things" (WA 14:101.26; 100, 37).

18. WA 26:505, 38 ff.
19. Langdon Gilkey, *Maker of Heaven and Earth: A Study of the Christian Doctrine of Creation* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959, 1965), pp. 55-58. For a modern discussion of the freedom of the creature in view of the creation from nothing, see Thomas F. Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 1-61.
20. LC I, 134 (Tappert, p. 383).
21. Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, trans. Paul F. Koehnke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961), pp. 58 f. "The more we know Jesus Christ the more we shall know God the Creator also. As we do not know Christ without the cross, so we do not know the Creator without the cross. To be asked to believe in the Creator is as offensive as to believe in the cross of Christ" (p. 59).
22. WA 40³:90, 9 f: *potest edificare destructos, erigere et consolari tristes, et in ipsa morte. Et eius officium proprium, quia est deus: ex nihilo omnia.* See also WA 40³:90, 25 ff; 39¹:470, 1 ff.
23. Gustav Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), p. 130. Wingren's treatment of Luther's understanding of vocation is especially helpful in relating God as Creator to the life of the cross.
24. WA 7:547.