

A GOSPEL DISCUSSION ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE UNIVERSE, AND RECENT
GOVERNMENT ADMISSIONS ABOUT UNIDENTIFIED AERIAL PHENOMENA

WORLDS WITHOUT NUMBER

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CHAPTER 1



The Creation and Function of the Universe

If we wish to understand the nature of the universe, including how it functions in relation to our existence, then we must look to what is observable by scientific inquiry, as limited as our current ability to view it all may be, and what our Father in Heaven has revealed on the subject. Unfortunately, both sources of “truth” provide us with little usable information. With apologies to both science and revelation, we are still in our infancy of gaining knowledge about the vast universe and its beginning and function. We have recently developed space-based telescopes whose resolution surprised us to learn that many of the twinkling stars in the night sky are not stars at all—but entire galaxies, each containing 100 billion stars and perhaps as many solar systems.

We are not unlike a tiny ant floating on a small piece of wood in the middle of a vast ocean, who seeks to better understand the world in which he finds himself adrift. From our superior and enlightened vantage point, we smile at the little ant and understand that he will never be able to comprehend the world, the solar system, the galaxy, or even the tiny particles that make up the matter of his hunk of wood and the galaxies—because he has such a limited ability to view and understand things so much greater than himself. Sorry to tell you, but we are that ant in the big picture of the cosmos. However, for the purposes of our discussion, we are edified by a brief conversation of what it is we believe we know, and how it affects our relationships with Deity, humanity, and ‘others.’

IN THE BEGINNING

“In the beginning,” the revealed word of God commences, the Elohim (Gods) “created the heavens and the earth.”

We learn a few things about the creation of this earth in the scriptures and in the temple. The Book of Abraham, which was received by the prophet Joseph Smith through pure revelation, appears to provide the most detailed and understandable account of the creation. The Genesis account, as well as that provided in the Book of Moses, which is essentially an inspired update of Genesis, provide much of the same information but from a different viewpoint at times.

However, before we launch into a full discussion of the days of creation, which would not actually add that much to our discussion of the creation of the universe and how it functions, let us pause and first realize that God has revealed precious little about the creation. In fact, He has revealed very little about most subjects. Allow me to clarify my meaning. God reveals what He wants us to know. That revelation usually comes through declarations to the prophets, although revelation can come to all of us, within our limited spheres of influence and authority. It can even come in the form of inspiration, through the Light of Christ, to those who have no particular grasp of the gospel and its importance. But all truth proceeds forth from the shining light of God, who possesses all truth and knowledge. We have a little understanding of who God is. We have a little understanding of what He has done and why He has done it. “A little understanding?” you might ask. But don’t we have thousands of pages of detailed knowledge about God and His holy plan of salvation and exaltation? We do. But the problem is that the knowledge about God and His abilities and activities fill trillions and trillions of pages. Here’s what God tells us: “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so My ways are higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8–9)

There it is. It may be harsh, but it’s the way things are. We are children. He is God. He may be our Heavenly Father, but He is God—He who is omnipotent, omniscient, and from everlasting to everlasting. Compared to God, we have very limited knowledge and even less understanding of that knowledge. I think that we may tend to tell ourselves that because the prophets have revealed a little more to us about God and His Son, Jesus Christ, and their work and glory, that we know a lot. We don’t. Do we know more than others who reject the prophets? Yes, we do. How much more do we know? Let’s say we know ten times more than others who know nothing of the restoration of all things in these latter days, just preceding the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ten times more sounds like a lot.

However, the problem is that the scale is much larger than we assume. If others have a knowledge and understanding level of 1, and we have a knowledge and understanding level of 10, then we feel quite comfortable and cozy in that superior position of intelligence. If the scale were 1 to 100, our position of 10 on the scale would be enviable. Take a deep breath, because in reality, the scale is closer to 1 to 1,000,000. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so My ways are higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.” How much higher are the heavens than the earth? Much. Heaven is very far away. The heavens are very high above the earth. God’s thoughts, ways, knowledge, and understanding are exponentially higher than ours. Before looking deeper into what we know from the revelations, let’s first consider what secular learning tells us on these matters.

SECULAR VIEW OF CREATION

If you go into a science class, you will likely learn about the Big Bang Theory of creation. In that theory, which is usually presented as much more than just a theory, you learn that there was nothing in the beginning. There was a void. There was nothingness. There was no energy. No light. No sub-particles. No particles. No atoms. No matter. There was no underlying matrix holding all structures together and giving them form. There was no time. There was nothing whatsoever. FOREVER NOTHING. Then, after eons and eons of absolutely nothing, there was suddenly a gargantuan burst of “something” that nearly instantly produced incredible amounts of energy, gravity, and subatomic particles that

arranged themselves into atoms and then molecules, producing all of the matter in our vast universe and exponentially expanded it with the ticking of time. That burst of something came from nothing—*creatio ex nihilo*. There was nothing to provoke the great burst of somethingness. There was no provocateur. From that burst of something from nothing came the trillions of galaxies, each containing a hundred billion stars and planetary systems. The only evidence of this burst of something is the manner in which the galaxies appear to be hurtling through the universe at very high speeds, from a centralized location, as if it were exploding matter from the point of a bomb that was set off 13.8 billion years ago.

If that's where matter got its start, then what do we learn in the classrooms about the origins of life? Roughly—here it is. There was nothing. No life. No biological tissues or animate matter anywhere. For billions of years there was nothing. Then, as one of those stony little planets sat quietly with percolating pools of hydrogen and other elements baking in the sun's radiation, suddenly, without provocation there was out of nowhere a single celled living organism. Where did it come from? Nowhere. It was just suddenly there—inanimate material transformed inexplicably into a living organism. It had never happened in the prior billions of years of similar circumstances, but now, suddenly, it happened. This single cell living organism had the intrinsic complex ability to absorb and process the energy it required, to multiply into replicas of itself, and congregate with those replicas, and eventually join together in a functional organism that eats, drinks, reacts, seeks better conditions, reproduces, and so on. This animated organism survived through replicating and multiplying generations and continued to reorganize itself into higher and higher life forms, until the day when it walked, then learned to talk, then text—the very pinnacle of intelligent communication.

Personally, I don't like this theory. It lacks logic and fails to meet the scientific criteria for a theory to become an accepted fact. Lest we become too heady in our rejection of such theories, let us remember—we don't know how it all began. We have no idea. Like Carl Sagan, the famed scientist who thought a great deal about these matters, we simply don't know what there was before there was something. "If the general picture of a big bang followed by an expanding universe is correct, what happened before that? Was the universe devoid of all matter and then the matter suddenly somehow created; how did that happen? In many cultures, the customary answer is that a God or gods created the universe out of nothing. But if we wish to pursue this question courageously, we must of course ask the next question: Where did God come from?"³

William W. Phelps, the scribe to Joseph Smith and Restoration insider, penned a song that sets forth the early leaders' curiosity on such questions. In "If You Could Hie to Kolob," the poet asks, if one could ever "find out the generation, Where Gods began to be? Or see the grand beginning, Where space did not extend? Or view the last creation, Where Gods and matter end?" This song always gives me a feeling of the eternities and the endless and wondrous nature of God, our Eternal Father. It also expresses the questions still posed by the spiritual and intellectual elite of the early restored Church. They simply didn't know. The Prophet Joseph Smith knew much more about the subjects, but he lacked the language or proper paradigm to express his understanding to the Saints of his time, as we will see.

As we begin to truly understand how the universe actually works, we also begin to comprehend how marvelous the creation actually is. There is so much more to it than mere happenstance and coincidental merging of atoms—trillions of trillions of trillions of trillions of tons of matter that erupted into existence from a singularity of nothingness, according to

our brightest scientific minds. It's a little funny to think about this theory—that everything suddenly erupted from nothing—because in the early days of the Catholic Church, its leadership came up with the creation doctrine (dogma) *creatio ex nihilo*, which is Latin for “creation from nothing.” Under this dogma, God created everything (except Himself) out of nothing. Apparently, He preexisted all matter and energy. During the Renaissance and the age of reason and scientific methodology, modern thinkers scoffed at the antiquated and simplistic notion of *creatio ex nihilo*. Then, as astronomers began to measure the expansion of the universe, which can be thought of like a giant explosion from a central point in space, they were stuck with the nagging conclusion that the entire mass of existence had to have begun at that single point. Hence, the Big Bang Theory. Like Carl Sagan, they had to deal with the question, what were things like a second before that explosion from a single point that is only a tiny fraction the size of an atom? And, how did that tiny pinpoint of nothing become the tremendous amount of something that fills the universe today? *Creatio ex nihilo!*

Professor Ron Hellings, PhD, a Church member who earned a doctorate in physics and spent twenty-five years as a research scientist at NASA, is well aware of the questions we are discussing in this chapter. He has said, “In the last 20 years, we have learned so much about the universe that we are now mystified and profoundly confused.” Understanding that both scientific observation and revealed knowledge fall short of providing us with the real nuts-and-bolts of how the universe came into being, or how it actually functions, Professor Hellings warns, “This is no time for anyone to criticize anyone else’s beliefs based on what cosmologists know.”⁴ Professor Hellings explains that “there are big problems with standard Big Bang cosmology,” such as the “horizon problem” and the “flatness problem,” both of which challenge the Big Bang’s underlying principle of being a random and chaotic occurrence. Some alternatives like “inflationary cosmology” have been proposed to correct the problems, Dr. Hellings adds, which encompasses the ideas of “eternal inflation” of the constantly expanding universe, and “the universe becoming a multiverse.”

Supporting the teaching of the Prophet on the subject, the first law of thermodynamics governs matters of creation and destruction of matter and energy, and can be summed up in three statements:

1. **The law of conservation of mass:** Mass cannot be created or destroyed.
2. **The law of conservation of energy:** Energy cannot be created or destroyed.
3. **The law of conservation of mass-energy:** Neither energy nor mass can be created or destroyed; instead mass is conserved as energy or energy is conserved as mass. A combination of the law of conservation of energy and conservation of mass (based on $E=mc^2$ (energy mass equivalence)).

The first two laws governed scientific thinking until the end of the 1800s, but then scientists began to understand that the two were actually interchangeable. As a result, the third law was developed, making better sense. For instance, when we take photons of energy in such a manner as to create matter out of it, we call this “matter synthesis.” Or, we can easily convert mass to energy by burning wood, or splitting atoms.

With these principles in mind, Professor Hellings explains, “The inflationary cosmology would say matter-energy is conserved, everything is matter-energy and the multiverse can be infinite and eternal.” Inflationary cosmology is no panacea, however, and Hellings says that “there are just a bunch of competing theories and no way to tell between them.”

All of this informs us that scientists are doing their best to figure out the origins and

functionality of the universe through observation and experimentation. In many ways they have made great strides—doubling from a 5 to 10 on our scale of 1,000,000. Again, they, like the ant floating aimlessly in the sea, are very limited in their ability to observe both the macro and the micro aspects of the universe. The point is that with everything we learn from scientific observation, and the revelations from God, we only know a small fraction of what there is to be known. Those who reject the revelations of God as originating from a real being of superior knowledge and intellect know much less and busy themselves trying to figure things out through observation only. Observation is good. Scientific inquiry is good. But to pursue knowledge of creation and how the universe works, without considering what the Grand Creator has told us about it, is akin to walking from the Pacific to the Atlantic wearing a blindfold. Let us consider what the Lord has revealed about the creation and functionality of our universe, and see if it can help augment our understanding of observable scientific principles.

GOSPEL VIEW OF CREATION

Again, in the beginning, the Elohim (Gods)² created the heavens and the earth. Which creation is this? Which heavens? Which earth? Is it the creation of the very first matter? Unfortunately, it appears that the creation outlined in Abraham, Genesis, and Moses, as well as the temple endowment, are figurative principles of the separate periods of creation of our own earth—although there may be some clues in the texts about the original creation generally. The scriptural accounts that we possess are based on the revelation given originally to the prophet Moses, who was specifically told that the account pertains only to the creation of this earth and its specific inhabitants. “But only an account of this earth, and the inhabitants thereof, give I unto you. For behold, there are many worlds that have passed away by the word of my power. And there are many that now stand, and innumerable are they unto man; but all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them” (Moses 1:35).

The account of the creation of this earth is given in creative periods—sometimes called days. They are not days. They are not thousand-year periods. They are very long periods of time during which certain preparations of the earth are made. The periods of creation are separate, with long periods of development and percolation in between. Then, when the creators return to initiate the next phase or period of creation, the first thing they do is check their previous phase of work, to see how it has developed during their long absence. They say of this period of absence between the “days” of creation, “And it came to pass that it was from evening until morning that it was night” (Abraham 24:19). So, if we wish to understand how God created, or at least “organized the elements” to create our earth and populate it with human and animal lifeforms, it is helpful to get a clear idea that the creation accounts in the scriptures are merely figurative and only offer short-hand information about the actual processes and occurrences of creation.

To explain that during the creative periods various organs of the planet were being prepared to eventually support lifeforms that would later be introduced, in Abraham we read about the fifth creative period:

And the Gods said: Let us prepare the waters to bring forth abundantly the moving creatures that have life; and the fowl, that they may fly above the earth in the open expanse of heaven. And the **Gods prepared the waters** that they might bring forth great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters were to bring forth abundantly

after their kind; and every winged fowl after their kind. And the Gods saw that they would be obeyed, and that their plan was good. And the Gods said: We will bless them, and cause them to be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas or great waters; and cause the fowl to multiply in the earth. And it came to pass that it was from evening until morning that they called night; and it came to pass that it was from morning until evening that they called day; and it was the fifth time. (Abraham 24:20–23; emphasis added)

Also, as we noted above, the work accomplished in this fifth creative period, like each of the respective periods of creation, is only the *preparation* of the waters, so that the waters could eventually sustain life. Likewise, in the sixth creative period, it is the *preparation* of the earth itself to eventually sustain life. Although the creators are preparing the waters to bring forth sea life and sea fowl during the fifth period, no final sea life or fowl are being created or introduced into the waters during the fifth period. This is true of all of the creative periods.

These creative periods are phases of preparation of the planet to eventually receive and sustain life. In addition to this, we learn that there are at least three steps in the process of creation: 1) all things are created first in the mind of God (His plan), then 2) are created in spiritual form, before they are eventually 3) created (organized from unorganized matter) in our tangible world. In Moses we learn a little more about the spiritual phase of creation, after God has conceived and planned (created) things in His mind. “And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew. For I, the Lord God, created all things, of which I have spoken, spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth. For I, the Lord God, had not caused it to rain upon the face of the earth. And I, the Lord God, had created all the children of men; and not yet a man to till the ground; for in heaven created I them; and there was not yet flesh upon the earth, neither in the water, neither in the air” (Moses 3:5).

These three separate types of creation further complicate our understanding of the process of creation, as we make appeals to various scriptures to better comprehend it. It can be understood—but a thorough understanding of these principles is not really germane to our present discussion. What we really want to know is how the universe came into being, and how it is structured, and how it functions, to help us better understand what is and what is not happening in our universe.

Another aspect of the length of time of creation that we don't really know that much about is how long the periods of creation were. There is no indication in the scriptural record, and each period of creation could have been much longer or shorter than each of the other periods. They may have been thousands, millions, or even billions of years each, with equally large periods of time (night) separating the periods. The only indication of the age of the earth, or possibly of a system related to the reign of God, is found in the *Times and Seasons*. Therein, William W. Phelps, the editor, referred to the “records found in the catacombs of Egypt,” passing on some information he claimed to have originated with Joseph Smith concerning the age of what he termed “this system.” He said that “eternity . . . has been going on in this system, almost two thousand five hundred and fifty five millions of years.”² That number is how they said 2,555,000,000, or 2.555 billion years in those days. Whether “this system” refers to our earth, our solar system, our galaxy, one of the higher orders of systems comprising our universe or the universe itself, or possibly Heavenly Father's eternal kingdom, we have no answer. What is so unique about the statement is that in Joseph Smith's day, no one spoke of the age of the earth or the universe in terms of billions of years. No one. Not even the most agnostic of scientists. Some thought that perhaps the age of the

earth was tens or hundreds of thousands of years—or millions at the most. Now, scientists guess, based on their perceived status of the universe’s expansion since the moment of the Big Bang, that its age could be at least 2.5 billion years, with most guessing it could be in the 13.8-billion-year range.

WHY GOD DOES WHAT HE DOES

The work and the glory of the Father are outlined in this passage of scripture, as revealed to Moses: “And the Lord God spake unto Moses, saying: The heavens, they are many, and they cannot be numbered unto man; but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine. And as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works, neither to my words. For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:37–39). The multiplicity of worlds and their many generations of existence and progress is very clear in this revelation, and we see that everything God does in this regard is centered in the progress of His children—with the goal of their eternal life as the crowning achievement of His work. He creates a world, not unlike our own earth, and He populates it with His spirit offspring. Generations of His children live and die on the planet, and when all who are assigned to that celestial orb for their personal period of temporal probation have completed their sojourn on its surface, it passes into its next phase, having fulfilled its celestial purpose.⁸ We will discuss what eventually becomes of such a planet below.

Born of the Light

The process by which God actually creates is hinted at in the following scripture: “Behold, I reveal unto you concerning this heaven, and this earth; . . . by mine Only Begotten I created these things. . . And I, God, said: Let there be light; and there was light. And I, God, saw the light; and that light was good. And I, God, divided the light from the darkness” (Moses 2:1–4). There is “light” at the center of all creation. It is the light of truth, the “Comforter,” which is the glory of the celestial kingdom, and it provides the promise of eternal life to the children of God. This light emanates from the presence of God, through His Son, and fills the immensity of the created universe. It specifically fills the sun, the moon, and all of the trillions of stars, in that it is *in* the sun, the moon, and the stars, and that it is the source of the light which they radiate, and is the very power by which they were created. It’s a lot to comprehend, but read with me.

This Comforter is the promise which I give unto you of eternal life, even the glory of the celestial kingdom; Which glory is that of the church of the Firstborn, even of God, the holiest of all, through Jesus Christ his Son—He that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth; Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. As also he is in the moon, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made; As also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made; And the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand. And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings. (D&C 88:4–11)

We note that Jesus Christ is the medium through which the Father creates and fills all things with life and light (see Hebrews 1:2). The scripture expressly tells us that the Father “is

in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things.” These are not just passive words of praise and honor. These are descriptions of who God is, where He is, and what He does. To a limited extent, they are also a description of *how* He does them. Now let’s look at the remainder of the passage, which is extremely instructive on the manner of creation: “Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things” (D&C 88:12–13). Is God sharing with us His grand secret of creation and governance? Is there a light that emanates from God that creates the matter of the universe and governs its functionality? Are all universal laws encoded in this light? God is very specific in telling us that the Light of Christ, which is an aspect of His Spirit, which we often read that emanates from the personage of God and gives light, revelation, intuition, and understanding to all life—and not just those who receive the more specific gift of the Holy Ghost—is the medium by which He governs and gives form and function. The Light of Christ emanates from God and “fills the immensity of space” and gives life, and gives substance and order (governs all things). We will discuss the nature of this light below, but for now, it is important to understand that it is by a form of light that God extends His influence and power throughout the universe (see John 1:5; 8:12).

The scriptures provide a very interesting insight into the principle of how this eternal light emanates from God. According to God, He speaks the word, and the light emanates and organizes unorganized matter (see Hebrews 11:3). First, as we have already read, Jesus Christ is the medium through which the light, called by God the Light of Christ, is delivered to every particle and reach of the universe. Christ, the first creation of God the Father and the Firstborn of the Father—as such, a God in His own right—is called “The Word” by the prophets. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not” (John 1:1–5). This Word (through the light or medium of Jesus Christ) is spoken (broadcast) by the Eternal Father, and the Light (creative—organizing—governing wave) emanates throughout the expanse of the universe, permeating and giving life and structure to every particle and object. “And by the word of my power, have I created them, which is mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth. And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten” (Moses 1:32–33).

The Nephite prophets likewise understood this principle, as exemplified in this explanation of God’s power and ability to control the earth and His other creations. “For behold, by the power of his word man came upon the face of the earth, which earth was created by the power of his word. Wherefore, if God being able to speak and the world was, and to speak and man was created, O then, why not able to command the earth, or the workmanship of his hands upon the face of it, according to his will and pleasure?” (Jacob 4:9). God utilizes the same language in revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith: “All things whatsoever I have created by the word of my power, which is the power of my Spirit. For by the power of my Spirit created I them; yea, all things both spiritual and temporal—First spiritual, secondly temporal, which is the beginning of my work; and again, first temporal, and secondly spiritual, which is the last of my work” (D&C 29:30–32).

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