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## Before Adam Hugh Nibley

Before Adam

Hugh Nibley

(Old Testament and Related Studies, chapter 7)

This is the edited text of an address given to the BYU community on April 1, 1980.

I am often asked by students: What about those people that lived thousands of years before Adam? They usually ask after class and expect me to give a definitive answer before leaving the room. Why don't I bring up the subject in class? I did for twenty years, and then gave it up—it was a waste of time. Within the past ten years, however, things have changed so much that it is time to resume the discussion if only to reorient my own thinking on a subject that is impossible to avoid.

The Latter-day Saints are the only Bible-oriented people who have always been taught that things were happening long, long before Adam appeared on the scene. They have never appreciated just how revolutionary that idea is. It does away with creatio ex nihilo, which, ever since the triumph of the School of Alexandria, has been for Christian and Jewish theologians alike the only possible definition of the word creation. In the April 1980 National Geographic, Magazine is a reproduction of a heroic relief sculpture on the wall of the so-

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called National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., showing eight full-grown human beings popping out of a turmoil of cloud.<sup>1</sup> It is entitled “Creatio ex nihilo—Out of the Void.” It should not be hard to confound such an absolute concept, since any alternative will do; and long before the time of Christ the ancient Sophists, supplanting religion by naturalism, came up with a scenario very close indeed to what we think of as evolution. And so we get at an early time (at the trial of Socrates, in fact—at which, incidentally, Socrates is the defender of religion—not the other way around!) the sight of an apostate religion squaring off against an always inadequate science. And the issue is never the merits of the evidence but always the jealous rivalry of the contestants to see which would be the official light unto the world.

Right down to the present day we have been the spectators of a foolish contest between equally vain and bigoted rivals, in which it is a moot question which side heaps the most contempt on God’s creatures. For the fundamentalist, to associate man too closely with God’s other creatures was the supreme insult to God and man. Man, say the Christian theologians, faithfully following Aristotle, is the rational animal—the only rational animal. All other beings in nature are soulless, speechless, thoughtless automata. Moreover, Adam was not only the only rational, immortal creation of God on earth, but the only intelligent actor on any solid world anywhere, being created out of nothing on the only inhabited planet in the entire universe—the solid earth, which was obviously the heavy center of everything, around which all other things revolved and onto which everything fell. Beside that, all was spirit.

The evolutionists took the doctors at their word and had a very easy time showing that man shares so many visible qualities and traits with other animals that if animals are mere “things”

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then so is man. Since they are able to survive and function simply as organisms reacting to an environment and nothing more, then man, being animal, has no more need of a soul than they have. The philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, in his “Essay on the Christian System,” said that the two fatal flaws of Christianity were (1) denying spirit and mind to any other creatures but ourselves (which both fundamentalists and Darwinists do) and (2) allowing life to no other world but our own. Adam in a vacuum—all alone in the society of God’s creatures and all alone in the emptiness of space, the only thinking animal on the only inhabited spot in all the emptiness of space! When it began to appear that the earth was only one among countless possible earths and not the one-and-only center of everything, the discovery was viewed by both sides as the fatal blow to the dignity of man and the integrity of the Bible. This has always amazed me. Why on earth should the idea of life on other worlds lead scientists like G. B. Kistiakowsky, D. N. Michael, Harlow Shapley, Arnold Toynbee, and Otto Struve to assume as a matter of course that such a situation renders God expendable and the Bible unacceptable?

2 Such a conclusion follows only from the all-or-nothing premises of Alexandrian absolutism: the universe and truth and God could not be otherwise by very definition than as the doctors of the fourth century described them; any changes in the scenario would require scrapping the whole thing, including God. It only shows, for Latter-day Saints, how “strongly riveted [were] the creeds of the fathers, who have inherited lies, upon the hearts of the children, and filled the world with confusion!” (D&C 123:7.) Strongly riveted, indeed! Those preconceptions were the very thing that Joseph and Brigham had the most difficulty in coping with among the Saints who cling to them to this day.<sup>3</sup>

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This futile quarrel should be no concern of ours. For one thing, we have a story to tell before Adam. Religion and science have none, absolutely none.

For the churchmen, the whole universe comes into existence in the week before Adam's own creation. But for the scientists, too, there is nothing to tell before the history. They set the stage for human history, but until a man with a book walks onto the stage there is no story, no play. Science studies the properties and the sets for the play, but the set is the play. The medium is the message. There is no more to follow. All around us in the universe, things are just happening. If they didn't happen one way, they would happen another. What difference does it make? The scientists of past decades have been proud of the erhabene Zwecklosigkeit, the "majestic meaninglessness" of it all. Since this is not to be my subject, one quotation, the classical remark of Tyndal, will suffice: "In the purely natural and inevitable march of evolution, life is of profound unimportance, a mere eddy in the primeval slime." 4 The wise men gloried in the strength of mind and character that enabled them to look an utterly indifferent universe in the face without flinching (after all, they had tenure), insisting that the rest of us rid ourselves of our infantile longings for more. When we visit the planets and their satellites today, what do we find? Nobody at home! Somewhere the side of a cliff slips and slumps, somewhere dense clouds of dust are blown by super-winds, somewhere gas or magma seeps through cracks in the ground or huge blocks of ice collapse or collide, somewhere a meteor lands without a sound, somewhere. What difference does it make? It is all, as some of my professors used to remind their impressed but unhappy classes with malicious glee, utterly meaningless. Mount St. Helens takes on interest only because we are here. Globes on which nothing happens for millions of years are just as interesting as those on which change is taking place all the

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time. The static condition is in itself a happening, and with nobody around to measure the time, one scenario moves as fast as another.

When science takes us to human prehistory, it is just more of the same. Since World War II, an immense lot of digging has been done all over the world, and the result is a great accumulation of properties but still no play. We learn from what is being turned up that people lived in shelters of various kinds, ate food that they gathered or hunted, warmed themselves and cooked with fire, wore clothing as they needed it, had pots to cook and store food in, had children, drank water, breathed air, and so on. And that is the whole story. The table is now set for the banquet, but no live guests ever show up. We sit in the darkened theater waiting for the show that never begins. It won't begin until we get a written record. Listen to the latest word on the subject by one of the foremost prehistorians, A. J. Jelinek (1977): "The overriding impression of the technological evidence in the archaeological record is one of almost unimaginable monotony. . . . The most overwhelming example is Olduvai Gorge where for approximately a million years no significant innovation is discernable." Even the later innovations "take place over hundreds of thousands of years; this means that we are talking about tens of thousands of generations of hominids maintaining patterns of technological traditions without discernable change."<sup>5</sup>

No Adam, no play—These can't be our people. Science promised an exciting new world, a great show, to which H. G. Wells offered to conduct us, but it all went stale in his own lifetime. To paraphrase the eminent biologist René Dubos, existentialist nausea has found its home in the most affluent and technologically advanced parts of the world. The most poignant problem of modern life is probably man's feeling that life has lost its significance. The view that the modern world is



absurd is no longer limited to the philosophical or literary avant-garde. It is spreading to all social and economic groups and affects all manifestations of life.<sup>6</sup>

I spend my days in the midst of noise, dirt, ugliness, and absurdity, in order to have easier access to well-equipped laboratories, libraries, museums, and a few sophisticated colleagues whose material existence is as absurd as mine. I doubt that mankind can tolerate our absurd way of life much longer without losing what is best in humanness.<sup>7</sup> It is religion that makes man humble in the face of nature, Dubos infers, and science that makes him arrogant, not the other way around.<sup>8</sup>

The humanists have always known that they have no play. Euripides has a little song to that effect, which he repeats no fewer than five times. What it says is, in effect, "I know this play makes no sense, but neither does anything else!" Shakespeare's last word on the subject in his last play, *The Tempest*, was: "Our revels now are ended. These our actors are melted into air, into thin air: and, like the baseless fabric of this vision, the cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces, the solemn temples, the great globe itself, yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve, and, like this insubstantial pageant faded, leave not a rack behind." (Act 4, scene 1, lines 148—56.) That's all there is. No one is going anywhere. Or take the highest achievement of modern theater, a play that won the Nobel Prize, no less. The characters in *Waiting for Godot*, writes an admiring critic, "have nothing to say, nor have they anything to do. Language for them is a means for expressing the meaninglessness of existence—Godot is a symbol of hope that keeps man waiting for something big to happen, but that never happens. On the whole, all that man does centres round his physical needs and devices to kill time."<sup>9</sup>

Now as to the past, when I first joined the army I was sent to weather school and became a weatherman, working with the

primitive charts and diagrams of the day. Coordinating the information that came over the teletype from a hundred other weather stations, I tried to report and predict the weather at Godman Field, Kentucky. Wouldn't it be wonderful, I thought in those days, if we had a movie that showed us all the moving storms and fronts. Then instead of having to throw the models together with feverish haste to project the past into future weather, I would only have to look at the moving picture and know exactly what was going to happen tomorrow.

Meteorologists can do that today. It is all before our very eyes on the evening news. Seeing is believing. We are going to be hit by a big one tomorrow (which turns out to be a beautiful day), or that big clear spot shows perfectly heavenly weather ahead (so it snows and sleets all day tomorrow). Now imagine that instead of a weather-eye, enabling such brilliant predictions a few hours ahead, we had a satellite picture showing the earth over millions of years. Every time we stop the picture we ask the scientist what is going to happen next. And so he tells us with great confidence. Can we trust him? We can check on the weather day by day and make corrections and adjustments and keep score. But as Professor Campbell, formerly of UCLA, reminds us, the paleontologist cannot do any of that. He cannot observe processes but only results. He has no regular sequence of pictures before his eyes but only a few badly blurred snapshots of the earth over the last three million years. Studying these, the specialists try to tell us just what happened. Am I willing to stake my eternal salvation on their highly conflicting opinions? The little pictures are very few in number, very far apart, and very badly damaged. Every authority today emphasizes that, more than ever before. In the place of connections between the specimens, we have only resemblances, and it is on them that we base our whole story—classification, taxonomy, biosystematics—it is all a question of endlessly debated definitions, not a whit different from the



harangues of the ancient Sophists. In the same breath, the experts today emphasize the scarcity and bothersome overabundance of evidence, the paradox resulting from a sudden accumulation of evidence during the past decade.

Upstairs in the old Education Building at Brigham Young University, there stood for many years a tall, thin, glass showcase. On the top shelf was a human skull; below it was the cast of a Cro-Magnon skull; then Neanderthal; and so on until we got to a skull of a gorilla. Here before our very eyes was an unimpeachable sermon on how man came to be. But things have changed now. "As late as 1955," writes Professor B. G. Campbell, fossils "could be fitted into a relatively simple and not very controversial phylogenetic lineage. The numerous fossils now known offer alternative interpretations." Not so compellingly simple as before, but how many alternative interpretations? "The number of possible hypotheses are both theoretically and practically unlimited."<sup>10</sup> J. J. Jerison wrote in 1975, "The simple picture of evolution from an australopithecine to a habiline to a pithecanthropine to a sapient grade is obviously inadequate."<sup>11</sup> He added rather wistfully, almost regretfully, "Things would actually fit together more easily if the dating of the new specimen at 2.8 million years ago were in error."<sup>12</sup> The equally eminent D. Pilbeam comments on the same development: "Until a few years ago relatively simple schemes that viewed past hominoids as foreshadows of living ones functioned very well as organizing paradigms." Today, "classification of past forms on the basis of present-day distinctions may not be very useful. Interconnections among fossil species and between them and the present species are increasingly difficult to draw. Concern with phylogeny is perhaps on the wane."<sup>13</sup> "A great deal of heated debate has occurred over the past ten years or so concerning hominid origins. The last decade has seen a number



of significant changes. . . . We are now in a period of uncertainty. This contrasts with the preceding period, during which much seemed so clear-cut and obvious.”<sup>14</sup>

The sensational new discoveries in Africa only remind the researchers how much they have been missing and how much they’re still missing. “Whence came these late Neogene hominoids?” asks Professor Pilbeam of the Olduvai population. The question remains unanswered because “our knowledge of the fossil record is sparse, and heavily skewed toward representation of jaws and teeth.”<sup>15</sup> And Professor Jelinek informs us that “the entire excavated area of occupation surfaces (all over the world) is well under the size of a modern football field.” At Olduvai, 80 percent of the material comes from a band of strata representing only 4 percent of the time-span of occupation.<sup>16</sup> As opposed to the certitudes that were the most characteristic—as well as the most obnoxious—trait of past generations of the Darwinian ministry, Campbell reminds us, “We know that we can never do more than present hypotheses on the basis of the presently available evidence. As timebound creatures, no ultimate truth about the origin and evolution of mankind can ever be known to us.”<sup>17</sup> “If nothing else,” Professor Pilbeam concludes his study, “perhaps the only thing that is certain is that the next decade will provide us many surprises.”<sup>18</sup> If that is certain, we should in all conscience postpone any further discussion or debate on such matters for at least another ten years. I could have saved myself a lot of trouble by simply ignoring the experts for thirty years. It is sad to think how many of those telling points that turned some of our best students away from the gospel have turned out to be dead wrong!

Now it is admitted, in the words of W. W. Howells, that all those years when everybody was sure of the answers, “no scheme was presented that intelligibly interpreted the fossil record.”<sup>19</sup>

And now the interpretation is far more difficult than ever, because there are just too many types to relate and explain. It is a strange fact, “a paradoxical problem,” as Pilbeam puts it, that “the hominids are one of the poorest represented of fossil mammal groups, relative to their apparent past diversity.”<sup>20</sup> An astonishing number of different types are running around (there are seven at Olduvai), and yet so very few specimens! What is wrong? It is no longer enough to fall back, as S. Washburn does, on the old chestnut: “Surely as more fossils are found [his tool theory] will be found to have been a major factor.”<sup>21</sup> What kind of science is that—basing our theories on evidence not yet discovered?

This is a reminder that those who study the origin of man begin with the final answers. The ultimate questions that can only be answered after all the returns are in are the very questions with which Lyell and Hutton and Darwin began their explorations. Our thrilling detective drama begins by telling us who did it and then expects us to wait around with bated breath while the detective brings in the evidence. The premise is stated, for example, by G. G. Simpson: “In the evolutionary pattern of thought there is no longer need or room for the supernatural. The earth was not created: it evolved. So did all the animals and plants that inhabit it, including our human selves, mind and soul, as well as brain and body. So did religion.”<sup>22</sup> Well, if we grant that, we already have the answer to the big questions. We know the final score. And as giving the plot away spoils the fun, so Simpson must go back to the Bible whenever he wants to interest an audience.

Here it is important to bring to attention the great number of knowledge banks that must be brought under contribution before we can get it all together. There was a time when the Bible was the only knowledge bank. Some fathers of the church, like Hilary, declared that anything not specifically stated to have





happened in the Bible could not possibly have happened anywhere. When Aristotle's only knowledge bank became available, the doctors of the church diligently accommodated the Bible to his teachings. With the study of the heavens, the stars became the next great source of guidance to the real nature of things. Then Bacon opened the book of nature. Next, geology and biology called the tune. Geology took a direct look at the past—we had to believe what it told us—while biology examined the active processes that brought about the visible changes. On these two hung all the laws and the prophets.

And why not? Where else could one turn for answers? It is an illusion to look elsewhere, Freud explained in a famous essay, "The Future of an Illusion," for what other science is there except science? Duly impressed, the world failed to ask whether those data, no matter how concrete and precise, were adequate for the immense burden of proof that was needed. The prestige of science rested on shocking oversimplification and elaborate tautologies. "Never mind the details," we were told. "We can fill them in later"—which means, as noted, that the great search for truth begins with the final answers.

Darwin decided at the age of twenty that the Bible was a fraud. He claimed he felt no distress and never doubted for a single second that his conclusion was correct.<sup>23</sup> In a disarming article, T. Dobzhansky admits that his own beliefs are based on anything but exhaustive evidence and that others with competent knowledge of that evidence do not agree with his conclusions.<sup>24</sup> In other words, his model doesn't work, but that is no reason for rejecting it or looking for another model. After all, it is scientific. He has put a great deal of time and study into it. It is based on known facts and sound reasoning. Why should he give it up for gross superstition, mysticism, and ignorant religious ranting? There's always the assumption that there is no other alternative to my science but your anti-science. Your



knowledge bank does not count if it obfuscates mine. As usual, Dobzhansky rests his case on discoveries yet to be made: "Guessing where new discoveries are likely to be made is a risky venture in science. And yet, a scientist is constantly forced to take this risk.<sup>25</sup> True, and for that very reason, as Karl Popper reminds us, a scientist can never be dogmatic. But Dobzhansky is nothing but dogmatic. Well, again, why not? Here were the sciences which in time would give us all the answers. We are quite sure of that, so why not accept their conclusions now? That is just what the public has done, and the results have been paralyzing. The Darwinian Sleep has done much more damage than the Newtonian Sleep—a dullness of mind that cripples curiosity with the authority of the Approved School Solution.

The two big questions today, Dobzhansky says, are (1) the mechanisms of evolution—the very question that Darwin was supposed to have answered for all time, and (2) "the biological uniqueness of man," which is the real Adam question. How do you define man? How do you define Adam? There were a lot of creatures running about long ago who looked like men, but for that matter there are a lot of them today; you can go to Hogle Zoo [in Salt Lake City, Utah] and see some of them, but they are not men. Are these zoo critters ancestral to us? No, for they are contemporary. And what about the other creatures who disappeared long ago? Are they ancestral to us? That is just the question, and there is no agreement on it. Since World War I, homo erectus has been found all over the Old World, the term including a number of prehistoric types. "Where did Homo Erectus come from?" asks W. W. Howells. "Where did he go? The paths are simply untraced. Above all, the nature of the line leading to living man remains a matter of pure theory."<sup>26</sup> In September 1979, 150 of the world's leading paleontologists met at the Eighth Pan-African Congress of Prehistory and Quaternary Studies in Nairobi. The main issue discussed was,



“What is the definition of Homo?”<sup>27</sup> How do you know a true man when you see him? Well, he looks like a man. Again, there are creatures in the zoo that look like men. “In recent years the old concept of a single, steadily evolving lineage from ape to man has been completely replaced by at least three and possibly more different forms of early man evolving simultaneously in Africa.” By two million years ago “at least two forms of hominids were living,” and one of them “died out perhaps a million years ago.”<sup>28</sup> And the other? It was no more manlike than many of the others. What evidence have we that it did not also die out? Pilbeam writes that three hundred individuals found in East Africa represent at least seven hominid species. He also notes, “These species do not resemble any of the living Old World higher primates.” In fact, they seem to have been in many ways distinctly different from all later hominids.<sup>29</sup> The tool-using Dryopithecids “disappear around 8 or 9 million years ago”; the Rampithecidae about 8 million years ago.<sup>30</sup> Campbell thinks they were related to us “on a personal assessment of very complex and conflicting evidence,” but he concedes that Leakey and Napier and others do not think *Anthropus africanus* was ancestral to *H. habilis*.<sup>31</sup>

A contemporary theory of great importance is that evolution has been directed and boosted through the ages as various homonid species have fortuitously adopted tools. After the initial innovation, the use of a particular tool could go on by simple imitation, yet Washburn claims that tools have made us what we are. He tells us that the famous chopper tool “remained in day-to-day use as a major element in the human tool kit for about two million years.”<sup>32</sup> One would think that 2 million years without a change would show quite remarkable immunity in these creatures to any didactic influence of the coup de poing, Faustkeil, or hand-ax. Perhaps the nature of the instrument itself is to blame. In 1964, President Barnes, of the



American School in Beirut, gave me what is perhaps the first Mousterian artifact ever recognized in Palestine, an excellent example of an Acheulean point, discovered by Fredrick Bliss, the founder of the University, at Buri-el Khadr. What puzzles me is what it could have been used for, for it was of marly chert, and I doubt if it could cut cheese. When I dropped it from a height of about nine inches on the tile floor, the top of the point broke off with the greatest of ease. So I was not surprised to read recently that while “there is virtually no evidence of nonlithic tools” for our pre-Adamites, and that these hand-axes are “the hallmark of most Middle Pleistocene cultures, prehistorians are still without firm evidence relating to the function of these first recognized and most elaborate of Lower Paleolithic stone tools.”<sup>33</sup> Hundreds and thousands of them, the standard all-purpose tool of 2 million years of diligent use—but what on earth were they used for? Yet Washburn assures us that thanks to such tools alone “the human way and the brain evolved together to produce ancient man of the genus Homo about half a million years ago. Then the brain evolved under the pressure of more complex social life until the species Homo sapiens appeared perhaps as recently as 50,000 years ago.”<sup>34</sup> Fortuitously discovered tools vigorously pushed man toward his full-blown glory, and yet 2 million years of that exhilarating process left not the slightest effect on their users. Just how powerful is the influence of the gadgets?

“Considerable academic debate surrounds the date for the appearance of modern man,” Washburn tells us. “By 35,000 years ago, however, the hunting populations of western Europe were biologically indistinguishable from modern man.”<sup>35</sup> Yet he also tells us that “man began when populations of apes, about a million years ago, started the bipedal, tool-using way of life.”<sup>36</sup> In the same volume of essays, H. de Lumley reports on the 350,000-year-old village of Terra Amata, with its well-made huts,



central heating (a hearth), and a special compartment for tool-making, the oldest known man-made structures.<sup>37</sup> What kind of men? R. G. Klein tells us that “modern man (*Homo sapiens*) seems to have made his first appearance between 45,000 and 35,000 years ago,” and then goes on to describe one of some 100 Pleistocene sites in the Ukraine between 80,000 and 75,000 years old, where the people wore furs and beaded garments, buried their dead, and built substantial heated huts.<sup>38</sup> The artifacts were Mousterian and, to quote the same scientist, “Mousterian artifacts invariably belong to Neanderthal man.”<sup>39</sup> But didn’t Neanderthal man become extinct? Some say he did, some say he didn’t. Which is it to be, 2 million years, 1 million years, half a million years, 50,000 years, or 35,000 years? Each one introduces a new species, though all of them used tools.

According to Klein, when “true sapiens” appears, it is with a sudden “quantum advance in human culture evolution.”<sup>40</sup> By definition evolution comes only by minute and gradual steps—a quantum advance must be something else. T. Dobzhansky, who lays particular emphasis on the tiny steps of micro-evolution, explains the anomaly by noting that culture brings an entirely new element into the picture: “The cultural evolution of mankind is superimposed on its biological evolution; the causes of the former are nonbiological.” But once caused, he insists, they contribute to biological changes by natural selection. “Genes determine the possibility of culture but not its content, just as they determine the possibility of human speech but not what is spoken.”<sup>41</sup> Whatever is behind it, it is the culture that marks the appearance of man as such, just as by very definition it is the written record that begins his history.

When about twenty years ago it was decided that man himself is the chief conditioner of his evolution, scientists began to view him as outside and independent of the mainstream of organic evolution. Here was a new dimension, an evolution that no



longer operated on blind chance. To define true man is to discover the uniqueness of man, that which he does not share with any other creature. It can only be his culture. And when do you get a real culture? Not until you get Adam. Those 100,000-year-old villages have nothing to tell us that we do not know. It is time we got to Adam.

To recapitulate, religion has no plot. Science has no plot. This means that Joseph Smith is the only entry. He, at least, has given us a picture. But is it a convincing picture? The fact is, we have never looked at it closely! We have drawn back from that assignment, preferring to save a lot of trouble and take sides with the traditional schools.

The stories of the garden of Eden and the Flood have always furnished unbelievers with their best ammunition against believers, because they are the easiest to visualize, popularize, and satirize of any Bible accounts. Everyone has seen a garden and been caught in a pouring rain. It requires no effort of imagination for a six-year-old to convert concise and straightforward Sunday-school recitals into the vivid images that will stay with him for the rest of his life. These stories retain the form of the nursery tales they assume in the imaginations of small children, to be defended by grownups who refuse to distinguish between childlike faith and thinking as a child when it is time to "put away childish things." (1 Corinthians 13:11.) It is equally easy and deceptive to fall into adolescent disillusionment and with one's emancipated teachers to smile tolerantly at the simple gullibility of bygone days, while passing stern moral judgment on the savage old God who damns Adam for eating the fruit he put in his way and, overreacting with impetuous violence, wipes out Noah's neighbors simply for making fun of his boat-building on a fine summer's day.



This is another case of what I have called the gentile dilemma or, if you will, the devil's dilemma.

Joseph Smith gave the world something that nobody else could. That is why I say that Joseph Smith, with nothing going for him and everything going against him, simply could not lose. He told us what the play is all about. If you can come up with a better story than his, more power to you, but up until now no one else has had any story at all to place before us. If only for that reason, I believe, the Prophet's story deserves a hearing.

The Latter-day Saints have four basic Adam stories, those found in the Bible, the book of Moses, the book of Abraham, and the temple—each seen from a different angle, like the four Gospels, but not conflicting if each is put into its proper context. And what is that context? One vitally important principle that everyone seems to have ignored until now is the consideration that everything is presented to us in these accounts through the eyes, or from the point of view of, the individual observers who tell the story. Historians long ago came to realize that the boast of German *Geschichtswissenschaft*—to report what happened at all times “*wie es eigentlich geschah*,” the whole truth, the complete event in holistic perfection as it would be seen by the eye of God—is a philosopher's pipe dream. And, indeed, it is from the philosophers that we got it, rooted as the fathers and the doctors are in the sublime absolutes of Alexandria: There is God and God only, and his holy and infallible book was written by his very finger, untouched by the human mind. We must credit the Moslems with carrying this doctrine all the way. Not only is it the crime of Shirk to credit the existence of anything besides God, but his book is as divine and ineffable as he is. I have been told that it is presumptuous for mortals, let alone infidels, to pretend to understand anything in it.



The Latter-day Saints, inheritors of the Christian version of this teaching, are constantly converting statements of limited application to universal or at least sweeping generalities. To illustrate, I was told as a child that the Rocky Mountains, the Appalachians, and the Andes all came into existence overnight during the great upheavals of nature that took place at the time of the Crucifixion—an absurdity that plays into the hands of critics of the Book of Mormon. But what we find in the 3 Nephi account when we read it carefully is a few sober, factual, eyewitness reports describing an earthquake of 8-plus on the Richter scale in a very limited area. Things that appear unlikely, impossible, or paradoxical from one point of view often make perfectly good sense from another. The Nautical Almanac gives the exact time of sunrise and sunset for every day of the year, yet astronauts know that the sun neither rises nor sets except from a particular point of view, the time of the event being strictly dependent on the exact location. From that point of view and that only, it is strictly correct and scientific to say that the sun does rise and set. Just so, the apparently strange and extravagant phenomena described in the scriptures are often correct descriptions of what would have appeared to a person in a particular situation. You and I have never been in those situations. To describe what he sees to people who have never seen anything like it, the writer must reach for metaphors and similes: “His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; . . . his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters.” (D&C 110:3; italics added.) There was no fire, no snow, no rushing waters, but that is as near as Joseph Smith and Sidney Ridgon could come to telling us what they experienced when “the veil was taken from [their] minds, and the eyes of [their] understanding were opened!” (D&C 110:1.) They were reporting as well as they could what they had seen from a vantage point on which we have never stood.





A recent study points out that the charge that Abraham's story in the Bible must be fictitious because no one could know the highly intimate things reported there—nobody, Hamming admits, unless it were Abraham himself. The earliest Abraham books are supposed to be autobiographies, and the story told from his point of view makes perfectly good sense. So with Noah in the ark. From where he was, "the whole earth" (Genesis 8:9) was covered with water as far as he could see; after things had quieted down for 150 days and the ark ground to a halt, it was still three months before he could see any mountaintops. But what were conditions in other parts of the world? If Noah knew that, he would not have sent forth messenger birds to explore. The flood as he described it is what he saw of it. "He sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground." (Genesis 8:8.) Couldn't he see for himself? Not where the dove went. It was not until seven days later that he sent it out again; and after flying all day, the bird came back with a green leaf fetched from afar; "so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth." (Genesis 8:11.) Still he waited another seven days. When the dove did not return, Noah had his answer. In some distant place, trees were bearing and there was birdfood to be found. But not where Noah was. All that time he had not dared to open up.

Note that the author does not fall into the literary trap of telling where the birds went and what they saw. That became a standard theme of early Oriental literature, faithfully reflected in the classical stories of the sea-eagle and the hoopoe. All Noah tells us is what he saw of the birds and the flood. The rain continued at least in spots, for there was that magnificent rainbow. Why do Christians insist on calling it the first rainbow, just because it is the first mentioned? Who says that water drops did not refract light until that day? Well, my old Sunday School teacher, for one, used to say it. The rainbow, like the



sunrise, is strictly the product of a point of view, for which the beholder must stand in a particular place while it is raining in another particular place and the sun is in a third particular place, if he is to see it at all. It is a lesson in relativity.

This principle is recognized today as “the anthropic cosmological principle.” I refer you to the April 1980 Scientific American. It specifies that what an observer is able to see of the universe actually makes a difference in the real nature of that universe: “Man’s experience is a constraint on the kinds of universe he could observe. Many features of the universe that are remarkable to ponder are inevitable prerequisites of the existence of observers.”<sup>42</sup> Though the authors say it is a mystery why this should be so, still “the principle overcomes the traditional barrier between the observer and the observed. It makes the observer an indispensable part of the macrophysical world.”<sup>43</sup>

Nowhere is the principle of this relativity more clearly proclaimed than in the cosmologies of the book of Moses and the book of Abraham. Both epics begin in realms above, far from the earth (which has not yet come into existence). At each step it is made perfectly clear who is speaking and from what vantage point. “I dwell in the midst of them all; . . . I came down in the beginning in the midst of all the intelligences thou hast seen.” (Abraham 3:21; italics added.) First, second, and third persons appear in a large cast of characters leaving one place for another. “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.” (Abraham 3:24; italics added.) What a world of inference opens up as we are launched into the mighty drama! Yet we immediately begin to feel ourselves into the situation. Those to whom the speaker refers (and there is no doubt who he is!) are known to Abraham from aforesaid—they are “all the



intelligences thine eyes have seen from the beginning.”

(Abraham 3:21; italics added.)

Before being introduced to his home planet, Abraham is given a view of the cosmos, in the which he is reminded again and again that all distances, directions, and motions are to be measured with respect to his own position only. From another position, the picture might well look very different.

Kolob, as we noted, is not the center of the universe but governs only one class of stars: “I have set this one to govern all those which belong to the same order as that upon which thou standest.” (Abraham 3:3; italics added.) In the apocryphal Abraham literature, which has very recently and very suddenly taken on extreme importance in the eyes of the learned world, this point of vantage is a place in the heavens to which Abraham has been taken. There he is at first terrified because he finds no place on which to stand, until the angel who is with him gives him a correct orientation by drawing a round diagram of things. This is reflected in Facsimile No. 2 of the Book of Abraham, but we cannot discuss that here.

Time also is not reckoned in absolutes but is limited to Abraham’s system; “the reckoning of the Lord’s time” is not reckoned absolutely but “according to the reckoning of Kolob”—an in-between element to gear Abraham’s time to a larger but not necessarily the largest system. There is also reckoning by sun and moon, relative to “the earth upon which thou standest.” (Abraham 3:4—5.)

In verse 6 the expression “set time” is used four times, reminding us that there is more than one frame of time reference. One must in the “times of reckoning” take into account that “two facts” can exist, the one not excluding the other. This is one of the mysteries of cosmology today. The



Doctrine and Covenants explains it by the necessity of limiting all “existence” to closed systems, for “otherwise there is no existence.” (D&C 93:30.)

Kolob’s influence and time governs “all those planets which belong to the same order as that upon which thou standest”—the expression here used for the seventh time. (Abraham 3:9; italics added.)

After being apprised, like Moses, of the endless nature of God’s works—“I could not see the end thereof”—Abraham is reminded of the glory elsewhere “before the world was.”

(Abraham 3:22.) Then, at the beginning of chapter 4, we see a delegation going “down” to organize this earth and its heaven.

To begin with, we see bare rock, “empty and desolate,” as the other planets and satellites of the system seem to be today, “because they had not formed anything but the earth.”

(Abraham 4:2.) Then the whole thing is water-covered beneath a dense envelope of cloud—“darkness reigned upon the face of the deep.” But things were already being prepared for what was to follow, for the Spirit of the Gods was brooding upon the face of the waters.” Dictionaries define brooding as “to sit or incubate (eggs) for the purpose of hatching.” As Milton puts it “dovelike sat’st brooding on the vast Abyss and mad’st it pregnant.” Also, “to dwell continuously on a subject.” Brooding is just the right word—a quite long quiet period of preparation in which apparently nothing was happening. Something was to come out of the water, incubating, waiting a long, long time.

Next, in verse 3, “there was light.” Where? It is an exercise in point of view again. All this time the Gods had been dwelling in light and glory, but the earth was dark. It was to where “darkness reigned,” according to our text, that the light came. (Abraham 4:2.) This was not the first creation of light. Wherever light comes into darkness, “there is light.”



The next verse reminds us that light itself is relative, a part of the energy spectrum seen by some being with the capacity to be aware of it: “They . . . comprehended the light, for it was bright” (Abraham 4:4), that is, visible. Basic chemicals react to light, but are they aware of it—do they comprehend it? In verse 5 we are introduced to the dualism of night and day, land and water, which is peculiar to the earth and conditions of all life upon it.

The creation process as described in the Pearl of Great Price is open ended and ongoing, entailing careful planning based on vast experience, long consultations, models, tests, and even trial runs for a complicated system requiring a vast scale of participation by the creatures concerned. The whole operation is dominated by the overriding principle of love. You may accept the Big Bang, with its potential for producing all that came thereafter, but by any reckoning the earth was definitely not among the instantaneous productions of the first millisecond or even of the first fifteen minutes. No matter how you figure, it came along much, much later after a great deal had happened. “Worlds without number” had already come into existence and gone their ways: “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.” (Moses 1:38.)

Consider how it was done: “And the Gods said: We will do everything that we have said, and organize them.” (Abraham 4:31.) “And the Gods saw that they would be obeyed, and that their plan was good.” (Abraham 4:21.) “We will end our work, which we have counseled. . . . And thus were their decisions at the time that they counseled among themselves to form the heavens and the earth.” (Abraham 5:2—3.) After the talk they got down to work. “The Gods came down and formed these the generations of the heavens and of the earth, . . . according to all that which they had said . . . before.” (Abraham 5:4—5.) They



worked through agents: “The Gods ordered, saying: Let [such-and-such happen] . . . ; and it was so, even as they ordered.”

(Abraham 4:9, 11.)

What they ordered was not the completed product, but the process to bring it about, providing a scheme under which life might expand: “Let us prepare the earth to bring forth grass” (Abraham 4:11; italics added), not “Let us create grass.”

“Let us prepare the waters to bring forth abundantly. . . . And the Gods prepared the waters that they might bring forth great whales, and every living creature that moveth.” (Abraham 4:20.)

Note the future tense: the waters are so treated that they will have the capacity. The Gods did not make whales on the spot but arranged it so that in time they might appear. They created the potential. “And the Gods saw that they would be obeyed, and that their plan was good” (Abraham 4:21), that is, it was working, not because they were doing it all themselves—there were other agents at work: they were being obeyed. By whom? Well, the land animals, we are told, which “would obey.”

(Abraham 4:25.) “And the Gods watched those things which they had ordered until they obeyed.” (Abraham 4:18.)

“They obeyed” is the active voice, introducing a teaching that, in my opinion, is by far the most significant and distinct aspect of Mormonism. It is the principle of maximum participation, of the active cooperation of all of God’s creatures in the working out of his plans, which, in fact, are devised for their benefit: “This is my work and my glory” (Moses 1:39.) Everybody gets into the act. Every creature, to the limit of its competence, is given the supreme compliment of being left on its own, so that the word “obey” is correctly applied. “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.” (Abraham 3:24.) Why? “And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things



whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.” (Abraham 3:25.) What he commands is what will best fulfill the measure of their existence, but they are not forced to do it—they are not automata. Adam was advised not to eat the fruit but was told at the same time that he was permitted to do it. It was up to him whether he would obey or not. If he did obey, he would qualify for a higher trust.

Abraham 4:11—12 continues: “Let us prepare the earth to bring forth grass. . . . And the Gods organized the earth to bring forth grass from its own seed, yielding fruit [the fruit is the seed], whose seed could only bring forth the same . . . after his kind; and the Gods saw that they were obeyed.” Here are levels of independence down to a complete programming by which the “seed could only bring forth the same.” It reminds us of DNA, but nothing is completely automatic, for the Gods watched those things which they had ordered “until they obeyed,” that is, until they could be trusted to carry on on their own. This is not Deism, the prearranged harmony of Leibniz, for the Gods keep up an active interest in the operation in which indeed things often go awry: “We shall go away now,” they say, “but we shall visit you again,” which they do from time to time, keeping up an active interest. The most important provision of all is, “We will bless them,” and “cause them to be fruitful and multiply.” (Abraham 4:28.) That blessing of everything makes all the difference. The Darwinists might say, “You people are simply describing a natural process in humanized terms,” for they have always made much of the completely natural, inevitable, mindless, undirected, spontaneous, mechanical aspect of natural selection necessary for its operation as a purely and completely physical law. They ever gloated on the unfeeling cruelty of the whole thing “nature red in tooth and claw,” as Kipling put it. The blessing is the whole difference between a play and no play.



After the earth is set up we are shown everything from Adam's point of view. In Genesis 2:5, we are definitely referred to a pre-temporal creation, then (2:8) we see a garden planted, and (2:15) a man put into the garden, where he is wonderfully at home. He can eat of every tree in the garden (2:16). He lives on terms of greatest intimacy with other creatures, naming and classifying them as he takes his place among them, in the manner of Claude Levi-Strauss's "primitives." (Genesis 2:19—20.) When Adam eats the fruit his eyes are opened—he is *apiqqeah*, one who sees things as they were not seen before, who sees things which he in another condition could not see. He is in a new ambience. Cast out of the garden, he finds himself in a dry climate and changes his diet from fruit to grains, which he must work hard to cultivate.

The book of Abraham is more specific. After the great cycles of creation come the smaller cycles, starting with a very dry planet followed by a very wet phase. (Abraham 5:5—6.) Man is formed of the elements of the earth like any other creature, and he lives in a very lush period, a garden, which is however reduced to an oasis in an encroaching desert. (Abraham. 5:7—10.) To this limited terrain he is perfectly adapted. It is a paradise. How long does he live there? No one knows, for this was still "after the Lord's time," not ours. (Abraham 5:13.) It was only when he was forced out of this timeless, changeless paradise that he began to count the hours and days, moving into a hard semi-arid world of thorns, thistles, and briars, where he had to toil and sweat in the heat just to stay alive and lost his old intimacy with the animals. (Genesis 3:17—19.)

The questions most commonly asked are: When did it happen? How long did it take? Our texts make it very clear that we are not to measure the time and periods involved by our chronometers and calendars. Until Adam underwent that fatal change of habitat, body chemistry, diet, and psyche that went





with the Fall, nothing is to be measured in our years, “for the Gods had not appointed unto Adam his reckoning.” (Abraham 5:13.) Until then, time is measured from their point of view, not ours. As far as we are concerned it can be any time, and there would be no point to insisting on this again and again if all we had to do to convert their time to our time was multiply our years by 365,000. Theirs was a different time. The only numbers we are given designated the phases of periods of creation: “and this was the second time” (Abraham 4:8), “and it was the third time” (4:13), and so on. The periods are numbered but never measured. The Gods called them “days,” but the text is at great pains to make clear that it was day and night from their point of view, when our time had not yet been appointed. “And the Gods called the light Day, and the darkness they called Night. And . . . from the evening until morning they called night; . . . and this was the first, or the beginning, of that which they called day and night. (Abraham 4:5.) Doctrine and Covenants 130:4—5 explains that “the reckoning of God’s time, angel’s time, prophet’s time, and man’s time [is] according to the planet on which they reside.” That implies different time schemes at least. In moving from one system to another one also changes one’s timing. “There are no angels who minister to this earth but those who do belong or have belonged to it. (D&C 130:5.)

“It was from morning until evening that they called day; and it was the fifth time.” (Abraham 4:23.) How long is such a time? In the “fourth time,” we read, “the Gods watched those things which they had ordered until they obeyed.” (Abraham 4:19, 18.) That important word “until” tells us two things: (1) that they took all the time that was necessary, no matter how long it might have been, measuring the period in terms not of a terminal date but in terms of the requirements of the task; (2) “until” means up till a certain time, but not thereafter. When things were running smoothly, they were left on their own, which



implies a shift from one time-scale to another. When, for example, “the Gods prepared the earth to bring forth” (Abraham 4:24), after they had prepared the waters to do the same long before, how long do you think that took? Again, the record is deliberately vague.

The relative times are clearly shown when “the Gods organized the lights in the expanse of the heaven.” From our position that is just what they are—lights, nothing more. “And caused them to divide the day from the night . . .” Such a division had already taken place at the beginning, but this was a new time-system for this earth. “. . . And organized them to be for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years.” (Abraham 4:14.) A sign is a symbol, a mark, an arbitrary indicator, a means of measuring. It is only a sign relative to a particular observer. These lights were not originally created as markers of time, but they could be used as such, they could be “organized for” such. The moon was not created for my convenience; but just the same, from where I stand it can be made to serve a number of special purposes. Aside from measuring time, those heavenly bodies do “give light upon the earth . . . , the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; with the lesser light they set the stars also.” (Abraham 4:15—16.)

Here we get what is perhaps the most striking instance of “anthrocentric cosmology.” An astronomer (I think at Notre Dame) recently calculated the probability of a planet in the solar system having a moon (just one moon, at that) that subtended exactly the same arc in the sky as does the sun from the surface of the same planet. The chances are astronomically remote, so remote, indeed, that there seems to be something deliberate about what is otherwise a stunning coincidence. From no other point of view in all the universe will the sun and the moon have exactly the same size. It is also arranged that the stars come out with the moon—though the ancients knew perfectly well that



they were there in the daytime too; yet for us, again—from our point of view only—they are simply not there. The North Star does not really stand still while the other stars circle around it (move away from the earth and all your calculations will be spoiled). Hence the repeated insistence on specifying, according to the time appointed as that “upon which thou standest.” (Abraham 3:3.)

What the book of Abraham shows me is that we are in the midst of eternity, surrounded by evidence of the fact. Every morning on the way to work, I behold those very old rocks at the base of Rock Canyon and think how everywhere around us in space float masses of rock like that, that never, never want to change and really never need to. What does a million years mean to them? For that matter, what does ten minutes? If they were blasted tomorrow, reduced to powder or vapor, nothing would be lost. That is the First Law: The stuff is there. In whatever form it may take, it is always all there. That is the first point scored by the book of Abraham, the first great mystery. Don't ask why it is there. Nobody can tell you. In 1951, the Pope officially declared for the Big Bang theory, because it looked to some like a creatio ex nihilo. Actually, it is just the opposite: the Big Bang took place precisely because all that the universe contains was already compressed within that primal singularity so tightly that it had to explode. It was all there, always. So we begin with an imponderable given quantity: “See, yonder is matter unorganized,” or as the Book of Abraham puts it, “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.” (Abraham 3:24.)

Mystery No. 2: Why should it be so organized? Its natural state calls for progressive disorganization—the Second Law. But organizing is the exact reversal of that law. Whose idea was it to build this elaborate organization which we can see for ourselves



exists, however contrary to natural law? Many scientists are puzzling over that just now. Trust the book of Abraham to anticipate such problems; this sort of thing has been going on for a long, long time. It is planned, programmed, and tested. The “anthropic cosmological principle” recognized that the state of organization depends on the observer. He reads order into the chaos. We may be looking at total chaos or at nothing, but to us it makes sense. Not just to me but to us. If it were only to me it could be an illusion, so we check with each other. Many find the whole thing absurd. Eminent scientists tell us that we are living in an absurd world. But that only means that we know that it should be different. When I say it is absurd, I am complaining that what I see is “not the way it really is.” And who are we? Abraham sees that as the ultimate question and meets it handily: intelligence, awareness is the beginning and ending of it all. You start out with “intelligences,” beyond which nothing is to be said. You can doubt everything else, but that much you must grant—there were those intelligences, because they still are. What the book of Abraham tells me is that, if this moment of consciousness is real, then it is all real. I can bear unshakable testimony to one thing: I am here. I am under no obligation to explain it or prove it before it can be believed.

Let us consider our Adam. What kind of being is he? The same kind as ourselves—but what is that? He plays a surprising number of roles, each with a different persona, a different name, a different environment, a different office and calling: (1) he was a member of the presidency when the earth project was being discussed; (2) he was on the committee of inspection that came down from time to time to check up on the operation; (3) then he changed his name and nature to live upon the earth, but it was a very different earth from any we know; it had to be a garden place specially prepared for him. (4) When he left that paradise, he changed his nature again and for the first time



began to reckon the passing of time by our measurements, becoming a short-lived creature subject to death. (5) In this condition, he began to receive instructions from heavenly mentors on how to go about changing his condition and status, entering into a covenant that completely changed his mentality and way of life. “The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit,” when “that which is natural” became spiritual. (1 Corinthians 15:45—46.) The man Adam passes from one state of being to another, and so do we: “as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” (1 Corinthians 15:49.) (6) In time he died and became a spirit being, the head of all his spirit children in the waiting-place, according to common Christian tradition as well as our own. (7) Then he became, after Christ, the firstfruits of the resurrection and returned triumphantly to his first and second estates (8) to go on to glory and eternal lives.

In these seven or eight Adams, we have another fundamental teaching that sets Mormonism off from all contemporary religion and science. The one views man’s life on earth as a one-act drama: Adam fell, Christ redeemed us, and that is the story. Before Adam, there was nothing. Science tells us that the drama is pointless, because there is really nothing after it. We, on the other hand, see an ongoing epic of many episodes, each one a play in itself—a dispensation.

The fifth chapter of Genesis begins with a very important episode—the formal establishment of Adam’s family organization. It begins with a book, a book of remembrance or genealogy, entitled “The Book of the Generations of Adam.” It begins, “In the day the Gods set apart [bara—we are being very literal here] Adam in the likeness of the Gods [bi-dmuth elohim] he made him. Male and female he set them apart, and gave them a blessing, and gave them their names as Adam, in the day he set them apart.” (See Genesis 5:1—3.) Next comes Seth



in the proper line of Adam, and the patriarchal line follows. The preceding chapter tells of the division into Cainites and Sethites, and it is significant that the line of Cain is omitted from the genealogy of Adam. The book of Moses tells of multitudes of Adam's children born before Cain and Abel (Moses 5:12, 16). They had followed Satan by choice and were disqualified as sons of God. We read in Moses: "And unto thy brethren have I . . . given commandment, that they . . . should choose me, their Father. . . . But behold, their sins shall be upon the heads of their fathers; Satan shall be their father." (Moses 7:33, 37.) Those who accepted the covenant were called sons of God and also the sons of Adam: "And this is the genealogy of the sons of Adam, who was the son of God." (Moses 6:22.) Only those qualify as Bene-Adam who are still in the covenant. Bene-Adam, however, is the normal Jewish word for human beings. The Septuagint considers Adam a proper noun from Genesis 2:16 on; the Vulgate from 2:19 on; Adam appears for the first time as a proper noun in the standard Hebrew Bible only after Genesis 4:25. In that text twenty-two of the twenty-seven occurrences of the name are accompanied by the article: "the man." They are not proper names. In Genesis, E. Lussier concludes that Adam has four senses:

1. "Man," a particular man, the first man (sixteen times).
2. The first husband (nine times).
3. Generic, "mankind" (two times).
4. As a proper name—once!<sup>44</sup>

So we might well ask: What about those people who lived before Cain and Abel? What about those who disappeared from sight? What about those who were not even warned of the Flood? What about those many, many who visited the earth as



resurrected beings? What about the Watchers? What about the sons of God who should not marry the daughters of men, and vice versa? And what about the giants they begot when they did marry? What about the comings and goings of Enoch's day between the worlds? What about his own status as "a wild man, . . . a strange thing in the land"? (Moses 6:38.) Who were his people, living in a distant land of righteousness, who never appear on the scene? What about the Three Nephites, whose condition so puzzles Moroni, until he is told that they are neither mortal nor immortal? (Mormon 8:10—11.) What about the creatures we do not see around us? What about the Cainites? What about the nations among whom Noah will have surviving progeny?

Speaking of Noah, God promised Enoch "that he [God] would call upon the children of Noah; and he sent forth an unalterable decree, that a remnant of his seed [Enoch's through Noah] should always be found among all nations, while the earth should stand; and the Lord said: Blessed is he through whose seed Messiah shall come." (Moses 7:51—53.) Methuselah boasted about his line as something special. (Moses 8:2—3.) Why special if it included the whole human race? These blessings have no meaning if all the people of the earth and all the nations are the seed of Noah and Enoch. What other line could the Messiah come through? Well, there were humans who were not invited by Enoch's preaching—not included among the residue of people not entering Enoch's city. They were "the residue of the people which were the sons of Adam; and they were a mixture of all the seed of Adam save it was the seed of Cain, for the seed of Cain . . . had not place among them." (Moses 7:22.)

One thing we should understand is that the image of the pre-hominid is not a discovery of modern science any more than the idea of evolution is. Primitive man is the easiest thing in the



world to imagine. Just look at your neighbor. The Greeks were fascinated with him, and so were the Middle Ages. Albrecht Altdorfer's painting "Der Wilde Mann," done in the early sixteenth century, showing a real ape-man at home with his family, is as good as anything H. F. Osborne ever turned out. Albrecht Dürer also was intrigued by the subject. Herbert Spencer had only to lean back in his armchair to turn out the First Principles. I have never found students the least hesitant to write papers on "A Day in the Life of Primitive Man." They know **all** about it. They don't have to look up a thing.

This is a natural product of the silliest doctrine of all that of cultural evolution. Taking one's own, contemporary civilization as the very latest civilization (which it is) and therefore the best (which it is not), it is the easiest thing in the world to classify **all** other civilizations on a scale of proximity to your own in time and spirit. Chrétien de Troyes in the twelfth century begins his famous work with such a classification. This is just as sound and scientific as textbooks on cultural anthropology used for years.

But is it logical to begin at the top, as our Adam does? The Adam tradition has it that Adam was the best and greatest, the most perfect of all men. Isn't that getting the normal process of things backwards? Not at all, in some things. If you want to found a university, do you begin by gathering a colony of very stupid and ignorant people and wait for it to evolve into an increasingly glorious institution? Does a university evolve? It accumulates books and buildings and staff; and if size is what makes a university, then we do indeed progress. But as often as not the big problem is to keep it from deteriorating!

So it is with Adam. Must modern man be an improvement on him? Such is that absurd doctrine of cultural evolution with which the schools have been saddled for a century. I well remember my old music teacher, Mr. Seyler, shaking his head





with wonder at how Mozart could possibly have written such wonderful music two hundred years ago!

Those soporific words “gradually” and “step by step,” repeated incessantly, are aimed at covering an ignorance that is both vast and surprising. One is lulled, overwhelmed, and stupefied by the gradualness of it all, which is at best a platitude, only good for pacifying the mind. The lazy word “evolution” has blinded us to the real complexities of the past. It raises an appalling number of questions to which we have no answer. Our ignorance not only remained vast, but became pretentious as well.<sup>45</sup>

Are we superior to the ancients? “If man had originally inhabited a world as blankly uniform as a high-rise housing development, as featureless as a parking lot, as destitute of life as an automated factory, it is doubtful that he would have had a sufficiently varied experience to retain images, mold languages, or acquire ideas.”<sup>46</sup>

If unused organs atrophy, we are losing rather than gaining brain-power. A. R. Wallace sorely offended Darwin by asking him, If every organ represents that minimal response to which it has been pressured by the need for survival, whence the brain, that marvelous organ endowed with a hundred times more power than any primitive has ever needed for survival or any modern man ever makes use of? What possible environment could, as a requirement for survival or any other purpose, have called forth such a prodigal reservoir of intellect? We can only look to a “first primeval childhood” far different from anything we know and conclude that Adam’s background reaches into a past more marvelous than any we can imagine.

That is another thing the most recent studies are bringing to light more clearly all the time: uniformitarianism is assumed in



all calculations, but now it begins to look to the naturalists as well as the physicists that things were far, far different back there than we can ever imagine them, recalling H. R. Haldane's famous remark that the universe is not only stranger than we think it is but stranger than we ever can think it to be.

One of those innumerable hypotheses that Professor Campbell mentions, now released for serious discussion by recent discoveries, is that human life may have been transplanted directly from some other planet. Speculating on the subject, we have the romantic Carl Sagan; Leslie E. Orgel of the Salk Institute; Francis H. C. Crick, a Nobel laureate; and others. One eminent scientist, Albert Rosenfeld, confesses, "I'm somehow not surprised at the idea that someone out there put us here. And if such a magical, mysterious, and powerful intelligence exists that is utterly beyond human imagining, can you give me a good reason why I shouldn't call it God?"<sup>47</sup>

Which takes us back to the issue with which the Adam question began and which has always been the central issue of human paleontology: a matter of definitions. They may seem trivial, secondary, naïve—but the experts have never been able to get away from it. Evolution and natural selection were never defined to Darwin's satisfaction. Today all the specialists are trying to agree on a clear definition for man: when is a homo a homo, and how much? And one of our biggest stumbling blocks is not knowing how Adam relates to other beings, earthly and heavenly. That is the root of the **Adam-God** misunderstanding. (Until we care to look into the matter seriously, I will keep my opinions in a low profile.)

Do not begrudge existence to creatures that looked like men long, long ago, nor deny them a place in God's affection or even a right to exaltation—for our scriptures allow them such. Nor am I overly concerned as to just when they might have lived, for



their world is not our world. They have all gone away long before our people ever appeared. God assigned them their proper times and functions, as he has given me mine—a full-time job that admonishes me to remember his words to the overly eager Moses: “For mine own purpose have I made these things. Here is wisdom and it remaineth in me.” (Moses 1:31.) It is Adam as my own parent who concerns me. When he walks onto the stage, then and only then the play begins. He opens a book and starts calling out names. They are the sons of Adam, who also qualify as sons of God, Adam himself being a son of God. This is the book of remembrance from which many have been blotted out. They have fallen away, refused to choose God as their father, and by so doing were registered in Satan’s camp. “Satan shall be their father, and misery shall be their doom.” (Moses 7:37.) Can we call them sons of Adam, bene-Adam, human beings proper? The representative Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks, and Romans, to name only the classic civilizations of old, each fancied themselves to be beings of a higher nature, nearer to gods than others who inhabited the land with them (and before them), or who dwelt in other lands. And yet they did not deny humanity to them.

Adam becomes Adam, a hominid becomes a man, when he starts keeping a record. What kind of record? A record of his ancestors—the family line that sets him off from all other creatures. Such records begin very early, to judge by the fabulous genealogic knowledge of the Australian aborigines (A. P. Elkin) or the most “primitive” Africans (L. Frobenius). Even written records go back to ages lost in the mists of time—the Azilian pebbles, the marking of arrows, and the identity of individuals in their relationships with each other.<sup>48</sup> Whether former speculation about life on other worlds is now to be upgraded to life from other worlds remains to be seen, but Adam is wonderful enough without that. That gap between the



record keeper and all the other creatures we know anything about is so unimaginably enormous and yet so neat and abrupt that we can only be dealing with another sort of being, a quantum leap from one world to another. Here is something not derivative from anything that has gone before on the local scene, even though they all share the same atoms.

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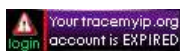


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