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The Bible and Life

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Abstract: This two-part series discusses the Creation, premortality, and evolution. The second and final part concludes the series.

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By Joseph A. West

II (Conclusion)

To people who believe in an unconscious, impersonal pre-existence, or who have a vague and indefinite idea of God and his attributes, the acceptance of man's origin through the lower animals may seem consistent. There are theological seminaries whose definition of God is still based upon the Nicene creed, that teach this theory of man's origin just as it is taught in the public schools. But to those who believe in a conscious pre-existence, and the fatherhood of God, the idea is inconsistent.

It should be remembered that the accepted scientific ideas of today may be denied tomorrow. A few years ago spontaneous generation was believed in, but the experiments of Pasteur and others have completely revolutionized scientific thought upon this subject. And so with many other once accepted theories.

The trouble lies in the impossibility of the finite mind of man being always able to determine just what truth is. It requires the inspiration of the Lord to enable him to do this, hence the scriptural saying, "There is a spirit in man, and the spirit of God giveth him understanding." By this means Joseph Smith received enlightenment upon a number of the great problems of life. But let us now say a word concerning the unanswered questions under consideration in our former article upon the subject:

1. That Adam and Eve were "created out of the dust of the earth" like the Egyptians and Babylonians were wont to create their heathen deities, and, in the last analysis therefore, it is only a question of which is the most dignified origin for man, "mud or monkey."

2. That Adam, instead of dying in a day of 24 hours in which he partook of the forbidden fruit, lived to be 930 years of age, and therefore, the scriptures contradict themselves.

In the *Pearl of Great Price*, Chapter 6, Book of Moses, there is recorded a conversation between the Lord and Adam, in which Adam asks why it is necessary to be baptized. The Lord, after explaining how sin came into the world through the fall, delivers the following significant command:

Therefore, I give unto you a commandment, to teach these things freely unto your children, saying: That by reason of transgression cometh the

fall, which fall bringeth death, and inasmuch as ye were born unto the world of water and blood, and the spirit which I made, and so OF DUST BECAME A LIVING SOUL, even so must ye be born again into the Kingdom of Heaven, of water and of the spirit, and be sanctified by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten * * * for by the water ye keep the commandment, by the spirit are ye justified, and by the blood are ye sanctified, etc.

From the commencement of life until its close, man draws sustenance from the elements of this earth, and thereby he grows and develops until he attains to the full stature of manhood, if so long preserved; and when death ensues, his remains ultimately narrow down to a few handfuls of dust. Not only Adam, but all men and women, since his and Eve's time, were thus created "out of the dust of the ground," and hence the attempt to compare the Bible account of man's formation to the moulding of an inanimate image from clay, is quite ridiculous.

As to the Lord's statement that in the *day* that Adam should partake of the forbidden fruit he should surely die, whereas he lived to be 930 years of age, I would refer to the saying of Apostle Peter, *viz.*: "A day with the Lord is as a thousand years." Notice "as a thousand years," not, "is a thousand years." (II Peter, 3:8; Ps. 90:4). But even so, neither Adam nor any of his posterity lived beyond this period, Methuselah, the oldest man, having lived but 969 years. Herein we have another proof that the term, "day," means a *time* of varying duration, according to its application. In this case, it may have referred to God's reckoning of time, according to the revolutions of the world upon which he dwells just as we reckon time by the diurnal revolutions of this earth. This was revealed to Joseph Smith in his translation of the little volume from which I have previously quoted, the *Pearl of Great Price*, from which in the writings of Abraham, Chapter 3, we have the following:

And I, Abraham, had the Urim and Thummim, which the Lord, my God, had given unto me in Ur of the Chaldees; and I saw the stars, that they were very great, and that one of them was nearest unto the throne of God; and there were many great ones which were near unto it; and the Lord said unto me: These are the governing ones, and the name of the great one is Kolob, because it is near unto me, for I am the Lord thy God; I have set this one to govern all those which belong to the same order as that upon which thou standest. And the Lord said unto me—that Kolob was after the—manner of the Lord * * * that one revolution was a day unto the Lord, after his manner of reckoning it being a thousand years according to the time appointed to that upon which thou standest. This is the reckoning of the Lord's time according to the reckoning of Kolob.

Referring now to a leading question, the excluding of the teaching of evolution from the public schools. It requires the combined influence of the fear of the law, rigidly enforced; the

force of public opinion, the moral conscience of the individual, and all the religious influence that can be brought to bear, to keep men moral and righteous, and then we have none too good a world. Sectarian doctrines, of course, must not be taught in our public schools. This belongs to the home, and theological seminaries. But neither should educators be allowed to teach any subject in our public schools that will undermine the faith of the children in religious belief, or in a belief in God. This, I think, is carrying the freedom of the schools too far and destroying their influence for the ultimate good of our children. The tax-payer is not paying them to tear down, but to upbuild everything that would make for the moral worth of coming generations; for, after all, this is the true test of a nation's future greatness.

As tersely expressed in a recent issue of the *Literary Digest*, "national greatness depends less upon the number of men to the square mile than to the number of square men to the mile."

As to how far the teaching of evolution in our public schools has a tendency to destroy a belief in God and Christianity, that depends largely upon the attitude of the teacher and his conception of the subject. Some Christian evolutionists who believe in pre-existence as taught in the Bible, take this view: By whatever method God created men, he must have created him spiritually first. If evolution be the plan, then all the various forms of life through which he was evolved, must have been preceded by a like spiritual creation. But instead of just creating matter and force and leaving them, by some self-existent law, to work out the wonderful mechanism of man's mortal body, he, God, was and is right here directing by his innumerable agencies every step in the great progressive march of the universe, just as every Christian believes him to be overruling for the good of all, the affairs of men and nations, and that, too, without any interference whatever with free agency.

"But," says one, "how can God do this throughout the whole expanse of the universe if he is a personality, as the Bible teaches, who cannot occupy more than one place at one and the same time " Just as a great general through his many subordinates, by wireless, and through other means of communication can direct and control the destiny of the millions of men under his command; only infinitely more so, for God is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent, because of the wonderful development of his faculties and powers and the multifarious and innumerable agencies at his command, including the Holy Priesthood, and the marvelous influence called the Holy Spirit, which pervades all space and is the life of all things and the power by which all things are upheld or sustained.

Scientists claim that the discovery of the remains of pre-historic man disproves the Mosaic account of creation, so far as it makes Adam the first man to be created by the Lord. If they were as anxious to harmonize the truths of science and the Bible as they are to antagonize them, they would say that pre-historic man might also have been swept from the earth before Adam's time, thus leaving him at the head of the present race of man, as the first and only progenitor thereof. God's first command to Adam to "multiply and *replenish* the earth" plainly implies that the earth had been previously inhabited.

It is true that there are many infidels among scientists, and especially among those who believe in the current theory of evolution, but this is largely accounted for because of the many contradictory and inconsistent things to be found among the various churches, and the seeming inharmony in the scriptures themselves; also, because men's training in scientific research has led them to deal only with demonstrable facts, whereas the things of God are only spiritually discerned.

Huxley, one of Darwin's greatest champions, in writing to John Morley, says:

"It flashes across me at all sorts of times with a sort of horror, that in 1900, I shall probably know no more of what is going on than I did in 1800. I would sooner be in hell a great deal—at any rate in one of the upper circles where the company and climate are not too trying. I wonder if you are ever plagued in this way?"

Yet Huxley belonged to that class of scientists who believed it took hundreds and perhaps thousands of millions of years to form the earth and to evolve man, and that the most wonderful harmony and consummate wisdom is manifest throughout the universe. Notwithstanding this, man, the crowning glory of creation, he inferred, is destined to live but a few short years and then pass into complete and eternal oblivion. Is this not a sad commentary upon the foresight, wisdom and majesty of that creative power, or force, or personality, whichever men may choose to call it, by which all things were brought into existence, and have, for eons past, been so wonderfully perpetuated and sustained? Would it not be more in harmony with common sense and sound philosophy to believe that all things were created to progress and endure eternally, even as the preacher says in Ecc. 3:14, "Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever."

Why should such men as Huxley, not only try to destroy a belief in immortality, but a belief in the redeemership of Jesus Christ, whom they rank as a great reformer, and nothing more, notwithstanding his most wonderful life?

If Jesus is not the Christ, as both he and his disciples have testified, then he is one of the greatest imposters who ever dwelt among men. How could such a person wield such a wonderful influence among so many millions of the most intelligent of his fellows, changing the current opinion of himself as a malefactor, deservedly crucified between two thieves, to the Prince of Peace, the King Emmanuel, the very God of the universe? Such a thing is ridiculously absurd and contrary to the very elements of common sense. It is also a reflection upon the judgment and intelligence of every Christian, living and dead. Christ's teachings are fundamental in the law and jurisprudence of every civilized nation, and if lived up to, would bring about universal happiness and world-wide peace.

To many, and especially to the Latter-day Saints, who believe in a conscious, personal pre-existence, a belief in evolution requires a remarkable credulity and a most wonderful imagination; but to others it must present a very different aspect, or so many of the foremost thinkers of the world would not see so many distinct lines of evidence that all focus upon this one conception of man's origin.

"Mormonism" is a transcendental system of progress, for it teaches that, "as man is, God once was; and as God is, man may become." This may seem rather pretentious, and perhaps sacrilegious to some of our Christian friends, but surely if we are the sons of God, whom Jesus told us to address as, "Our Father, which art in heaven," nothing can prevent us from ultimately becoming like him if we live up to the laws of our existence as he has done.

In conclusion, permit me to ask, why should anyone try to destroy faith in the Bible and the Christian religion? With all its imperfections, has it not always led the vanguard of civilization, and without it would this world not be an infinitely worse place? The main cause of the social unrest and political chaos throughout the world today, is a disbelief in God and a hereafter, and in a future life of personal punishments and rewards. Millions in Europe, and multitudes in our own fair, free land, have abandoned a belief in a world and life beyond. They ask for no heaven and they fear no hell. They want what they claim to be their share of the good things of life without any reciprocal or productive effort on their part. Hence they cry, "Down with government; let us destroy with fire and sword the existing order of society that we may at once come into possession of our share of the world's wealth, for time is passing and death will end all." Faith in a Christian God, and a hereafter, would remedy this great evil.

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