

mean that, despite the impressive range of sources, at times, his touch feels a little too light. Other than one typo, however, the text is clean and quite readable. And though this is East's first monograph, it commends itself as a mature work of scholarship that will benefit the church and the academy alike.

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Nathan J. Chambers, *Reconsidering Creation Ex Nihilo in Genesis 1*

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In *Reconsidering Creation Ex Nihilo in Genesis 1*, Nathan Chambers has offered a welcome, if not bold, contribution toward the growing dialogue between biblical studies, exegesis and theology. Given that the book grew out of a thesis supervised by Walter Moberly, this should not surprise. Motivated by Moberly's insistence that 'there is more than one frame of reference and more than one goal for reading Israel's scripture' (p. 242), Chambers seeks to draw together Ricoeur's worlds *within* the text, *behind* the text and *in front of* the text. Traditionally, modern biblical scholarship tends toward the world in which the text was written (behind the text), while the focus of classic Christian theology is on how the text is performed in the world (in front of the text). For Chambers (and most would agree), the larger literary-canonical context (within the text) serves as the point that should draw the other two together.

As the title suggests, the specific issue with which Chambers interacts is the well-known conclusion of modern biblical scholarship that creation out of nothing is an 'anachronistic imposition' on proper interpretation of Genesis 1 (p. 1). This imposition is believed to obscure rather than illumine the text. Of course, this claim is not new, and it has engendered tension between scholars whose focus is behind the text and those whose focus is in front of the text. The traditional understanding that *creatio ex nihilo* is a second-century development thus introduces the key question posed for the entire book: 'How should we relate these subsequent movements in "scriptural thinking" to "the Old Testament's own categories of thought"?' (p. 2) Here Chambers attempts to balance the valid concern of biblical scholarship that these impositions may risk losing the wisdom of the Old Testament with the equally valid concern of theologians that without these developments we may risk not understanding the implications of the text.

Chambers is honest about his shared anxiety with many biblical scholars that the voice of the Old Testament is not muted or lost by tradition. Yet, he is also in agreement with Gadamer's critique of the Enlightenment prejudice against prejudice. Thus, 'it is no longer tenable for biblical scholarship to reject creation *ex nihilo* as "post-biblical" or "traditional" simply on the grounds of Enlightenment assumptions regarding the relationship between critical reason and tradition' (p. 4). But, as Chambers points out, this does not automatically mean that creation *ex nihilo* should be accepted as 'traditional wisdom'.

With this, the stage is set for the structure of the book as Chambers asks if creation *ex nihilo* is sustainable as a category or framework for the interpretation of Genesis 1. The structure of the chapters is logical. Chapters 1 and 2 look at creation *ex nihilo* from the perspective of modern biblical scholarship and from historical/theological studies respectively. The third chapter attempts to synthesise these perspectives as the author examines the rise of creation *ex nihilo* in the early church. The conclusions of this chapter reveal the crux of Chamber's position, as he argues that it was actually 'biblical pressure' that led the early church to teach creation *ex nihilo* as the discernible 'deep logic of Scripture' (p. 132). This is the point where the literary-canonical context brings the two seemingly disparate positions together.

It is also this larger literary-canonical context that serves to bring the philological examination of the syntax of Genesis 1:1–3 in chapter 4 together. Although Chambers believes that the opening words of Genesis 1 are best understood as an independent clause, he admits that philological evidence alone is inconclusive. Thus, chapter 5 expands the hermeneutical horizons and uses Levenson, Gunkel and Childs as a way into seeing how the broader narrative might inform conclusions. The book culminates in the sixth chapter where Chambers offers two options for reading Genesis 1. The first follows Gunkel's and Childs' approaches that Genesis 1:1 should be read as a heading to the entire narrative of the chapter, and in that respect should be seen as providing hermeneutical guidelines for how to read it. The second option, and the one that Chamber 'tentatively' argues, is that Genesis 1:1 describes an initial comprehensive act. In this act, God created his own domain within creation and then the domain for his creatures. Interestingly, Chambers insists that 'the larger argument of this work reconsidering the role of creation *ex nihilo* in reading Gen 1 does not stand or fall on this particular proposal' (p. 240). This being the case, the author concludes with some suggestions for how creation *ex nihilo* can illuminate Genesis 1, wherein the Christian theology and modern biblical scholarship can be brought into constructive dialogue.

From the perspective of a historical theologian, Chambers' work shows a promising reunion of two disciplines that were inseparable for so long. The importance of recognising development in the biblical text is balanced with the inevitability of the necessity of development in the theological task as the text continues to live.

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Sandy Finlayson, *Chief Scottish Man: The Life and Ministry of Thomas Chalmers*

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Without Thomas Chalmers' vision, organisational talents and ability to rally opinion, it is likely that the Free Church would never have come about. Building on his previous,