

Believe it or not, there are some people claiming to be Christians who deny that God created everything—and even deny that he created out of nothing.

Mormons, for example, claim that God at one time lived near another star, named Kolob, and after achieving a celestial power base, he went on to fashion this world.

In recent years, this error has found advocates in the Word Faith Movement that is part of American Evangelicalism. For example, Word Faith preacher Kenneth Copeland claims that heaven is another planet and that God created Earth to be a copy of it.

These ideas are *totally alien* to the historic Christian faith. From the beginning of Christian history—in fact, from before the time of Christ in orthodox Judaism—the people of God have held to the divinely revealed principle that God made everything that exists (meaning there was no other planet on which he was originally based) and that he created everything out of nothing.

Thus the Church today teaches: “We believe that God needs no preexistent thing or any help in order to create, nor is creation any sort of necessary emanation from the divine substance. God creates freely ‘out of nothing’” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 296).

As the following quotes from the early Church Fathers reveal, that is what Christians have always taught.

HERMAS

“And as I prayed, the heavens were opened, and I saw the woman whom I had desired saluting me from the sky, and saying, ‘Hail, Hermas!’ And looking up to her, I said, ‘Lady, what are you doing here?’ And she answered me, ‘I have been taken up here to accuse you of your sins before the Lord.’ ‘Lady,’ said I, ‘are you to be the subject of my accusation?’ ‘No,’ said she, ‘but hear the words which I am going to speak to you. God, who dwells in the heavens, and made out of nothing the things that exist, and multiplied and increased them on account of his holy

Church, is angry with you for having sinned against me.” (*The Shepherd* 1:1:1 [A.D. 80]).

“Believe first of all that God is one, that he created all things and set them in order and brought out of nonexistence into existence everything that is, and that he contains all things while he himself is uncontained” (*ibid.*, 2:1:1).

ARISTIDES

“Let us proceed, then, O king, to the elements themselves, so that we may demonstrate concerning them that they are not gods, but corruptible and changeable things, produced out of the nonexistent by him that is truly God, who is incorruptible and unchangeable and invisible, but who sees all things and changes them and alters them as he wills” (*Apoloogy* 4 [A.D. 140]).

THEOPHILUS OF ANTIOCH

“Furthermore, inasmuch as God is uncreated, he is also unchangeable; so also, if matter were uncreated, it would be unchangeable and equal to God. That which is *created* is alterable and changeable, while that which is *uncreated* is unalterable and unchangeable. What great thing were it, if God made the world out of existing matter? Even a human artist, when he obtains material from someone, makes of it whatever he pleases. But the power of God is made evident in this, that he makes whatever he pleases out of what does not exist, and the giving of life and movement belongs to none other but to God alone” (*To Autolytus* 2:4 [A.D. 181]).

“And first, they [the prophets of God] taught us with one consent that God made all things out of nothing; for nothing was co-eternal with God: but he being his own place, and wanting nothing, and existing before the ages, willed to make man by whom he might be known; for him [man], therefore, he prepared the world. For he that is created is also needy; but he that is uncreated stands in need of nothing” (*ibid.*, 2:10).

IRENAEUS

“Men, indeed, are not able to make something from nothing, but only from existing material. God, however, is greater than men first of all in this: that when nothing existed beforehand, he called into existence the very material for his creation” (*Against Heresies* 2:10:4 [A.D. 189]).

TERTULLIAN

“The object of our worship is the one God, who, by the Word of his command, by the reason of his plan, and by the strength of his power, has brought forth from nothing for the glory of his majesty this whole construction of elements, bodies, and spirits; whence also the Greeks have bestowed upon the world the name *Cosmos*” (*Apoloogy* 17:1 [A.D. 197]).

“There is, however, a rule of faith; and so that we may acknowledge at this point what it is we defend, it is this precisely that we believe: There is one only God and none other besides him, the creator of the world who brought forth all things out of nothing through his Word, first of all sent forth” (*The Demurrer Against the Heretics* 13:1 [A.D. 200]).

“He is the unique God for this reason alone, that he is the sole God, and he is the sole God for this reason alone, that nothing existed along with him. So too he must be the first, because all else is after him. All else is after him because all else is from him and from him because they are created out of nothing. The account of Scripture, then, is correct: ‘Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Or whom has he consulted? Or who showed him the way of wisdom and knowledge? Who gave, and recompense will be made to him?’ [Rom. 11:33-36]” (*Against Hermogenes* 17:1 [A.D. 203]).

“Firmly believe, therefore, that he made it wholly out of nothing; and by believing that he has such powers, you will have found the knowledge of God” (*The Resurrection of the Dead* 11:5-6 [A.D. 210]).

HIPPOLYTUS

“Then shall the righteous answer, astonished at the mighty and wondrous fact that he, whom the hosts of angels cannot look upon openly, addresses them as friends, and shall cry out to him, ‘Lord, when saw we you hungry, and fed you? Master, when saw we you thirsty, and gave you drink? You Terrible One, when saw we you naked, and clothed you? Immortal, when saw we you a stranger, and took you in? You friend of man, when saw we you sick or in prison, and came to you? You are the ever-living One. You are without beginning, like the Father, and co-eternal with the Spirit. You are he who made all things out of nothing’” (*Discourse on the End of the World* 43 [A.D. 217]).

“On the first day God made what he made out of nothing. But on the other days he did not make out of nothing, but out of what he had made on the first day, by molding it according to his pleasure” (Fragment from *The Six Days Work* [A.D. 217]).

ORIGEN

“The specific points which are clearly handed down through the apostolic preaching are these: First, that there is one God who created and arranged all things and who, when nothing existed, called all things into existence” (*The Fundamental Doctrines* 1:0:4 [A.D. 225]).

CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE

“[The mother of the seven Maccabean martyrs said:] ‘O son, pity me that bore you [nine] months in the womb, and gave you milk for three years, and nourished you and brought you up to this age; I pray you, O son, look upon the heaven and the earth; and having considered all the things which are in them, understand that out of nothing God made these things and the human race. Therefore, O son, do not fear that executioner; but being made worthy of your brethren, receive death, that in the same mercy I may receive you with your brethren.’ The mother’s praise

was great in her exhortation to virtue, but greater in the fear of God and in the truth of faith, that she promised nothing to herself or her son from the honor of the six martyrs, nor believed that the prayer of the brothers would avail for the salvation of one who should deny, but rather persuaded him to become a sharer in their suffering, that in the day of judgment he might be found with his brethren" (*Exhortation to Martyrdom* 11 [A.D. 253]).

METHODIUS

"[I]n fact out of nothing, man is brought into being, [so] how much rather shall man spring again into being out of a previously existing man? For it is not so difficult to make anything anew after it has once existed and fallen into decay, as to produce out of nothing that which has never existed" (*Discourse on the Resurrection* 1:14 [A.D. 300]).

"[A]ll things are placed under you [God] as their cause and author, as he who brought all things into being out of nothing, and gave to what was unstable a firm coherence; as the connecting band and preserver of that which has been brought into being; as the framer of things by nature different; as he who, with wise and steady hand, holds the helm of the universe; as the very principle of all good order; as the unchallengeable bond of concord and peace" (*Oration on Simeon and Anna* 6 [A.D. 305])

LACTANTIUS

"[One is foolish to think] the one God, who had power to create the universe, is also unable to govern that which he has created. But if he conceives in his mind how great is the immensity of that divine work, when before it was nothing, yet that by the power and wisdom of God it was made out of nothing—a work which could only be commenced and accomplished by one—he will now understand that that which has been established by one is much more easily governed by one" (*Divine Institutes* 1:3 [A.D. 307]).

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"Let no one inquire of what materials God made those so great and wonderful works, for he made all things out of nothing. Without wood, a carpenter will build nothing, because the wood itself he is not able to make. Not to be able is a quality of weak humanity. But God himself makes his own material, because he is able. To be able is a quality of God, and, were he not able, neither would he be God. Man makes things out of what already exists, because he is . . . of limited and moderate power. God makes things from what does not exist, because he is strong; because of his strength, his power is immeasurable, having neither end nor limitation, like the life itself of the maker" (*ibid.*, 2:8:8).

ALEXANDER OF ALEXANDRIA

"[T]he Word by which the Father formed all things out of nothing, was begotten of the true Father himself" (*Letters on the Arian Heresy* 1:11 [A.D. 326]).

THE APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS

"He raises all men up by his will, as not wanting any assistance. For it is the work of the same power to create the world and to raise the dead. And then he made man, who was not a man before, of different parts, giving to him a soul made out of nothing. But now he will restore the bodies, which have been dissolved, to the souls that are still in being: for the rising again belongs to things laid down, not to things which have no being. He therefore that made the original bodies out of nothing, and fashioned various forms of them, will also again revive and raise up those that are dead" (*Apostolic Constitutions* 5:1:7 [A.D. 400]).

"For you [Father] are eternal knowledge, everlasting sight, unbegotten hearing, untaught wisdom, the first by nature, and the measure of being, and beyond all number; who brought all things out of nothing into being by your only begotten Son, but begot him before all ages by your will, your power, and your goodness, without any instrument, the

only begotten Son, God the Word" (*ibid.*, 8:2:12).

AUGUSTINE

"O Lord, who are not one thing in one place, and otherwise in another, but the selfsame, and the selfsame, and the selfsame? Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, did in the beginning, which is of you, in your wisdom, which was born of your substance, create something, and that out of nothing. For you did create heaven and earth, not out of thyself, for then they would be equal to your only-begotten [Son], and thereby even to you; and in no wise would it be right that anything should be equal to you which was not of you. And nothing else except you there was not whence you might create these things, O God, one Trinity, and triune unity; and, therefore, out of nothing did you create heaven and earth" (*Confessions* 12:7 [A.D. 400]).

"[T]hough God formed man of the dust of the earth, yet the earth itself, and every earthly material, is absolutely created out of nothing; and man's soul, too, God created out of nothing, and joined to the body, when he made man" (*The City of God* 14:11 [A.D. 419]).

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