away from foundational beliefs regarding the JST, the LDS Church has become progressively more committed to them. Many early LDS Church members saw the Inspired Version as a divinely guided, yet unauthorized, publication, mainly because of its incompleteness. However, since the 1950s, scholars, primarily Robert J. Matthews, have compared the published Inspired Version with the manuscripts and verified its integrity. Furthermore, the LDS edition of the Bible—the standard Bible of the Church—includes JST references and excerpts.

Robert J. Matthews discusses the eternal worth of the JST as well as its role in the Restoration. He answers questions regarding the use, completion, and translation of the JST. Matthews asserts that a knowledge of the JST will increase the perception “of the nature of scripture, of the nature of revelation, and of the value of reading scripture to obtain revelation from God” (38).

—Michelyn Lyster

Creatio ex Nihilo: The Doctrine of “Creation Out of Nothing” in Early Christian Thought, by Gerhard May (T & T Clark, 1994)

The original German text of this book appeared in 1978 with the title Schöpfung aus dem Nichts: Die Entstehung der Lehre von der creatio ex nihilo. Only minor changes occur in the English text. The thesis focuses on the origin and roots of the doctrine of creation “out of nothing.” However, Gerhard May also emphasizes the interplay between ideas about creation and other facets of theology. The key players in the debates are philosophers, theologians, and clerics.

In the second century a.d., many Christian doctrines were unsettled. Even God’s omnipotence and the question of whether he existed alone or in company with other gods were debated. Was the creator the supreme God or a lesser god? Would an omnipotent god create evil? Similar debates concerned the nature of creation. Are man and the cosmos evil or good? Could matter be eternal without itself possessing godhood? If matter is eternal, isn’t God merely an artist? Each of these issues impacted on the doctrine of creation.

Christian Gnostics, under the leadership of Basilides, advanced the concept of creation out of nothing in a form that closely resembled the doctrine later adopted by the mainline church. Gnostic ideas about creation, however, contained other elements that were offensive to a majority of church leaders. Shortly before a.d. 200, an orthodox approach to creatio ex nihilo was initiated by Theophilus of Antioch and was expanded upon by Bishop Irenaeus of Lyons. Irenaeus refuted gnostic philosophy with clear, simple statements about God and His powers but joined Theophilus and the Gnostics to proclaim that God created earth and the cosmos out of nothing. With the blessing of orthodoxy, the doctrine spread quickly throughout the church.
Although Gerhard May's style is scholarly, any interested reader can gain much from this volume. The topic remains central to LDS studies of the doctrinal changes that occurred in early Christianity.

—R. Grant Athay

*Turning Hearts: Short Stories on Family Life*, edited by Orson Scott Card and David Dollahite (Bookcraft, 1994)

This collection of stories written by LDS authors provides readers with ideas about how healthy families function and how parents and children can resolve problems in positive ways to strengthen individuals, heal schisms, and bind families together. It is also a collection of stories about adults acting in adult roles.

These are in many ways faith-promoting stories. The protagonists come away with new insights about their lives: parents and children face intergenerational misunderstandings; widowed adults find a second opportunity to love; fathers and sons as well as mothers and daughters are forced to examine their relationships; a young African American convert struggles to find her place both at church and within her family.

Instead of ending in divorce court, sexual infidelity, family dissolution, or abandonment, these stories end with healing, repaired misunderstandings, and new ways to interpret difficult family situations. They offer patterns for living: fulfilling obligations to aging parents, repairing wounds from childhood, teaching teenagers to keep the Sabbath, and dealing with the struggles of being overworked young mothers and fathers.

Still, these heroes are not larger than life: a bishop begins with arrogance in his new calling; a father is, at least initially, full of self-pity and quick to anger; a girl is a self-absorbed teenager. These are authentic stories. The events, the situations, the people—while sometimes a little contrived or one-dimensional—for the most part ring true. By turning the hearts of readers, these stories give hope for family life.

—Stefinee Pinnegar