

Extracts from the Work on Things Created.²⁹⁶⁷



I. This selection is made, by way of compendium or synopsis, from the work of the holy martyr and bishop Methodius, concerning things created. The passage, “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine,”²⁹⁶⁸ is explained by Origen as signifying that the pearls are the more mystical teachings of our God-given religion, and the swine those who roll in impiety and in all kinds of pleasures, as swine do in mud; for he said that it was taught by these words of Christ not to cast about the divine teachings, inasmuch as they could not bear them who were held by impiety and brutal pleasures. The great Methodius says: If we must understand by pearls the glorious and divine teachings, and by swine those who are given up to impiety and pleasures, from whom are to be withheld and hidden the apostle’s teachings, which stir men up to piety and faith in Christ, see how you say that no Christians can be converted from their impiety by the teachings of the apostles. For they would never cast the mysteries of Christ to those who, through want of faith, are like swine. Either, therefore, these things were cast before all the Greeks and other unbelievers, and were preached by the disciples of Christ, and converted them from impiety to the faith of Christ, as we believers certainly confess, and then the words, “Cast not your pearls before swine,” can no longer mean what has been said; or meaning this, we must say that faith in Christ and deliverance from impiety have been accorded to none of the unbelievers, whom we compare to swine, by the apostolic instructions enlightening their souls like pearls. But this is blasphemous. Therefore the pearls in this place are not to be taken to mean the deepest doctrines, and the swine the impious; nor are we to understand the words, “Cast not your pearls before swine,” as forbidding us to cast before the impious and unbelieving the deep and sanctifying doctrines of faith in Christ; but we must take the pearls to mean virtues, with which the soul is adorned as with precious pearls; and not to cast them before swine, as meaning that we are not to cast these virtues, such as chastity, temperance, righteousness, and truth, that we are not to cast these to impure pleasures, for these are like swine, lest they, fleeing from the virtues, cause the soul to live a swinish and a vicious life.

II. Origen says that what he calls the Centaur is the universe which is co-eternal with the only wise and independent God. For he says, since there is no workman without some work, or maker without something made, so neither is there an Almighty without an object of His power. For the workman must be so called from his work, and the maker from what he makes, and the Almighty Ruler from that which He rules over. And so it must be, that these things were made by God from the beginning, and that there was no time in which they did not exist. For if there was a time when the things that are made did not exist, then, as there were no things which had been made, so there was no maker; which you see to be

2967 From Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 235.

2968 [Matt. vii. 6.](#)

an impious conclusion. And it will result that the unchangeable and unaltered God has altered and changed. For if He made the universe later, it is clear that He passed from not making to making. But this is absurd in connection with what has been said. It is impossible, therefore, to say that the universe is not unbeginning and co-eternal with God. To whom the saint replies, in the person of another, asking, "Do you not consider God the beginning and fountain of wisdom and glory, and in short of all virtue in substance and not by acquisition?" "Certainly," he says. "And what besides? Is He not by Himself perfect and independent?" "True; for it is impossible that he who is independent should have his independence from another. For we must say, that all which is full by another is also imperfect. For it is the thing which has its completeness of itself, and in itself alone, which can alone be considered perfect." "You say most truly. For would you pronounce that which is neither by itself complete, nor its own completeness, to be independent?" "By no means. For that which is perfect through anything else must needs be in itself imperfect." "Well, then shall God be considered perfect by Himself, and not by some other?" "Most rightly." "Then God is something different from the world, and the world from God?" "Quite so." "We must not then say that God is perfect, and Creator, and Almighty, through the world?" "No; for He must surely be by Himself, and not by the world, and that changeable, be found perfect by Himself." "Quite so." "But you will say that the rich man is called rich on account of his riches? And that the wise man is called wise not as being wisdom itself, but as being a possessor of substantial wisdom?" "Yes." "Well, then, since God is something different from the world, shall He be called on account of the world rich, and beneficent, and Creator?" "By no means. Away with such a thought!" "Well, then, He is His own riches, and is by Himself rich and powerful." "So it seems." "He was then before the world altogether independent, being Father, and Almighty, and Creator; so that He by Himself, and not by another, was this." "It must be so." "Yes; for if He were acknowledged to be Almighty on account of the world, and not of Himself, being distinct from the world,—may God forgive the words, which the necessity of the argument requires,—He would by Himself be imperfect and have need of these things, through which He is marvellously Almighty and Creator. We must not then admit this pestilent sin of those who say concerning God, that He is Almighty and Creator by the things which He controls and creates, which are changeable, and that He is not so by Himself."

III. Now consider it thus: "If, you say, the world was created later, not existing before, then we must change the passionless and unchangeable God; for it must needs be, that he who did nothing before, but afterwards, passes from not doing to doing, changes and is altered." Then I said, "Did God rest from making the world, or not?" "He rested." "Because otherwise it would not have been completed." "True." "If, then, the act of making, after not making, makes an alteration in God, does not His ceasing to make after making the same?" "Of necessity." "But should you say that He is altered as not doing to-day, from what He



was, when He was doing?" "By no means. There is no necessity for His being changed, when He makes the world from what He was when He was not making it; and neither is there any necessity for saying that the universe must have co-existed with Him, on account of our not being forced to say that He has changed, nor that the universe is co-eternal with Him."

IV. But speak to me thus: "Should you call that a thing created which had no beginning of its creation?" "Not at all." "But if there is no beginning of its creation, it is of necessity uncreated. But if it was created, you will grant that it was created by some cause. For it is altogether impossible that it should have a beginning without a cause." "It is impossible." "Shall we say, then, that the world and the things which are in it, having come into existence and formerly not existing, are from any other cause than God?" "It is plain that they are from God." "Yes; for it is impossible that that which is limited by an existence which has a beginning should be co-existent with the infinite." "It is impossible." "But again, O Centaur, let us consider it from the beginning. Do you say that the things which exist were created by Divine knowledge or not?" "Oh, begone, they will say; not at all." "Well, but was it from the elements, or from matter, or the firmaments, or however you choose to name them, for it makes no difference; these things existing beforehand uncreated and borne along in a state of chaos; did God separate them and reduce them all to order, as a good painter who forms one picture out of many colours?" "No, nor yet this." For they will quite avoid making a concession against themselves, lest agreeing that there was a beginning of the separation and transformation of matter, they should be forced in consistency to say, that in all things God began the ordering and adorning of matter which hitherto had been without form.

V. But come now, since by the favour of God we have arrived at this point in our discourse; let us suppose a beautiful statue standing upon its base; and that those who behold it, admiring its harmonious beauty, differ among themselves, some trying to make out that it had been made, others that it had not. I should ask them: For what reason do you say that it was not made? on account of the artist, because he must be considered as never resting from his work? or on account of the statue itself? If it is on account of the artist, how could it, as not being made, be fashioned by the artist? But if, when it is moulded of brass, it has all that is needed in order that it may receive whatever impression the artist chooses, how can that be said not to be made which submits to and receives his labour? If, again, the statue is declared to be by itself perfect and not made, and to have no need of art, then we must allow, in accordance with that pernicious heresy, that it is self-made. If perhaps they are unwilling to admit this argument, and reply more inconsistently, that they do not say that the figure was not made, but that it was always made, so that there was no beginning of its being made, so that artist might be said to have this subject of his art without any beginning. Well then, my friends, we will say to them, if no time, nor any age before can be found in the past, when the statue was not perfect, will you tell us what the artist contributed to it, or wrought upon it? For if this statue has need of nothing, and has no beginning of existence,

for this reason, according to you, a maker never made it, nor will any maker be found. And so the argument seems to come again to the same conclusion, and we must allow that it is self-made. For if an artificer is said to have moved a statue ever so slightly, he will submit to a beginning, when he began to move and adorn that which was before unadorned and unmoved. But the world neither was nor will be for ever the same. Now we must compare the artificer to God, and the statue to the world. But how then, O foolish men, can you imagine the creation to be co-eternal with its Artificer, and to have no need of an artificer? For it is of necessity that the co-eternal should never have had a beginning of being, and should be equally uncreated and powerful with Him. But the uncreated appears to be in itself perfect and unchangeable, and it will have need of nothing, and be free from corruption. And if this be so, the world can no longer be, as you say it is, capable of change.

VI. He says that the Church²⁹⁶⁹ is so called from being called out²⁹⁷⁰ with respect to pleasures.

VII. The saint says: We said there are two kinds of formative power in what we have now acknowledged; the one which works by itself what it chooses, not out of things which already exist, by its bare will, without delay, as soon as it wills. This is the power of the Father. The other which adorns and embellishes, by imitation of the former, the things which already exist. This is the power of the Son, the almighty and powerful hand of the Father, by which, after creating matter not out of things which were already in existence, He adorns it.

VIII. The saint says that the Book of Job is by Moses. He says, concerning the words, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,”²⁹⁷¹ that one will not err who says that the “Beginning” is Wisdom. For Wisdom is said by one of the Divine band to speak in this manner concerning herself: “The Lord created me the beginning of His ways for His works: of old He laid my foundation.”²⁹⁷² It was fitting and more seemly that all things which came into existence, should be more recent than Wisdom, since they existed through her. Now consider whether the saying: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God,”²⁹⁷³—whether these statements be not in agreement with those. For we must say that the Beginning, out of which the most upright Word came forth, is the Father and Maker of all things, in whom it was. And the words, “The same was in the beginning with God,” seem to indicate the position of authority of the Word, which He had with the Father before the world came into

2969 Ἐκκλησία.

2970 ἐκκεκληθέναι.

2971 [Gen. i. 1.](#)

2972 [Prov. viii. 22.](#)

2973 [John i. 1, 2.](#)

existence; “beginning” signifying His power. And so, after the peculiar unbeginning beginning, who is the Father, He is the beginning of other things, by whom all things are made.

IX. He says that Origen, after having fabled many things concerning the eternity of the universe, adds this also: Nor yet from Adam, as some say, did man, previously not existing, first take his existence and come into the world. Nor again did the world begin to be made six days before the creation of Adam. But if any one should prefer to differ in these points, let him first say, whether a period of time be not easily reckoned from the creation of the world, according to the Book of Moses, to those who so receive it, the voice of prophecy here proclaiming: “Thou art God from everlasting, and world without end.... For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday: seeing that is past as a watch in the night.”²⁹⁷⁴ For when a thousand years are reckoned as one day in the sight of God, and from the creation of the world to His rest is six days, so also to our time, six days are defined, as those say who are clever arithmeticians. Therefore, they say that an age of six thousand years extends from Adam to our time. For they say that the judgment will come on the seventh day, that is in the seventh thousand years. Therefore, all the days from our time to that which was in the beginning, in which God created the heaven and the earth, are computed to be thirteen days; before which God, because he had as yet created nothing according to their folly, is stripped of His name of Father and Almighty. But if there are thirteen days in the sight of God from the creation of the world, how can Wisdom say, in the Book of the Son of Sirach: “Who can number the sand of the sea, and the drops of rain, and the days of eternity?”²⁹⁷⁵ This is what Origen says seriously, and mark how he trifles.

2974 Ps. xc. 2, 4.

2975 Ecclus. i. 2.