CREATION *EX NIHILO* OR *EX MATERIA*?
A CRITIQUE OF THE MORMON DOCTRINE OF CREATION
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Orthodox Christianity has understood that God created the universe out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). Creating simply by divine fiat, God needed no pre-existent materials to create, which strongly supports the doctrine of God's omnipotence.   Mormonism, however, rejects creation out of nothing, however. God is merely an Artificer or Shaper or Organizer of eternal matter. According to F. Kent Nelson and Stephen D. Ricks, the LDS understanding of creation "differs from both scientific and traditional Christian accounts" in that it recognizes creation "as organization of preexisting materials, and not as an ex nihilo event."[1]

Mormons often claim that Christians *imposed* the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* on Scripture. LDS theologian B.H. Roberts declared that "Christians converted into dogma the false notion of the creation of the universe out of 'nothing,' assuming God's transcendence of the universe. They accepted the idea that 'creation' meant absolutely bringing from non-existence into existence, and ultimately pronounced anathema upon those who might attempt to teach otherwise."[2] The influence of Greek philosophy on the early church Fathers is an oft-cited reason for "theological add-ons" such as creation out of nothing.[3]

In an energetic but ultimately failed effort to defend the LDS position on "creation from [eternally] preexisting matter," Stephen D. Ricks classifies the defense of creation out of nothing as a doctrine that emerged significantly later in church history. He claims that it is still "fiercely maintained by fundamentalist Protestants (who continue to rigorously exclude Latter-day Saints from Christianity because Latter-day Saints affirm a belief in the existence of matter before the creation."[4] He condescendingly speaks of the defense of creation *ex nihilo* as the "rearguard actions by theological enthusiasts, members of great 'yawning' associations, and participants in meetings of societies of Christian philosophy."[5]

My recently coauthored *Creation Out of Nothing: A Biblical, Philosophical, and Scientific Exploration*[6] exposes such remarks by Ricks as grossly inaccurate. (Incidentally, I have met and have had very cordial interactions with Prof. Ricks; I trust that Ricks will engage the ideas of the book—and perhaps even concede to overstatement!) The LDS position itself is difficult to square with Scripture and its implications. I can only summarize the remarkable supports from creation out of nothing from the OT and NT. I do not have space to explore the relevant extrabiblical Jewish and Christian writings (the Dead Sea Scrolls, apocryphal and pseudepigraphal writings, early church fathers, rabbinic sources, and medieval Jewish exegetes). In many of them we observe a consistent two-fold pattern: (a) constant assertions of God's unique unbegottenness (*agenn_tos*); all else, including matter, is begotten (*genn_tos*); and (b) a two-stage *ex nihilo* creation, in which God first creates any substrates—water, matter, etc.—and then shapes and orders them into an orderly cosmos. For details regarding the biblical, extrabiblical, philosophical, and scientific support for creation *ex nihilo*, I refer readers to my coauthored book.

In this essay, however, I shall explore (I) the Mormon doctrine of creation, contrasting it with the Christian view. Then I shall present (II) the Old Testament (OT) evidence followed by (III) the New Testament (NT) evidence for creation out of nothing.

I. CREATION AND LDS THEOLOGY

Let us first briefly look at the LDS Scriptures (which are binding) and secondary writings (which carry authoritative weight but are not strictly canonical) to see what they have to say regarding the nature of creation. The Book of Mormon declares that "there is a God, and he hath created all things, both the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are" (2 Nephi 2:14; cf. Mosiah 4:9; 2 Nephi 11:7; Helaman 14:12). The early sections of the Doctrine and Covenants use similar language (e.g., D&C 14:9 [1829] and 45:1 [1831]). In the Book of Abraham (1842), however, we read that God created from pre-existing material—that is, the Gods went down and "organized and formed the heavens and the earth" (4:1). Creation is simply organization of pre-existing elements.

In addition to these writings, Joseph Smith and other Mormon spokesmen—both early and contemporary—have articulated the idea of creation as reorganization. In the King Follett Discourse (6 April 1844), Smith declared that the "pure principles of element are principles which can never be destroyed: they may be organized and re-organized, but not destroyed. They had no beginning, and can have no end."[7] Brigham Young, Smith's immediate successor, similarly declared that God created from an "eternity of matter" and "when He speaks, He is obeyed, and matter comes together and is organized."[8]

The recent *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* asserts that creation is "organization of preexisting materials."[9] Mormon thinker Lowell Bennion avers, "Latter-Day Saints reject the *ex nihilo* theory of creation. Intelligence and the elements have always existed, co-eternal with God. He is tremendously creative and powerful, but he works with materials not of his own making."[10] Stephen E. Robinson holds a similar view.[11]

This, of course, clashes with Scripture—not simply Christian creeds (which Mormons reject). The biblical writers see God as ontologically distinct from His creation. God and what He has brought into existence constitute all the reality there is. God alone is everlasting and immortal; all else (God's creation) is contingent and exists only by God's sustaining power, which excludes eternal matter.
> There are two main features to the doctrine of creation out of nothing:
> (1) all things are *ontologically dependent* upon God for their continued existence in being
> (2) the universe and all other reality apart from God *began and has not always existed*.[12]

True, some Christian theologians believe creation is nothing more than ontological dependence (i.e., God's providential sustenance of all existence things, preventing them from lapsing into nonbeing);[13] temporal origination is ultimately (or largely) irrelevant.[14] However, this view of creation does not capture the thrust of this key Christian doctrine, which declares that God is distinct from all other reality, *which He not only sustains but also has brought into being a finite time ago*. So for Christians, creation more properly includes both the temporal origination and ontological dependence of the material world on God's decree.[15]

II. OLD TESTAMENT SUPPORT FOR CREATION OUT OF NOTHING

German theologian Gerhard May, whom LDS scholars like to cite, admits that the idea of creation out of nothing "corresponds factually with the OT proclamation about creation"[16] However, he claims that the doctrine is not *demanded* by the text.[17] Upon closer examination, however, a solid case can be made for *creatio ex nihilo* in the OT—that it is indeed *demanded* by the text. When we consider all the relevant factors, there simply is no other plausible, consistent way to read the biblical text.

That said, the OT case for creation *ex nihilo* is a *cumulative* one, not relying upon one piece of evidence alone but upon a number of mutually-reinforcing elements. When we combine them, the case for creation out of nothing is quite strong.

A. *Genesis 1 and Ancient Near East (ANE) Cosmogonies:* The ancient Babylonian "creation epic" *Enuma elish* and other ANE cosmogonies (which speak of the world's origin), despite what is commonly claimed, are remarkably different from Gen. 1. Mesopotamian cosmogonies, for instance, are intertwined with *theogonies*—accounts of the gods' origins. In them, we are not told so much about how the universe came about—the origin of the worlds is really accidental or secondary in ANE accounts—but how the *gods* emerged. Furthermore, when it comes to the elements of the universe (the waters/deep, darkness), a deity either *controls* one or *is* one.[18] As Umberto Cassuto puts it, the ANE creation epics tell about the *origin of the gods* who came before the birth of the world and human beings. They speak of "the antagonism between this god and that god, of frictions that arose from these clashes of will, and of mighty wars that were waged by the gods."[19]

However, writing with an *awareness* of such rival, polytheistic cosmogonies, the monotheistic author of Genesis 1 deliberately *rejects* them.[20] In ANE cosmogonies, deities struggle to divide the waters whereas Yahweh simply speaks and thereby creates all things, including astral bodies (which are not *gods*, as in ANE accounts, but creations).[21] As Rolf Rendtorff points out, even the darkness and the waters are elements of creation (cf. Isa. 45:7).[22] Gerhard von Rad makes the powerful point that Israel's worldview, as is reflected in Genesis, drew a sharp demarcating line between God and the world. The material world is purged of any reference to the divine or the demonic.[23] Ugaritic scholar Mark S. Smith notes this: "These cosmic monsters [darkness, deep, chaos] are no longer primordial forces opposed to the Israelite God at the beginning of creation. Instead, *they are creatures like other creatures* rendered in this story."[24] Genesis 1 depicts a "divine mastery" over these forces, which are "depersonalized" and "domesticated."[25] As James Barr notes, the theomachies (divine warrings) and polytheism of the ANE are a sharp contrast to Genesis 1, which is "magnificently monotheistic."[26] And regarding ontology or being, Genesis (unlike ANE accounts), the created world does not somehow *emanate* from Yahweh as an "overflow of the essence of deity, but rather an object."[27]

John Walton says that the similarities between Mesopotamian cosmogonies and the Bible are superficial rather than substantial: "it is difficult to discuss comparisons between Israelite and Mesopotamian literature concerning creation because the disparity is so marked."[28] The key differences Walton sees are:
- theogony vs. cosmogony
- polytheism vs. monotheism
- organization vs. creative act

Additionally, there is a difference in *style*, not only *content*. Kenneth Kitchen has pointed out the contrast between the simple creation account in Genesis and the more elaborate ANE creation epics. As a general rule of thumb, *the simpler the earlier*: "simple accounts or traditions may give rise (by accretion or embellishment) to elaborate legends, but not vice versa."[29]

B. *Genesis 1:1 as Absolute Rather Than Construct:* A not-uncommon view of Genesis 1 is that it was influenced by *Enuma elish* ("When heaven above"—not an absolute beginning) and other ANE epics. Indeed, such a perspective has affected how Genesis 1:1 itself was to be understood in some recent translations ("In the beginning of creation, when God made heaven and earth, the earth was without form and void . . . ." [NEB]—although this was recently *revised* to an absolute rendering in the REB

translation)). Allegedly, because "beginning" does not have an article preceding it (possibly suggesting "in a beginning), it is not absolute but temporal.[30]

Such temporal renderings of Gen. 1:1-2 imply that there is no absolute beginning to creation—something Mormons seize upon since this *could* imply that primordial matter existed eternally and was organized by God. If Gen. 1:1 is a dependent clause, then the first thing God creates is light, not heaven and earth (i.e., the universe).

There have been four views on how to interpret Genesis 1:1: [31]

Four views on Gen. 1:1	How Gen. 1:1 is interpreted
View #1: V. 1 is a temporal clause subordinate to the main clause in v. 2.	"In the beginning when God created . . . , the earth was without form."
View #2: V. 1 is a temporal clause subordinate to the main clause in v. 3 (v. 2 is a parenthetical comment).	"In the beginning when God created . . . (now the earth was formless), God said . . . ."
View #3: V. 1 is a main clause and serves as a title to the chapter as a whole, summarizing all the events described in vv. 2-31.	"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth—[and here is how it happened] . . . ."
View #4: V. 1 is a main clause describing the first act of creation. Vv. 2 and 3 describe subsequent phases in God's creative activity.	"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. [After he did so,] the earth was uninhabitable and desolate."

A relative or temporal beginning ("in [a] beginning"—Views #1 and #2) permits the possibility of preexisting matter (although not necessarily so). An absolute reading ("in *the* beginning"—Views #3 and #4) presents us with a definite or absolute beginning of the universe.[32] Victor Hamilton observes that the standard alternatives are either *monotheism* (God as the ultimate, eternally-existent Being) or an *eternal dualism* (God and chaotic matter as co-eternal). In the beginning, was there one existing entity or were there two—God and pre-existing, chaotic matter?[33] The differences are dramatic and significant.

After surveying the relevant scholarship, Gordon Wenham asserts that "the majority of recent writers reject [the construct] interpretation."[34] While I cannot go into the many reasons for this, let me make these summary points.

(a) *The lack of an article hardly entails a construct state rather than an absolute state ("in* the *beginning").* Scholars such as Wenham,[35] N.E. Ridderbos,[36] James Barr,[37] John Sailhamer,[38] and others have shown that temporal phrases often lack an article (Isa. 40:21; 41:4, 26; 46:10; cp. Gen. 3:22; 6:3, 4; Mic. 5:1; Hab. 1:12; cf. Prov. 8:23).[39] Indeed, in Job. 8:7; 42:12; Eccl. 7:8; and Isa. 46:10, we see this word "beginning" used in opposition to the "end." Barr, arguing that there is *no* grammatical evidence that "beginning" is construct in Gen. 1:1,[40] calls such a reading "intrinsically unlikely."[41] The construct argument depends upon the absence of the article, and it simply will not work.

(b) *The literary structure of Genesis 1 militates against a construct rendering of Gen. 1:1.* According to the over-quoted construct advocate, Ephraim A. Speiser, the P (Priestly) account of creation ends at 2:4a and the J (Jahwistic) account begins at 2:4b. He believes that Gen.1:1-3 parallels Gen. 2:4b-7. However, Victor Hamilton reveals how jarringly unaesthetic this would be. If Genesis 1:1 is a temporal dependent clause,

then the additional facts are that verse 2 is a parenthetical comment, set off by the hyphens from what precedes and follows; and the main clause appears in verse 3, "And God said . . . ." The result is an unusually long, rambling sentence, in itself not unheard of, but quite out of place in this chapter, laced as it is with a string of staccato sentences.[42]

Hershel Shanks says we should reject the inferior quality of the construct for the majestic absolute rendering. The attempt by some translations to make Gen. 1:1-3 into one long sentence is "a model of awkwardness" and "a clutter of thoughts crying to be sorted out," which is instinctively off-putting.[43] The main concerns behind the construct rendering are, in fact, resolved by an absolute one.[44]

(c) *The phrase "the heavens and the earth" is a merism that refers to the totality.* According to Hershel Shanks, many of the alleged problems for the absolute reading brought up by contruct advocates (e.g., Speiser) are resolved by noting that the phrase "the heavens and the earth" is a merism—a rhetorical device referring to the extreme parts or to the first and last of something to represent the whole. In Gen. 1:1, the author is not telling us about the order of creation; rather, he is telling us that "God made the universe."[45] What is more, Shanks notes, *if* "heaven and earth" speaks of totality—thereby *eliminating* a primordial pre-existence—then *even a construct reading of Gen. 1:1 would imply creation out of nothing.* [46] *Totality* rather than *organization* is the chief thrust of this merism, as Claus Westermann affirms.[47] The construct view appears even shakier.

(d) *Fourth, further support for this absolute reading (and #4 in particular) stems from the fact that this particular absolute view is the oldest view.* Bruce Waltke lists "all ancient versions"—not to mention ancient commentators—as understanding Genesis 1:1 as an "independent clause."[48]
- This absolute understanding of Gen. 1:1 and its status as an independent clause is borne out by the Septuagint's rendering as well (*En arch_ epoi_sen ho theos ton ouranon kai t_n g_n. H_ de g_ . . .* = "In the beginning God created heaven and earth. And the earth . . . "), reinforcing the absolute beginning of the cosmos here.[49]
- John 1:1 (*En arch_ _n ho logos . . .* = In the beginning was the Word . . .) itself relies on the Septuagint rendering of Gen. 1:1.
- First-century Jewish historian Josephus follows the absolute rendering of the Septuagint at the outset of his *Antiquities*: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth [*En arch_ ektisen ho theos ton ouranon kai t_n g_n*]."[50]
- All ancient versions such as Aquila, Theodotion, Symmachus, and Targum Onkelos understand Gen. 1:1 as an independent clause.
- Theophilus of Antioch (ca. 180) draws on the absolute reading of the Septuagint in *To Autolycus* (2.4): "In the beginning God created heaven [*En arch_ epoi_sen ho theos ouranon*]."
- Pseudo-Justin (AD 220-300) also cites the absolute rendering of the Septuagint of Gen. 1:1: "For Moses wrote thus: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth [*En arch_ epoi_sen ho theos ouranon kai t_n g_n*],' then the sun, and the moon, and the stars."[51]
- Jerome's Vulgate begins with the absolute rendering as well, treating it as an independent clause (*In principio creavit Deus coelum et terram*).[52]
- Saadia Gaon's tenth-century translation into Arabic takes Gen. 1:1 as an independent sentence.
- The various versions and the Masoretic pointing imply that "this was the standard view from the third-century B.C. (LXX) through to the tenth century A.D. (MT)."[53]

Therefore, all things being equal, preference should be given to antiquity.[54] Presumably, those closest to the composition of Gen. 1 would be the better informed about its meaning. Remarkable is the overwhelming unanimity of "both the Jewish and Christian tradition" about the first word in the Bible being in an "absolute state" and that the first verse is "an independent clause."[55] Other reasons could be adduced for Gen. 1:1 as absolute, but I shall stop here.

As noted above, a case can be made for a two-step view of creation—one in which God creates everything ("the heavens and the earth") and the second, in which God prepares it for human

habitation. In *Creation Out of Nothing*, we note that this view was held by medieval Jewish exegetes as well as the church fathers through Irenaeus and Augustine. This exposes a fallacy made by many LDS scholars: if God shapes matter as an Architect or Designer, then the "stuff" God uses must be eternally pre-existent. But this is a huge *non sequitur*. There is very good reason—especially given the Bible's aversion to metaphysical dualism (since God alone is eternal or everlasting)—to embrace the idea that matter was itself brought into existence by God. Kenneth Mathews writes: "It is an unnecessary leap to conclude that the elements in v. 2 are autonomous, co-eternal with God and upon which he was in some way dependent for creation."[56] Brevard Childs remarks that some primordial dualism in Gen. 1:2 is simply out of the question.[57] Julius Wellhausen himself deemed the construct reading of Gen. 1:1 as "desperate."[58] Gerhard Hasel survey of the literature concludes by noting the *unanimous* support of the independent/main-clause reading of Gen. 1:1 in light of the "combined efforts of lexical, grammatical, syntactical, comparative, and stylistic considerations."[59]

Wenham writes: "most modern commentators agree that v 1 is an independent main clause to be translated, 'In the beginning God created. . . . .'"[60] In light of Wenham's analysis, Stephen Ricks' pejorative remarks about "fundamentalist Protestants," "rearguard actions," and "members of great 'yawning' associations" who espouse *ex nihilo* creation actually are, quite humorously, wide of the mark! Temporal readings of Gen. 1:1 (#1 or #2) simply are by and large rejected by biblical commentators in favor of an *absolute* reading (#3 or #4).

C. *The Implications of the Verb* Bara' *(Create) for Creation Out of Nothing:* Does the verb *bara'*, which is used for "create" in Gen. 1:1 and elsewhere in the OT, imply creation out of nothing? Of course, *bara'* ("create") is used for, say, God's creation of the people of Israel (*e.g.*, Isa. 43:15) or His creation of a clean heart (Ps. 51:12). Even after God's *initial* creation is complete (Gen. 2:1), God creates indirectly by continuing to create all creatures and bring about His glorious purposes in history: "When you send your Spirit, they are created" (Ps. 104:30).

That said, we can still pick up strong signals from OT writers regarding the uniqueness of the word *bara'* (despite the Septuagint's obscuring it).[61] So we must look more closely at this word. While we must be careful not to load it with more freight than it was meant to carry, we must not overlook its significance either.

The relevant use of the term *create* (*bara'*) occurs 38 times in the Qal stem or verb form and 10 in the Niphal stem.[62] Note that we are *not* here considering the Piel stem (which some scholars consider a distinct verb and doubt its very *connection* to *bara'* in the Qal or Niphal stems),[63] which can mean "to cut, split" (Josh. 17:15).

As an aside, the alleged etymology of *bara'* (e.g., "cut," "split"?) will not be helpful here, despite the claims of some Mormons.[64] As biblical scholar Moisés Silva emphatically states: "Modern studies compel us to reject this attitude [i.e., appealing to etymology as giving us the 'basic' or 'real' meaning of a word] and distrust a word's history."[65] Similarly, Barr asserts: "The main point is that the etymology of a word is not a statement about its meaning but about its history."[66]

While *bara'* by itself entail creation out of nothing, we should note its great theological significance. The cumulative result from the reasons given below is that *bara'*, in relevant contexts, does suggest creation out of nothing:

1. *There is an utter absence of pre-existing material in connection with the verb* bara': As Werner Schmidt writes, this verb expresses that God "did not have need of already existing material . . . creation is deprived of any similarity to human action."[67] George Knight remarks that "God has given man the power to refashion stuff that is already there; but man cannot *bara'*; only God can create."[68] Childs notes that while the product is always mentioned, material never is. This, in addition to the "simultaneous emphasis on the uniqueness of God's action," could not be brought into a "smooth harmony with the fact of a pre-existent chaos. World reality is a result of creation, not a reshaping of existing matter."[69] Childs concludes that *creatio ex nihilo* is implicit in Gen. 1:1.

One may ask: Why is *bara'* used not only of the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1) and to the creation of human beings (1:27), but also of great sea creatures (1:21)? Is this theologically significant? The answer takes us back the ANE context, in which sea monsters would have been primeval forces that hindered a well-ordered cosmos. Genesis 1 implies that this is a *false* theological view. The not-insignificant verb *bara'* is emphasizes that God created the sea creatures; they are *not* hostile forces to be reckoned with.[70]

#2: In view of the fact that God is always the subject of bara'*, this verb appears to be without analogy and refers uniquely to divine activity.* Wenham comments: "it should be noted that God, the God of Israel, is always the subject" of *bara'*.[71] But some will shrug this off by pointing out that *bara'* is used in conjunction with other words not necessarily associated with divine activity, such as *'asah* ("make") and *yasar* ("form"); these appear to be interchangeable with *bara'* (Gen. 1:26,27,31; 2:3; Isa. 43:1,7; 48:15).

We must be careful of linguistic reductionism here and not assume that parallelisms are purely *synonymous*. While such verbs may express *facets* or *aspects* involved in God's creative work (e.g., God "made" man in his image), the verb "create" goes *beyond* what they express and communicates something beyond them. According to Walter Brueggemann, "While it may be used synonymously with 'make' or 'form,' the verb 'create' is in fact without analogy. It refers to the special action by God and to the special relation which binds these two parties together."[72]   Karl-Heinz Bernhardt asserts that *bara'* is used to express clearly the incomparability of God's creative work. It refers to the "nonpareil work of the Creator God."[73]

So even though *bara'* is used in conjunction with other terms, this does not mean that they are fully equivalent and that *bara'* has nothing significant to contribute beyond the verbs *make* (*'asah*) or *form* (*yasar*). Indeed, *creating* may involve *making* and *forming*, but *making* and *forming* fall short of *creating.* John Hartley observes that *create* refers to the creation of something *new* by God; only God *creates.* Other verbs (*form*, *make*) allow for "a variety of processes to come into play between God's speaking and the object's coming into existence."[74] But *bara'* uniquely captures *the entirety and breadth of God's creation*—something these other supporting verbs fail to do.

3. *The uniqueness of* bara' *is evidenced by its association with God's powerful word.* God's not requiring pre-existing matter to create is further reinforced by His creating by His powerful word (cp. Ps. 33:6) Wenham observes that while *bara'* is not a term exclusively reserved for creation out of nothing, it preserves the same idea (citing W.H. Schmidt, "God's effortless, totally free and unbounded creating, his sovereignty. It is never mentioned what God created out of").[75] The verb *bara'* in Gen. 1 speaks of the "absolute effortlessness of the divine creative action" who creates merely by His will and word.[76] Von Rad similarly declares, "It is correct to say that the verb *b_r_'*, 'create,' contains the idea both of complete effortlessness and *creatio ex nihilo*, since it is never connected with any statement of the material. The hidden pathos of this statement is that God is the Lord of the world."[77] Thus any eternal dualism is implicitly rejected.[78]

While *bara'* does not automatically connote creation out of nothing in the context of Genesis 1, its being "without analogy" is part of a cumulative case pointing in the direction of *creatio ex nihilo*.[79] The idea of *creatio ex nihilo* is implied in Genesis 1:1 as no "beginning" for God is mentioned.[80] Thus *bara'* is a word best-suited to express the concept of creation out of nothing. In fact, no other Hebrew term would do.

4. T*he verb* bara' *in Gen. 1:1 is connected with the totality of God's creation ("the heavens and the earth"), which points us to creation out of nothing.* Walter Eichrodt expresses the implicit assumption that the OT makes regarding absolute creation: "The idea of the absolute beginning of the created world thus proves to be a logical expression of the total outlook of the priestly narrator."[81] For example, Isa. 40:21, which refers back to Gen. 1:1 but utilizes the parallel expression "from the

foundation of the earth," is "a clear reference to an absolute beginning" and not an "arbitrary judgment."[82] Eichrodt considers the doctrine creatio *ex nihilo* as being "incontestable"[83]—especially in light of the author's strict monotheism as well as his radical distinction between ancient cosmogonies, in which the gods emerged out of pre-existing matter, and his own. Eichrodt argues that "the ultimate aim of the [creation] narrative is the same as that of our formula of creation ex nihilo."[84] As Claus Westermann noted, Gen. 1:1 refers to "The Beginning. Everything began with God."[85]

D. *Additional OT Texts Imply Creation* ex Nihilo: Having looked at Gen. 1:1, we should note other important OT passages reinforcing creation out of nothing. In them we witness the *totalism* as well as the *contingency* of God's creation. Such a totalism (e.g., the merism "the heavens and the earth") is to be expected since, in the Hebrew mind, there was no other kind of phenomenological existence outside the creative activity of God.[86]

Proverbs 8:22-26 states that *before* the depths were brought forth (i.e., the "deep" of Gen. 1:2), Wisdom was creating with God. Commenting on this passage, Richard J. Clifford notes that "the basic elements of the universe did *not* exist. There were no cosmic waters (v. 24), no pillars of the earth . . . and no habitable surface of the earth."[87] Nothing else besides the Creator existed—and this would preclude any pre-existent stuff. Thus, the reference made later in 2 Pet. 3:5 (alluding to Gen. 1), where God creates "from water," assumes that the waters themselves were brought into existence by God. Thus we should not read into such a passage some eternally-existent "deep" based on Gen. 1:2—indeed, God *created* the "deep" (Ps. 104:6; Prov. 8:24, 27-8)—no more so than we should see the "darkness" of Gen. 1:2 as eternal and uncreated, since God creates *both* darkness and light (Isa. 45:7).

> In a passage that refers to "the beginning, before the world began," (Prov. 8:23b), we read:
> When there were no depths I was brought forth,
> When there were no springs abounding with water.
> Before the mountains were settled,
> Before the hills I was brought forth. (Prov. 8:23-25)

Proverbs 8:24, Michael Fox observes, assumes that the "waters" of Gen. 1:2 are part of the *process* of creation. Their formation is a step/stage in creation.[88] He observes the similarity in language between 8:26 ("Before the mountains were set down. . .") and Ps. 90:2 ("before the mountains were born . . . from everlasting to everlasting you are God"), concluding: "Prov 8 starts from the indisputable commonplace that God existed before the start of time and ascribes the same precedence to wisdom."[89]

Everything that exists independently of God/Wisdom had a distinct temporal origin. Derek Kidner writes of Proverbs 8: "wisdom is both older than the universe, and fundamental to it. Not a speck of matter (26b), not a trace of order (29), came into existence but by wisdom."[90] Roland Murphy declares that the meaning of this passage is "clear": "[Wisdom] is . . . preexistent to anything else . . . Wisdom was there before anything else."[91]

Psalm 24:1-2 speaks in sweeping terms about God's creation: "The earth is the LORD's and everything in it . . . for he founded it on the seas. . . ." Or take Psalm 146, where we read that believers' hope is to be "in the LORD their God"—that is, the God "who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them." It is this God who "keeps faith forever" (Ps. 146:5-6). In the various psalms in which creation is mentioned, God first creates an ordered cosmos for human habitation and then works out His redemptive plan through His people Israel. While creation is not the primary focus here, it serves as a backdrop for God's saving actions in human history.[92]

In addition, the notion of *creatio ex nihilo* is reinforced when Scripture declares the eternality and self-sufficiency of God in contrast to the transience of the finite created order. Psalm 102:25-27 speaks to the *everlastingness* of God as opposed to the *transience* of everything else:

> Long ago you laid the foundation of the earth,
> and the heavens are your handiwork.

> They may perish, but you remain,
> While they all wear out as clothing. You can change them like a garment and [they] are put away,
> But you are the same and your years do not end.

Comments Leslie Allen, "Creator and creation are distinct: he is so much greater than they and must outlive them, as a man outlives his clothes. Unlike material things, Yahweh alone is immortal and immune from decay."[93] It would indeed contradict the mindset of biblical writers to say, "From everlasting to everlasting, You are God—although matter exists alongside You from everlasting to everlasting"!

Implicit throughout Isa. 40-48 is the supreme sovereignty and utter uniqueness of Yahweh in creation, besides whom there was no other god—or anything else—when He created: "I am the first and the last" (44:6; cp. 48:12); "I, the LORD, am the maker of all things" (44:24); "I am the LORD, and there is none else" (45:18; cp. 46:9). God's stupendous creative power is without analogy. Contrary to the LDS worldview, God sets himself apart as "creator and author of all things"—not merely organizer or arranger.[94]

We observe there are simply *no* preexisting conditions to which God is subject; it is God's commanding word that brings creation into being.[95] Westermann notes that (Deutero-)Isaiah's emphasis on God *alone* as the Creator and sole God is by virtue not only of His being "greater and more powerful than all the rest" of Babylon's gods, but "by being the one who remains ('I am the first and the last')."[96]

The OT presents Israel as not so much concerned with the *ex nihilo* dimensions of creation as it was with the sovereignty of God over creation, of God's absolute rule without competition, of the power of God's word.[97] However, their worldview took for granted that the contingent, temporal creation was utterly distinct from the everlasting, beginningless Creator and that God and what He brought into being constitute reality. These assumptions point to creation *ex nihilo*—not creation *ex materia.* The reason creation out of nothing was not an explicitly-declared article of faith in the OT is because "there was simply no alternative."[98] That is, "there was no other reality than that established by God," and thus the Israelites "had no need expressly to *believe* that the world was created by God because that was the presupposition of their thinking."[99] The very merism of totality—"the heavens and the earth"—expresses *totality* rather than simple *organization.* To say that God merely *organized* does not to justice to what this merism expresses.

So the cumulative case for creation *ex nihilo* in the OT is strong. Genesis 1, starkly set against the ANE cosmogonical context, supports creation out of nothing—not some preexistent matter. God and creation are ontologically distinct and constitute all the reality there is. Also, Gen. 1:1 is an absolute statement, not a temporal clause. Its absoluteness offers strong support for creation *ex nihilo.* Indeed, the majority of scholars today recognize that this absolute reading is not only grammatically and contextually preferable; it is also aesthetically superior. Thirdly, the verb *bara'* (in certain contexts) lends further undergirds the idea of creation *out of nothing* in certain contexts. Its unique association with God and His word, its lack of connection with anything material, and its utter novelty make it a fitting expression of the idea of creation *ex nihilo.* And contrary to LDS assumptions, it is a *non sequitur* to say that if God *formed* or *shaped* the elements into an orderly cosmos, then they must be eternally existent. Apart from Jewish abhorrence to such a dualism, a two-stage creation, in which God creates His raw materials out of nothing (Gen. 1:1) and then shapes them into a cosmos (Gen. 1:2-31), is perfectly plausible. Finally, the contingency of the created order as well as the totalism expressed by the OT further attest to creation out of nothing. God created everything external to Himself. Without God, nothing else could exist. He must bring it into being, and He must sustain it in being. John Goldingay observes that any "First Testament thinker" addressing the question, "Where did matter come from" would "no doubt declare" that "Yhwh made it, of course."[100]

III. *NT Support for Creation ex Nihilo:*

Not only does the OT imply creation out of nothing. The NT does as well. Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke declare that "the OT idea of creation" serves as a background to Paul's affirmations about creation in the New.[101] Childs affirms that "it is apparent that the Old Testament's understanding of God as creator was simply assumed and largely taken for granted as true" by NT authors.[102] He adds that the NT writers believed that "the world was not eternal" and that "God's creative power encompasses everything." It is aptly summarized in the phrase, *creatio ex nihilo*.[103]

Robert Jenson affirms that NT writers and the primal church "simply took over Jewish teaching" on creation—one that "did not need to be asserted, but functioned rather as warrant in asserting other things. Thus the absolute difference between Creator and creature is an automatic classification (Rom. 1.25; Heb. 4.3). 'Creator' is simply equivalent to "God" (1 Pet. 4.19), and 'creature' is simply equivalent to 'everything' (Romans 8.19-39; Colossians 1.23)."[104] This ontological distinction between Creator and creature is undeniable in Scripture, yet Mormon scholars are curiously reluctant to acknowledge it.

One new twist, of course, is that the NT writers connected creation and Christology. In Christ's sharing the identity of God as the Creator of the universe (e.g., 1 Cor. 8:6)[105] and in light of his resurrection, creation is now infused with the hope of restoration. Even so, the monotheism of the OT—with its rejection of an eternal dualism—is clear. As in the OT, the NT writers see God as the Creator of all, without whom there would be no reality distinct from Him. Obviously, the NT writers build on the OT.

Although the Greeks used a range of words for "creation," G. Petzke notes that the NT and post-biblical Judaism follow the Septuagint in their avoidance of *d_miourgos* ("demiurge") for "Creator," which "was common in the surrounding world."[106] What is remarkable is that, despite any Greek philosophical influences on biblical writers, the word *d_miourgos* ("builder") appears only once in the NT (Heb. 11:10), and this term is altogether avoided in the Septuagint. By contrast, "creator [*ho ktis_s*]" is the preferred term in Scripture. But even here—unlike Platonism—the word "builder" (*d_miourgos*) does not suggest a lower status than that of creator. Rather, NT writers such as Paul regularly affirm the "essentially Jewish conception of the cosmos."[107] This is further borne out by the fact that the stock Greek word for unformed matter—*hyl_*—is found only once in the NT—without any reference to unformed matter (Jas. 3:5b).

Let us now briefly survey the NT passages relevant to, and entailing, creation out of nothing.
A. John 1:3: "*All things came into being by Him; and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being*": Referring to creation, John 1:3 utilizes sweeping and unexceptional language: "all things [*panta*]" came into being through the Word. Rather than second-century theologians' moving away from an anti-materialistic Gnosticism and inventing creation out of nothing, Raymond Brown notes that here within the biblical text itself we see that "the material world has been created by God and is good."[108] The implication is that all things exist through God's agent, who is the originator of everything. This is borne out by the fact that though the Word already *was* (*_n*), the creation *came to be* (*egeneto*).[109] So when Scripture speaks of God's creation, there is an all-embracing nature to it. Klaus Wengst points out the obvious—namely, nothing out of all that exists is excluded.[110] Ernst Haenchen affirms that any proto-Gnosticism, in which the material world was evil, is rejected in this passage.[111] Rudolf Schnackenburg observes that in this passage the goodness of all created things is being defended since, in the work of creation, everything owes its existence to Him.[112] Even Rudolf Bultmann, for all of his talk about Hellenistic influences on NT writers, declares that John 1:3 indicates that "everything that there is [*panta*]" is an affirmation in the strongest words possible that "everything without exception" has been made by the Logos: "the creation is not the arrangement of a chaotic stuff, but is . . . creatio ex nihilo."[113] (Ricks' assertions notwithstanding, none of the cited scholars would qualify as "fundamentalist Protestants"!)

B. Romans 4:17: "*[Abraham] is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were*": As in Genesis ("Let there be . . ."), Paul speaks of God who "calls" all things into being. Paul is, according to NT scholar James Dunn, operating from an undisputed "theological axiom."[114] That is, *there is no precondition to God's activity*—whether it concerns creation, resurrection, or granting a child to an elderly infertile couple. Where there is death, God brings to life; where there is barrenness, God makes fruitful; in the case of creation, where there is nothing, God brings something into existence. Everything that exists is wholly dependent upon God for its being and continued existence.

Dunn explains the relationship between Paul's understanding of creation and its connection with redemption in Romans 4:17:

> Paul calls on this theological axiom not simply because it is a formula few if any of his readers would dispute, but because it clearly implies also the relationship which must pertain between this creator and his creation. As creator he creates without any precondition: he makes alive where there was only death, and *he calls into existence where there was nothing at all*. Consequently that which has been created, made alive in this way, must be totally dependent on the creator, the life-giver, for its very existence and life. Expressed in such terms the statement provides the governing principle by which all God's relationships with humankind must be understood, including salvation and redemption. Unless God is inconsistent, the same principle will govern God's dealings as savior: he redeems as he creates, and he reckons righteous in the same way in which he makes alive. That is to say, his saving work depends on nothing in that which is saved; redemption, righteous-reckoning, is not contingent on any precondition on the part of the recipient; the dead cannot make terms, that which does not exist cannot place God under any obligation—which is to say that the individual or nation is dependent on the unconditional grace of God as much for covenant life as for created life. It was this total dependence on God for very existence itself which man forgot, his rejection of that dependence which lies at the root of his malaise ([Romans] 1:18-28).[115]

Otfried Hofius points out that Paul is drawing on the common connection made within the extra-biblical Jewish thought and literature of his day between creation out of nothing and the resurrection of the dead.[116] Indeed, Hofius affirms that creation out of nothing in such passages "is not doubtful."[117] Robert H. Mounce expresses the biblical assumption expressed here and throughout Scripture: "By definition the Creator brings into existence all that is from that which never was. Anything less than that would be adaptation rather than creation."[118] Paul Achtemeier concurs, commenting that God will go to whatever lengths possible to fulfill His promises—even if this means creating something where before nothing at all had existed.[119]

Ernst Käsemann notes the "full radicalness" of the doctrine of justification, which is "an anticipation of the resurrection of the dead."[120] This deserves to be called "creation out of nothing."[121] Pointing to this passage, Bernhard Anderson asserts that the sovereignty of God as Creator does indeed *entail* the doctrine of creation out of nothing.[122] Roman Catholic scholar Joseph Fitzmyer sees in this passage that the promise to Abraham was made by the all-powerful Creator God Himself, who "can bring about all things."[123] So Romans 4:17, even if it does not directly address creation out of nothing, certainly includes it.

C. Hebrews 11:3: "*By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible*": Church historian Jaroslav Pelikan sees this passage as "explicitly" teaching creation out of nothing.[124] Indeed, it is one of the most powerful affirmations of creation out of nothing in the NT, despite its being phrased negatively ("was not made [*kat_rtisthai*]") rather than positively.

What is it that "cannot be seen"? Craig Koester argues against the two common alternatives of (1) "nothingness" (some semi-substantial "non-existence") and (2) the "transcendent realm" (reflecting

Hellenistic notions that the visible is derived from the invisible world). He says that "what cannot be seen" corresponds to (3) the powerful "word of God."[125]

As an aside, one could argue that even on (2), *creatio ex nihilo* is hardly excluded since it is possible to speak of God's bringing about the world out of nothing material (after all, He created all things, whether *visible* or *invisible*); He simply speaks, and a cosmos—ordered according to the Ideas or Forms in the divine Mind—is brought into being. However, Koester claims that "what cannot be seen" appears to refer to the "word of God."[126]

Of course, such an interpretation would support creation out of nothing.   This passage, which reflects the thinking of Psalm 33:6 ("By the word of the LORD, the heavens were made"), we read of the creative power of *rh_mati theou*—"the word/command of God." This harks back to Hebrews 1:2-3, where God's *Word*—namely, Christ—is the instrument by which God "created the universe."

This reading is certainly possible, but it still does not capture what the text says as the most natural reading. The writer of Hebrews is not stating in *positive* terms that the world was made from something not visible. Rather, he puts it *negatively*—namely, that the world was not made from anything visible. Here, much turns on how the negative *m_* is to be used, as there is an unusual word order here. Lane points out two alternative possibilities:
  (a) ". . . so that what is seen was brought into existence from what *cannot* be seen."
  (b) ". . . so that what is seen was *not* brought into being from anything that can be seen."

Lane, not to mention (among others) Ronald Williamson and Philip E. Hughes,[127] opts for (b). Lane points out that the negative *m_* usually occurs before the word or phrase that is negated, and here it is the entire clause ("so that what is seen was not brought into being from anything observable").[128] The negative *m_* properly modifies the whole infinitival clause (*eis to m_ ek phainomen_n to blepomenon gegonenai*), the *eis to* phrase having a final or purposive sense to it ("so that").[129] The thrust of this clause is a denial of the world's having a visible source. Lane summarizes by saying that although Heb. 11:3 does not state *creatio ex nihilo* in positive terms, but negatively, "it denies that the creative universe originated from primal material or anything observable."[130]

D. Romans 11:36: *"For from him and through him and to him are all things"*; Colossians 1:16: *"For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him"*; 1 Corinthians 8:6: *"yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live"*: The sweeping *comprehensiveness* of these passages ("all things") resembles the OT worldview—with the addition of the cosmic Christ's sharing in God's identity. The sum total of reality is comprised of God/Christ and everything else (i.e., creation). Nothing is omitted.

According to Romans 11:36, "from [*ek*]" God and "through [*dia*] him and to [*eis*] him are all things [*ta panta*]." In light of such a sweeping statement, it would seem odd to say that from, through, and to Him are all things—except primordial matter. Unoriginate matter would hardly fit in with such an assertion. Absolute creation makes the best sense of such comprehensive claims. It speaks with a totalism that God is "the source (*ek*), sustainer (*dia*), and goal (*eis*) of all things."[131] All things find their origin in God—not to mention their being sustained and directed by Him.[132]

Some have suggested that this formulation in Rom. 11:36 is akin to (and therefore influenced by) Stoicism. However, we must be careful not to succumb to parallelomania. As Thomas Schreiner rightly observes, "the parallels are superficial since such formulations must be interpreted in terms of the worldview of the author, and Stoicism and Pauline thought are obviously different."[133] For example, the Stoic conception of God was pantheistic, but Paul's understanding of God was personal and theistic.

Similarly, Paul's language in 1 Cor. 8:6 speaks with the same comprehensiveness of "Reality = God/Christ + Creation": "there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live." NT scholars such as Richard Bauckham and James Dunn note that Paul splits the *Shema* of Deut. 6:4 ("Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one"). Paul affirms that *Jesus* is identified with Yahweh as the "one LORD" of Deut. 6:4, and *both* Jesus and the Father are seen as bringing about the created order.[134] Amazingly, the monotheistic Paul is making a dramatic pronouncement in "Christianizing" the *Shema*.[135] The *ta panta* ("all things")—like "the heavens and the earth" of Gen. 1 and elsewhere in the OT—refers to *everything, the universe*.[136]

Even the word "creation" (*ktisis*), according to the second edition of the Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker Greek lexicon (BAGD), has the sense of "the sum total of everything created," and this is borne out by the Creator-creation distinction made in Scripture (cp. Heb. 9:11: "not part of this creation"]).[137] In BAGD's third edition, the word "create [*ktiz_*]" is defined as "to bring something into existence."[138]

Colossians 1:16-17 speaks comprehensively as well when it declares that *all things* were created *in* and *through* Christ. The totalistic merism in Genesis 1:1 ("the heavens and the earth") is expressed in the phrase "all things [*ta panta*]." The mention of His having created all things "in heaven and on earth"—which corresponds to or parallels[139] "things visible and invisible" (*ta orata kai ta aorata*)—indicates that these expressions "embrace everything for there are no exceptions."[140] M. Barth and Blanke observe that "things visible and invisible" should *not* be understood in a Platonic sense of the realm of appearance as opposed to the realm of Ideas or the Forms. Rather, in accordance with the Hebrew worldview (which had no word for "invisible"), we should translate such a passage as "what is seen and what is not seen." [141]

Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke stress that the totality (*ta panta*) refers to the "entire creation" (comparable to the Hebrew *kol*, "all"): "In the viewpoint of [Colossians], *everything* that is not creator is represented as having been created."[142] What is expressed in Col. 1:16 is in "striking contrast" to "Hellenistic statements" about the nature of creation.[143]

We could refer to other portions of Scripture along these lines. Revelation 1:8 declares that the Lord is the enduring "Alpha and the Omega." He is the One "who is and who was, and who is to come." (This, of course, echoes passages such as Isa. 42:4; 44:6; 48:12 or Ps. 90:2, where God alone—unlike matter—is "from everlasting to everlasting." It is God, "who created all things" (Eph. 3:9). Indeed, "you created all things and because of your will they existed and were created" (Rev. 4:11).

So the doctrinal formulation of creation out of nothing is, as Jürgen Moltmann puts it, "unquestionably an apt paraphrase" of what Scripture means by "creation."[144]

E. 2 Peter 3:5 (NIV): "*long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water*"; 2 Peter 3:5 (REB): "*there were heavens and earth long ago, created by God's word out of water and with water*": LDS scholars latch on to this verse as a proof-text for God's creation from eternally pre-existent chaotic deeps or the primeval ocean.[145]

However, rather than this being *creatio ex aquis*, however, 2 Pet. is speaking more loosely when using the phrases "from [*ek*] water" and "by [*dia*] water."[146] Also, Schreiner suggests, the syntax here is complicated and unclear;[147] so we should proceed with caution. Scientific considerations aside, it would be difficult to maintain that the author believed that the universe was made literally *from water*; it is utterly contrary to the biblical worldview that presents God alone as enduring and everlasting. Being the Creator of all things outside Himself, any eternal dualism is utterly unbiblical, and 2 Pet. assumes this.

Thus, while the NIV renders this verse, "long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water," it is unlikely.[148] Second Peter takes for granted the backdrop of

Gen. 1 and uses "heavens and earth" here as a merism for totality (cp. also v. 7: "the present heavens and earth"). Thus the NIV's rendering is unlikely since it breaks up this unity. The more natural reading would unite "the heavens" and "earth."

According to Genesis 1, God organizes/orders the waters He Himself has brought into being, separating the waters to make clouds of the sky (Gen. 1:6-8) and making the dry land by gathering the water together (Gen. 1:9): "On the basis of the Genesis account, then, Peter's assertion that God created the heavens and the earth 'out of water' does not seem far-fetched."[149] Indeed, "God used water as an instrument in his creation of the sky."[150] Schreiner suggests that when Peter says that the world was formed *ex hydatos* ("out of water"), he probably has in mind the emergence of the earth and sky from these waters.[151] The phrase *through* [*dia*] *water* refers to God's using water as an instrument in forming the world, suggesting a two-step creation process (The OT implies this, and early orthodox Christian theologians writing on creation—virtually to a man—held to this view—not to mention many medieval Jewish exegetes.)

What is Peter's point? He makes a parallel by bridging two uses of water in the Pentateuch to show that things *have changed* since the creation of the world. God spoke, using the division of water to create the sky, but he also used water to destroy the world—again, just by His divine decree.[152]

So we must be careful of pressing the preposition *ek/ex* ("out of") too far. After all, the Scriptures reinforce that God is indeed the ultimate source of all things, and the preposition *ek/ex* is often used in the NT to convey this (e.g., Rom. 11:36 that "from [*ek*] Him . . . are all things"). M. Barth and Blanke state that whereas the Stoic Seneca might use "from [*ek/ex*] to refer to the material out of which something is produced, biblical writers such as Paul use it to designate the Creator.[153] Paul himself—not to mention 2 Pet. 3:5—utilizes many *overlapping* prepositions for God's creative actions; so we must be cautious about "dogmatic differentiations" as well as drawing Hellenistic connections that simply are not there.[154]

Given the loose and even "confusing"[155] use of prepositions in this passage, it is unwise to read into them some cosmological theory—especially as God's dividing the waters above and below in the creative process (Gen. 1) would suffice to account for this language, as Jerome Neyrey suggests.[156]

In addition, we must allow for Peter's rhetorical purposes: "One of the main reasons he introduces the idea of the world as being created 'by water' is to prepare for the parallel he will make in verse 6, where God destroys the world 'by water.'"[157] In v. 5, God creates the world (in the second of two stages, as we have seen) by His word; then in v. 7, God judges it "by the same word."[158] Thus we have a fitting parallel.[159] So this much-appealed to passage by LDS scholars allegedly supporting God's creating out of eternally pre-existent watery chaos misses the point.

The NT, then, mirrors the OT's understanding of creation. Apart from the important NT addition of the cosmic Christ, the Pantocrator, the same creation themes are reiterated—namely, the sweeping totalistic picture of God as the Creator of all and the fact of creation's contingency in contrast to God's self-existence (Jn. 1:3, Rom. 4:17; Heb. 11:3; etc.) forcefully present creation out of nothing. The 2 Pet. 3:5 passage should not be taken as supporting creation *ex materia* since the OT suggests God's creation of everything (including the waters/deep, darkness) and then later dividing them in the latter stage of this two-part (as Gen. 1 indicates). Indeed, the cumulative weight of evidence from the OT and NT leads to a strong case for creation *ex nihilo*.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

What conclusions may we draw in light of LDS claims and their conflict with Scripture's affirmations regarding creation?

*First, the idea held by ancient Greek and contemporary Mormon thinkers alike that there can be independent, eternally pre-existent matter co-existing with God—a metaphysical dualism—is to affirm a form of **idolatry**, compromising both the ontological distinction between Creator and creature and the nature of divine sovereignty.* That is, such a dualism attributes an eternal, independent ontological status to something other than God, and it entails that something external to God limits or constrains his creative activity. Basil of Caesarea pointedly affirms in his *Hexaemeron*, "If matter were uncreated, then it would from the very first be of a rank equal to that of God and would deserve the same veneration."[160]

*Second, the LDS claim that God cannot destroy or create the elements/matter **undermines the power of God**: it would be by pure luck that God ended up creating at all since the raw materials just happened to exist alongside Him from eternity!* Church historian Eusebius challenged those claiming that matter was eternally pre-existent to tell him "whether it does not follow from their argument that God by lucky chance found the substance unoriginate, without which, had it not been supplied to Him by its unoriginate character, He could have produced no work at all, but would have continued to be no Creator."[161]

*Third, Mormons, following Gerhard May, tend to confuse **implicit** with **ambiguous**.* While arguments for creation out of nothing are often *implicit* in Scripture, this hardly means they are *ambiguous*. In fact, an argument can have great power—even though implicit. A father might tell a son, "Either I am mowing the lawn, or you will have to do it—and I'm not mowing the lawn." The father's point is far from ambiguous, and while implicit, it is quite forceful with no question remaining as to what is meant.

When we apply this point to creation out of nothing, we can affirm, "Either *creatio ex nihilo* is true, or God did not create everything. But Scripture says that God created everything." When the Bible declares that God created everything, it implicitly affirms that *creatio ex nihilo* is true; the matter is not ambiguous. Or consider this: "Either *creatio ex nihilo* is true, or God is not all-powerful. But God is truly all-powerful." Again, God's being all-powerful strongly suggests creation out of nothing. Though it is implicit in Scripture, it is not ambiguous.

*Fourth, even if the biblical evidence were ambiguous and that the biblical writers took no position on this issue, the LDS idea that God created from eternally pre-existing matter **does not win by default**.* Rather, this position has its own burden of proof to bear. Mormons give the impression that an either-or situation exists regarding creation: either the Bible explicitly teaches creation out of nothing or the creation *ex materia* view is true by default. However, one must deal contextually and exegetically with the biblical texts, offering positive evidence for the *ex materia* position. The idea of creation from pre-existent matter would not automatically were the Bible actually unclear on the matter.

Happily, we have no need of that hypothesis.

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[1] "Creation, Creation Accounts," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:340.
[2] B.H. Roberts, *The Truth, the Way, the Life*, ed. Stan Larson (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1994), 224.
[3] See Stephen E. Robinson's comments on this in Stephen E. Robinson and Craig L. Blomberg, *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 138.
[4] Stephen D. Ricks, "Ancient Views of Creation and the Doctrine of Creation *ex Nihilo*," in *Revelation, Reason, and Faith: Essays in Honor of Truman G. Madsen*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo: FARMS, 2002), 332.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Coauthored with William Lane Craig (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004). See also our coauthored essay, "Craftsman or Creator?" in *The New Mormon Challenge*, ed. Francis Beckwith, et al. (Grand Rapids:

Zondervan, 2002); and Paul Copan, "Is Creation *ex Nihilo* a Post-biblical Invention?" *Trinity Journal* NS 17 (1996): 77-93.

[7] Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Latter-day Saints*, 7 vols., intro. and notes by B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 6:308-309 (=*TPJS*, 350-352). The King Follett Discourse is found in the *Journal of Discourses* (*JD*) 6:1-11.

[8] *JD*, 13:248.

[9] "Creation, Creation Accounts," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 340.

[10] Lowell Bennion, "A Mormon View of Life," *Dialogue* 24/3 (1991): 60.

[11] Stephen Robinson, personal correspondence (20 April 1998): "I would not be comfortable with saying that God cannot bring eternal matter into being nor destroy it." Rather, "God creates matter out of chaos and can return it to chaos, and that chaos is not matter as we know it, but a level of existence that human beings cannot comprehend. For me chaos is not matter, but neither is it non-existence."

[12] Ted Peters, "On Creating the Cosmos," in *Physics, Philosophy, and Theology: A Common quest for Understanding*, ed. Robert Russell, William Stoeger, and George Coyne (Vatican City: Vatican Observatory, 1988), 273-4.

[13] For example, Langdon Gilkey, *Maker of Heaven and Earth* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959), chapter 3.

[14] Friedrich Schleiermacher was chiefly responsible for collapsing the ideas of Creation and Preservation in his work published in 1821-22, *The Christian Faith*, vol. 1, trans. Richard R. Niebuhr (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 148-52.

[15] Robert John Russell, "Finite Creation Without a Beginning," in *Quantum Cosmology and the Laws of Nature*, ed. R.J. Russell, Nancey Murphy, and C.J. Isham (Vatican City: Vatican Observatory, 1993), 309.

[16] Gerhard May, Creatio ex Nihilo: *The Doctrine of "Creation Out of Nothing" in Early Christian Thought*, trans. A.S. Worrall (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), xi.

[17] Ibid., 24.

[18] John H. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 25-6.

[19] U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, vol. 1, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1972), 7.

[20] Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Polemic Nature of the Genesis Cosmology," *Evangelical Quarterly* 46 (1974): 81-102.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Rolf Rendtorff, "Creation and Redemption in the Torah," in *The Blackwell Companion to the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Leo G. Purdue (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2001), 314.

[23] Gerhard von Rad, "Some Aspects of the Old Testament World-view," in Bernard W. Anderson, ed., *Creation in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 3.

[24] Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 38. See also Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

[25] Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 38.

[26] James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 472.

[27] Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Marks (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 47.

[28] John Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature*, 26.

[29] Kenneth Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1966), 89 (and note).

[30] So W. Sibley Towner, *Genesis* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 15.

[31] See Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* WBC 1 (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1987), 11.

[32] See Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26* NAC 1A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 137.

[33] Victor P Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17* NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 105.

[34] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 12. See also Gerhard F. Hasel, "Recent Translations of Genesis 1:1," *The Bible Translator* 22 (1971): 154-68; Hershel Shanks, "How the Bible Begins," *Judaism* 21 (1972): 51-58.

[35] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 12.

[36] N. H. Ridderbos, "Genesis i 1 und 2" (in *Studies on the Book of Genesis*) in *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 12 (Leiden: Brill, 1958), 216-9.

[37] James Barr notes this as well, pointing to Isa. 41:4, 26; 48:16; Prob. 18:23; Eccl. 3:11 ("Was Everything That God Created Good?" in *God in the Fray*, ed. Tod Linfelt and Timothy K. Beal (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 58.

[38] John Sailhamer, "Genesis," *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, ed. Frank Gaebelein, 21-23. See also John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 35-7.

[39] N. H. Ridderbos argues that Genesis 1:1 cannot be translated as a temporal clause: "Genesis i 1 und 2," in *Oudtestamentische Studien* 12, *Studies on the Book of Genesis* (1958): 216-19.

[40] Barr, "Was Everything That God Created Rally Good?" 57.

[41] Ibid., 58.

[42] Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 31.

[43] Shanks, "How the Bible Begins," 51.

[44] See Shanks, "How the Bible Begins,"51-8.

[45] Ibid., 55.

[46] Ibid., 57.

[47] Claus Westermann, *Genesis: A Practical Commentary*, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 7.

[48] Bruce Waltke, "The Initial Chaos Theory and the Precreation Chaos Theory," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132 (July 1975): 223.

[49] Bernhard W. Anderson, *Creation versus Chaos* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 185.

[50] *Antiquities of the Jews*, 1.1.

[51] *Hortatory Address to the Greeks* [*Oratio ad Graecos/Cohortatio ad Graecos*] 28.

[52] Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 107; also Waltke, "The Initial Chaos Theory, 223.

[53] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 13; also Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 107.

[54] Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 41.

[55] Waltke, "The Initial Chaos Theory," 225 and entire essay (217-28).

[56] Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 141.

[57] Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 386.

[58] Cited in Hasel, "Recent Translations of Genesis 1:1," 163.

[59] Ibid., 167.

[60] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 12.

[61] The more general verb *poiein* ("to make") is often used instead of *ktizein* ("to create") in the Septuagint. The verb *ktizein* occurs 66 times in the Septuagint, and 39 of them are without a Hebrew equivalent. See Hans-Helmut Esser, "Creation," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 378. The verb *ktiz_* occurs 66 times in the Septuagint, and 39 of them are without a Hebrew equivalent.

[62] The verb *bara'* occurs 11 times in Genesis and is always translated *poie_* ("make") in the Septuagint.

[63] Gordon Wenham notes that any "etymological connection" with the Piel of *bara'* is doubtful (*Genesis 1-15*, 12); W. H. Schmidt, "*br'*, to create," 253-4.

[64] B.H. Roberts, *The Truth, the Way, the Life*, ed. Stan Larson (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1994), 224

[65] Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 51. See also D.A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 26-32. Peter Cotterell and Max Turner state that the etymological fallacy is "a sufficiently dead horse in

educated theological circles" (*Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1989], 114).

[66] James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 109.

[67] Werner H. Schmidt, *The Faith of the Old Testament: A History*, trans. John Sturdy (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 173. Schmidt notes that while the word *bara'* by itself does not mean creation *ex nihilo*, God's creating by his word goes beyond representing a craftsman at his work.

[68] George A. F. Knight, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Theological Commentary on Isaiah 40-55* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1965), 45.

[69] Brevard S. Childs, *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament* (Naperville, Ill.: Allenson, 1960), 40.

[70] David Wilkinson, *The Message of Creation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 21.

[71] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 12.

[72] Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 17. Cf. W. H. Schmidt's "no analogy" comment in "*br'*, to create," in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997), 1:254.

[73] Karl-Heinz Bernhardt , "*bara'*," in the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 2:246, 247. He adds that in a redactional process, "P introduced *bara'* into particularly important passages and thus implicitly prevented a misunderstanding of *'asah* in the earlier narrative" (246)

[74] John E. Hartley, *Genesis* NIB 1 (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2000), 45.

[75] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 12.

[76] Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 142.

[77] Von Rad, *Genesis*, 47.

[78] Waltke makes clear that "one should not infer an eternal dualism from this silence" (*Genesis: A Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001], 68).

[79] Walter Brueggemann suggests that while Gen. 1:2 speaks of a kind of chaos, 1:1 (which he takes to be a later theological reflection on creation) "suggests God began with nothing" (*Genesis* [Atlanta: John Knox, 1982], 29). According to Brueggemann, no attempt is made to resolve the apparent tension. He also notes that by the time of the NT, "it was affirmed that God created out of nothing (cf. Rom. 4:17; Heb. 11:3)" (29).

[80] John Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound* (Sisters, Ore.: Multnomah, 1996), 247-49.

[81] Walter Eichrodt, "In the Beginning: A Contribution to the Interpretation of the First Word of the Bible," in Bernhard W. Anderson, ed., *Creation in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 72.

[82] Ibid., 67.

[83] Ibid., 72.

[84] Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, trans. J.A. Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 101.

[85] Westermann, *Genesis: A Practical Commentary*, 7.

[86] R. K. Harrison, "Creation," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 1:1023.

[87] *Proverbs: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 96.

[88] Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9* ABC 18A (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 282.

[89] Ibid., 284.

[90] Derek Kidner, *Proverbs* TOTC 15 (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1964), 78.

[91] Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs* WBC 22 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 52.

[92] See Stacy R. Obenhaus, "The Creation Faith of the Psalmists," *Trinity Journal* 21 NS (Fall 2000): 131-42.

[93] Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150* WBC 21 (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1983), 16.

[94] Knight, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 124.

[95] Werner Foerster writes that "God created everything (without precondition)." "*ktiz_*," in ed. Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 3: 1012; see also W.H Schmidt, "*bara'*," in *Theological Lexicon of the Old*

Testament, 3 vols., ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997), 1:256.

[96] Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 156.

[97] See Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 158-9.

[98] Claus Westermann, *Creation*, trans. John J. Scullion (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 5.

[99] Ibid.

[100] John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology: Israel's Gospel*, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 77.

[101] *Colossians*, ABC 34B, trans. Astrid B. Beck (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 198.

[102] *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*, 391.

[103] Ibid.

[104] "Aspects of a Doctrine of Creation," 17.

[105] See Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

[106] G. Petzke, "*ktiz_,*" in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 2, ed. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 325.

[107] Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 38.

[108] Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII* ABC 29 [New York: Doubleday, 1966], 26.

[109] Ibid., 8.

[110] "*Nichts von allem, was ist, ist ausgeschlossen*" (Klaus Wengst, *Das Johannessevangelium*, vol. 1 [Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2000], 48).

[111] *"Für diese war die materielle Welt schlecht"* (Ernst Haenchen, *Das Johannesevangelium: Ein Kommentar*, [Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1980], 120).

[112] Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, vol. 1, trans. Kevin Smyth (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 238, 239.

[113] Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *et al.* (ET Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 38.

[114] James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1988), 237.

[115] Ibid.

[116] For a more extensive discussion, see his essay "Die Gottesprädikationen Röm 4,17b," in his *Paulusstudien II, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 143 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 58-61. Hofius observes that creation out of nothing is assumed in various passages such as *Joseph and Asenath* 12:2 with 20:7 and 2 Maccabees 7:7:23 and 28-9, (Syrian) 2 Baruch 14:17; 21:4; 48:8; cp. *Apostolic Constitutions* 8.12.7.

[117] "*ist . . . nicht zweifelhaft*" (Hofius, *Paulusstudien II*, 60n).

[118] Robert H. Mounce, *Romans* NAC 27 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 128; also W.H. Schmidt, "*br'*, to create," *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 1:256); and William P. Brown, "Creation," in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 293.

[119] Paul J. Achtemeier, *Romans*, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 82.

[120] Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 123.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Anderson, "Creation," *IBD* 1:728.

[123] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* ABC 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 383.

[124] Jaroslav Pelikan, "Creation and Causality in the History of Christian Thought," in Sol Tax and Charles Callender, eds., *Evolution After Darwin*, vol. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1960), 34.

[125] Craig Koester, *Hebrews* ABC 36 (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 99-100.

[126] The preposition *ek/ex*, which can mean "out of," can also be translated *causally*, as it parallels "by the word of God." The sense would then be that the visible comes into existence by the invisible (Koester, *Hebrews*, 474).

[127] Ronald Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 377-9; Philip Edgecumbe Hughes, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 443

[128] Lane, *Hebrews*, 326-7. See also Hughes, *Hebrews*, 443.

[129] See Maxmilian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek* (Rome: Pontifical Institute, 1963), § 352, 122.

[130] William L. Lane, *Hebrews*, 332.

[131] Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* NIGNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 743.

[132] Robert H. Mounce, *Romans* NAC 27 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 227.

[133] Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* ECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 637.

[134] Dunn, *Theology of the Apostle Paul*, 268; Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 38. Bauckham notes that what Paul does is *reproduce the words of the statement about Yahweh and make them apply to both the Father and Christ*. Paul is thus including Jesus in the divine identity, redefining monotheism as *christological monotheism*.

[135] F. F. Bruce, *I & II Corinthians* NCBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 80.

[136] Dunn, *Theology of the Apostle Paul*, 267.

[137] Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 456.

[138] Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 572.

[139] Corresponds, that is, in chiastic fashion.

[140] P. T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon* WBC 44 (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1982), 46.

[141] M. Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, ABC 34B, trans. Astrid B. Beck (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 200. O'Brien sees these invisible things ("thrones, dominions, etc.) as hostile angel powers (*Colossians, Philemon* 46). On such a view if we see the things "unseen" as referring to thrones and dominions and principalities and powers, they still find their source and temporal origination in Christ.

[142] M. Barth and H. Blanke, *Colossians*, 199.

[143] Ibid.

[144] Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 74.

[145] Stephen Ricks, "Ancient Views," 328.

[146] Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* WBC 50 (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1983), 297.

[147] Thomas Schreiner, *1 and 1 Peter, Jude* NAC 37 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 374.

[148] Ibid.

[149] Douglas J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude* NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 170.

[150] C.F.D. Moule, *Idiom Book of the New Testament* Greek, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 55.

[151] Schreiner, *1 and 2 Peter, Jude*, 376.

[152] Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 302.

[153] M. Barth and H. Blanke, *Colossians*, 197, 205.

[154] Ibid., 199.

[155] Jerome H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude* ABC 37C (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 234.

[156] Ibid., 234: "Genesis 1 describes how the dry land was separated 'out of' the waters above and below."

[157] Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 170

[158] Ibid., 171.

[159] Bo Reicke suggests *ex nihilo* creation in his comments on 2 Pet. 3:5—namely, that God' by his "all-powerful word" brings about "the first days" of the "original creation." *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude* ABC (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1964), 175.

[160] *Hexaemeron* 2.4.

[161] *Preparation of the Gospel* [*Praeparatio Evangelica*] 7.20.