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## The Bible and Life

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**Abstract:** This two-part series discusses the Creation, premortality, and evolution. The first part begins the series.

# The Bible and Life

By Joseph A. West

## I.—Pre-existence

Finding that the study of evolution is implanting infidelity in the minds of the youth of America, William J. Bryan lately employed his forensic ability to get the teaching of it excluded from the public schools. Before the late Kentucky Legislature, he came within one of securing enough votes to pass a law of this kind. This so enraged certain advocates of evolution that he has been the object of ridicule and attack ever since.

From the general tenor of the articles in opposition to him one would be led to suppose that, to be consistent with the Bible, all Christians must believe that the earth and all it contained were created just 5,926 years ago, in six days, of twenty-four hours each; that Adam and Eve were created in the last period thereof, "out of the dust of the ground," as a man would mould a graven image. Therefore, in the final analysis, it was only a question as to which was the most dignified origin for man—mud or monkey. It appears also to be thought that Adam, instead of dying in the day of twenty-four hours in which he partook of the forbidden fruit, lived to be 939 years of age, and, therefore, that the Bible contradicts itself.

In rebuttal of the first three suppositions, reference need only to be made to the fourth verse of the second chapter of Genesis:

"These are the generations of the heavens and the earth, when they were created, in the day that the Lord made the earth and the heavens; and every plant of the field before it was in the earth and every herb before it grew."

All the creative periods were thus included in one, and it is evident that the word "day" meant an indefinite period of time, and not a day of twenty-four hours.

In the *Pearl of Great Price*, one of the four standard works of the Church (the others being the *Bible*, the *Book of Mormon*, and the *Doctrine and Covenants*), among other ancient, divinely inspired writings translated from Egyptian papyrus by Joseph Smith, we have an account of the vision of Moses, which vision is held to have formed the basis of the account of creation as given in the first two chapters of Genesis. This account in

no way conflicts with the account given in the Bible, but makes several additions thereto which greatly clarify its meaning. In it the word "times" takes the place of the word, "day," agreeing with the foregoing conclusion that all creative days were of indefinite length, so that no matter how long the earth's creative periods may have been, there is likely to be no inharmony between the Scriptures and the deductions of science on the matter of the age of the earth.

We find other seeming inharmonies between the first and second chapters of Genesis. The first chapter gives a brief but complete account of creation, including man; and yet the fifth verse of the second chapter declares, after all this had taken place, that, "there was not a man to till the ground."

"And the Lord formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." (Gen. 2:7.)

Furthermore, we read in verse 9:

"For out of the ground the Lord made to grow every tree that was pleasant to the sight, and good for food."

And verse 19 reads:

"For out of the ground the Lord formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air."

All of which, according to chapter 1, already had been created, thus causing apparent confusion or uncertainty as to what all this might mean. In the *Pearl of Great Price* the mystifying passages of these two chapters are clarified most beautifully and harmoniously. After the fourth verse, as quoted above, the following is added:

"For I, the Lord, created all things of which I have spoken, spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth: \* \* \* and I, the Lord, 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; \* \* \* and I, the Lord, formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul; nevertheless, all things were before created, but spiritually were they created and made, according to my word."

It will therefore be seen that the first chapter relates to the spiritual and the second to the temporal, or earthly creation, and that not only man, but all created things, have a dual existence consisting of a spiritual and an earthly organization which are united in life and separated in death.

It also makes plain the doctrine of pre-existence, which to the Latter-day Saints generally appears irreconcilably opposed to



the evolution theory of the origin of man. As it is so vital to this subject, I will add the following before proceeding further:

Among the Christians outside of the "Mormon" Church there seems to be a wide difference of opinion upon this doctrine of pre-existence. Some deny it altogether. Some believe that man had an unconscious, impersonal pre-existence, but no religious sect, either Christian or Pagan, so far as my reading and observation go, teaches the kind of pre-existence believed in by the Latter-day Saints, and which is as strongly entrenched behind scriptural authority as any other doctrine of the "Mormon" faith. Joseph Smith revealed, as a divine principle, the conscious, individual pre-existence of all mankind, including all animal life.

William J. Bryan, in his *Prince of Peace*, makes the following remarkable statement:

"Six thousand years of recorded history, and yet we know no more about the secret of life than we knew in the beginning."

"Mormon" philosophy declares the pre-existent spirit to be the life-giving, vitalizing power of all organized life; and that when a man dies, the dust of which his body is composed returns to the earth, and his spirit, which is an exact counterpart of the body, returns to God from whence it came. In proof of this we have the following from the Bible, and from modern revelation:

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was:" [referring to death] "and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." (Ecc. 12:7.)

The four beasts spoken of (Rev. 4:6) \* \* \* are figurative expressions; \* \* \* that which is spiritual, being in the likeness of that which is temporal; and that which is temporal is in the likeness of that which is spiritual; the spirit of man in the likeness of his person, as also the spirit of the beast, and every other creature which God has created." (Doc. and Cov. 77:12.)

When Christ appeared to the brother of Jared he said:

"Behold \* \* \* this is the body of my spirit: and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear unto thee to be in the spirit, will I appear unto my people in the flesh." (Book of Mormon, Ether 3:16.)

To disprove the doctrine of unconscious, impersonal pre-existence, one needs to refer to the life of our Savior and his relationship to mankind: Paul speaks of him as our "Elder Brother," or "the Firstborn of every creature." Col. 1:15; "The Firstborn among many brethren." Rom. 8:29; and "The Firstbegotten." Heb. 1:6. As Christ lived four thousand years after Adam these quotations must refer to his pre-existent state. He also says in Col. 1:16: "For by him [Christ] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and

invisible." To accomplish this wonderful work he must have been, not only a conscious being, but a most powerful and intelligent one; and since he is our elder Brother of the same primeval family, we must necessarily have had a conscious personal pre-existence like him, though inferior in many other respects.

Christ's prayer before he went to Gethsemane is also most conclusive proof of his conscious personal pre-existence, and hence, indirectly, of our own:

"Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." (John 17:5-24.)

Without a conscious pre-existence, he could not have had personal pre-existent glory such as he here refers to.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sir Oliver Lodge, and many psychologists, believe in life after death, but not in pre-existent life. If, after death, the spirit still lives, it seems inconsistent to believe that it did not exist before the body was created.

Upon the general subject of pre-existence, the following are but a few of the many scriptural passages that can be cited in proof thereof: Job 38:4-7; Ecc. 12:7; Mat. 6:9; Heb. 12:9; Jer. 1:5; Eph. 1:4-5; Rev. 12:7.

Man's pre-existence is beautifully set forth in the following from the Book of Abraham:

"Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones; and God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them and he said: These will I make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he said unto me, Abraham, thou art one of them, thou wast chosen before thou wast born, And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those that were with him, We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell; and we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them; and they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever." (*Pearl of Great Price*, III: 22-26.)  
*Logan, Utah.*

### Have You the Information?

"Mother and sister are very anxious to hear from WALTER S. CALLAWAY. He is about twenty-one years old, joined the "Mormon" Church at Houston, Texas, came west and for a time was at St. Anthony, Idaho. We believe he is still located in some "Mormon" community. Please address any information to J. A. Young, Beaver, Utah.