

Creation Ex Nihilo — Cheat Sheet

matter, which is exactly what Latter-day Saint theology teaches.

CORE POSITION (ONE SENTENCE)

Creation *ex nihilo* is a second-century philosophical development, not a biblical teaching; the Hebrew Bible consistently describes God organizing pre-existing

THEIR KEY PROOF-TEXTS — AND RESPONSES

Verse	Their Claim	Our Response
Gen. 1:1	"God created" = from nothing	Gen. 1:2 has pre-existing chaos (<i>tohu wabohu</i>), waters, and deep (<i>tehom</i>) BEFORE God speaks in v. 3. He organizes what is already there.
Heb. 11:3	"Not made of things which do appear" = nothing	<i>Katartizo</i> = "framed/arranged." Invisible ≠ nonexistent. Made from invisible matter, not from nothing.
Rom. 4:17	"Calls things that be not" = ex nihilo	Context is Abraham — God promises descendants that don't YET exist. About resurrection and promise fulfillment, not cosmology.
Col. 1:16	"By him all things created"	Affirms Christ as creator. Says nothing about the METHOD. LDS agree Christ created all organized things.

OUR BEST SCRIPTURES FOR CREATION FROM EXISTING MATTER

- **Genesis 1:2** — Pre-existing chaos, waters, deep — present BEFORE God's creative acts
- **Genesis 1:6-7** — God DIVIDES existing waters — organizing, not conjuring

HEBREW WORD STUDY: *BARA* ≠ "CREATE FROM NOTHING"

- *Bara* is used only with God as subject — indicates divine authority, not method

EARLY CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE (QUICK HITS)

- **Justin Martyr (c. 150 AD)**: "He in the beginning did... create all things out of unformed matter" (*First Apology*, 10) — explicitly taught creation from pre-existing matter
- **Clement of Alexandria (c. 200 AD)**: Acknowledged creation from pre-existing matter, drew on Platonic cosmology

QUICK-FIRE OBJECTION RESPONSES

"If matter is eternal, God isn't sovereign."

A master architect is not diminished because he didn't create atoms. God's sovereignty is in His infinite power, knowledge, and creative genius — not in a metaphysical abstraction about conjuring from nothingness.

"Every Christian teaches ex nihilo — you're the outlier."

Justin Martyr (c. 150 AD) taught creation from pre-existing matter. Ex nihilo didn't become consensus until late 2nd century. The LDS position recovers the earlier view.

LDS RESTORATION SCRIPTURES

- **D&C 93:29** — "Intelligence... was not created or made, neither indeed can be"

KEY RESOURCES

- [FairLatterdaySaints: Creation](#)

- **Job 38:4-7** — "Sons of God shouted for joy" — beings existed BEFORE earth's creation
- **2 Peter 3:5** — Earth formed "out of the water and in the water"
- **Proverbs 8:22-30** — Wisdom present before the earth's foundations
- **Psalms 33:6-7** — God GATHERS waters, LAYS UP the deep — organizing language
- **Isaiah 43:7** — *Bara* paralleled with *yatsar* (form from material) and *asah* (make)

- Paralleled with *yatsar* (to form, like a potter with clay) in Isaiah 43:7, 45:7
- Used in Isaiah 65:18 — God "creates" Jerusalem a rejoicing — transformation, not origination
- No Hebrew lexicon defines *bara* as "create from absolute nothingness"

- **Theophilus of Antioch (c. 180 AD)**: Among the FIRST to articulate *ex nihilo* — developed as anti-Gnostic polemic
- **Gerhard May (historian)**: "*Creatio ex nihilo* appeared as a specifically philosophical and theological creation in the second century... It is not found in the Bible"
- **Jon Levenson (Harvard OT scholar)**: "The notion that creation entails absolute origination is not native to the Hebrew Bible"

"Hebrews 11:3 says 'not made of things which appear' — that means nothing."

Invisible ≠ nonexistent. The verse distinguishes visible from invisible, not existent from nonexistent. Organized from imperceptible matter = exactly the LDS position.

"If intelligence is eternal, God didn't create us."

Unorganized intelligence is not a person. God organized intelligence into spirits and bodies. A sculptor who brings form and beauty to marble has truly created — the marble's pre-existence doesn't negate the creation.

"This makes God just a craftsman, not a Creator."

Genesis 1 describes exactly this: separating, gathering, forming, organizing. The biblical God is praised for His creative WORK (Psalm 19, 104), not for a metaphysical property of conjuring matter.

- **D&C 93:33** — "The elements are eternal"
- **D&C 131:7** — "All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure"
- **Abraham 3:18** — Intelligences "have no beginning; they existed before"
- **Abraham 4:1** — "The Gods organized and formed the heavens and the earth"

- [Church of Jesus Christ: Creation](#)
- Gerhard May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo: The Doctrine of 'Creation out of Nothing' in Early Christian Thought*
- Jon Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*