

Chapter 13

Creation and the Fall

Biblical evidence for creation from pre-existing material

It is true, as the authors note (p. 147), that Latter-day Saints reject *creatio ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing), instead, believing that God created from pre-existing material. This is something that has ample biblical support.

Firstly, the Hebrew word translated as “created” in Genesis 1:1-3 is the verb בָּרָא *bara* which is used in Joshua 17:15-18 and elsewhere to mean creation from pre-existing material.

Job 38:3-11 NIV gives an important building analogy that supports the idea of creation from pre-existing material:

Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you
Shall answer me.
Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell
Me, if you understand.
Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who
Stretched a measuring line across it?
On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone
While the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?
Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth
From the womb,
When I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in
Thick darkness.
When I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place
When I said, “This far you may come and no father, here
Is where your proud waves halt”?

This passage in Job argues against creation *ex nihilo* and in favour of creation from matter - from sea and cloud. It uses the analogy of building - marking the dimensions, stretching a measuring line, setting footings, laying the cornerstones - and reveals an ambivalence toward the sea and a concern that the waters be controlled, concepts that are also found in texts from ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia.¹

John 1:3

¹ Stephen D. Ricks, “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, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2002), 319-338, here pp. 325-26

This [the LDS belief in creation from pre-existing material] is in direct conflict with the Bible, which states: “Through him all things were made: without him nothing was made that has been made” (Jn 1:3). If God made everything, there cannot be anything which already existed before creation, or which was not created (P. 147)

Such an argument is flawed for many reasons. First, it should be noted that this is not how early Christians understood this and other verses. For instance, Justin Martyr wrote that God “in the beginning of His goodness, for man’s sake, created all things out of unformed matter” (*First Apology* 59).² So the term “all things” refers to everything that has a shape, not matter itself.

Additionally, the Greek term *πας* *Pas* (commonly translated as all, any, every, or whole) can be understood in a limited and relative sense. Examples of this fact can be found throughout the New Testament. Renowned Baptist preacher C.H. Spurgeon persuasively argues this point:³

“The whole world is gone after Him.” Did all the world go after Christ? “Then went all Judea, and were baptised of him in Jordan.” Was all Judea, or all Jerusalem baptised in Jordan? “Ye are of God little children,” and “the whole world lieth in the wicked one.” Does “the whole world” there mean everybody? If so, how was it, then, that there were some who were “of God?” The words “world” and “all” are used in seven or eight senses in Scripture; and it is very rarely that “all” means all persons [or all things], taken individually.

Michael and Adam

In Joseph Smith’s diary, under 21 January 1836m he recorded a revelation: “The heavens were opened upon us and I beheld the celestial kingdom of God...I saw father Adam and Abraham and Michael and my father and mother, and my brother Alvin...(P. 146)

The question raised is that of how Joseph Smith could possibly see Michael and Adam, notwithstanding the Doctrine and Covenants teaching that they are the same person (e.g., D&C 27:11).

The Prophet saw a series of vignettes, each of which was in a different place and time. Thus, he saw the Twelve Apostles together in a foreign land, and then he saw Elders

² Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:165, as cited by John A. Tvedtnes, “Creation ex nihilo,” in *Joseph Smith and the ancient world* (Forthcoming), 130

³ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Particular Redemption* (February 28, 1858), accessible from www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0181.htm

McClellan and Young in different places. He also saw the Twelve and his own parents and Alvin in the celestial kingdom, despite the fact that Alvin was the only one who died up to that time. It was clearly a vision with various scenes, with Smith being able to see Michael and then his appearance on earth as Adam in different scenes, it was not a real event.

The Fall

Original Sin

In the concluding chapter of Herbert Haag's *Is Original Sin in Scripture?* the author includes a summary containing the following points:

1. The idea that Adam's descendants are automatically sinners because of the sin of their ancestor and that they are already sinners when they enter the world, is foreign to Holy Scripture. The well-known verse from the Psalms 51:7 and 50:7 merely means that everyone born of woman becomes a sinner in this world, without fail. The Bible often uses the device of attributing a man's later deeds or achievements to him from the time of his conception and birth (cf., for example, Jeremiah 1:5, where Jeremiah is made a prophet in his mother's womb).
2. The inheritance of Adam's sin means rather that sin, after its entrance into the world, so spread that consequently all men are born in a sinful world and in this sinful world become themselves sinners.
3. No man enters the world a sinner. As the creature and image of God he is from his first hour surrounded by God's fatherly love. Consequently, he is not at birth, as is often maintained, an enemy of God and a child of God's wrath. A man becomes a sinner only through his own individual and responsible action.⁴

Further, that Adam did not sin can be seen in the Bible in 1 Timothy 2:14:

And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

Was Adam's fall part of God's plan?

Latter-day Saints understand that when God created the earth and man, He chose to create them in an eternal and perfect form. He thereafter pronounced them as "very good" (Genesis 1:31). When God created the Garden of Eden he placed the tree of knowledge of good and evil in it. If he never intended for Adam or Eve to partake of it, why was it

⁴ Herbert Haag, *Is Original Sin in Scripture?* trans. Dorothy Thompson (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969) 106-7, as cited by Stephen D. Ricks, "Adam's fall in the Book of Mormon, Second Temple Judaism, and Early Christianity," in *The disciple as scholar: essays on scripture and the ancient world in honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2000), 595-606, here p. 603.

there? Surely and all wise God could have eliminated the tree or placed a barrier around it like He did with the tree of life (Genesis 3:24) if the fall were not part of His plan. It seems clear that the fall was part of God's plan because God purposefully planted this tree in the garden. By doing so, he gave Adam and Eve the freedom to choose (2 Nephi 2:26-27; Moses 4:3) either to remain as He had created them or to begin an imperfect world where both physical and spiritual death were possible.

Knowing that man would fall, God also prepared ahead of time "a way for our escape" from both kinds of death (2 Nephi 9:8-10) through the resurrection and the atonement of Jesus Christ (2 Nephi 9:19-25). That his mission and sacrifice were prepared even "before the foundation of the world" is attested to throughout the scriptures (Ephesians 1:3-4; 1 Peter 1:19-20; Revelations 13:8; Mosiah 4:6-8; Alma 22:13-14; Moses 4:1-2). When we understand that the Saviour's mission was "foreordained" from the beginning, the reason should satisfy us that Adam's fall was "foreordained" (1 Nephi 9:6; 2 Nephi 9:6, 10; Mosiah 4:6-7; Mormon 9:12-13) to bring about God's eternal purposes (Ephesians 3:11; 2 Nephi 2:24-25; Moses 1:39). As Nephi testified, "Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy" and eternal life (2 Nephi 25, 27).⁵

⁵ Michael W. Hickenbotham, *Answering challenging Mormon Questions* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon Publishers and Distributors, 1994), 120-21