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***Science & Mormonism Series 1: Cosmos, Earth, and Man***

Chapter Title: Who Is Adam?

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This book from which this chapter is excerpted is available through Eborn Books:

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***Recommended Citation***

Trent D. Stephens, "Who Is Adam?" in *Science & Mormonism Series 1: Cosmos, Earth, and Man*, edited by David H. Bailey, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, John S. Lewis, Gregory L. Smith, and Michael R. Stark (Orem, UT, and Salt Lake City: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2016), <https://interpreterfoundation.org/reprints/science-and-mormonism/SM1Chap16.pdf>.

SCIENCE & MORMONISM SERIES 1

# COSMOS, EARTH, AND MAN

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GREGORY L. SMITH, AND MICHAEL R. STARK



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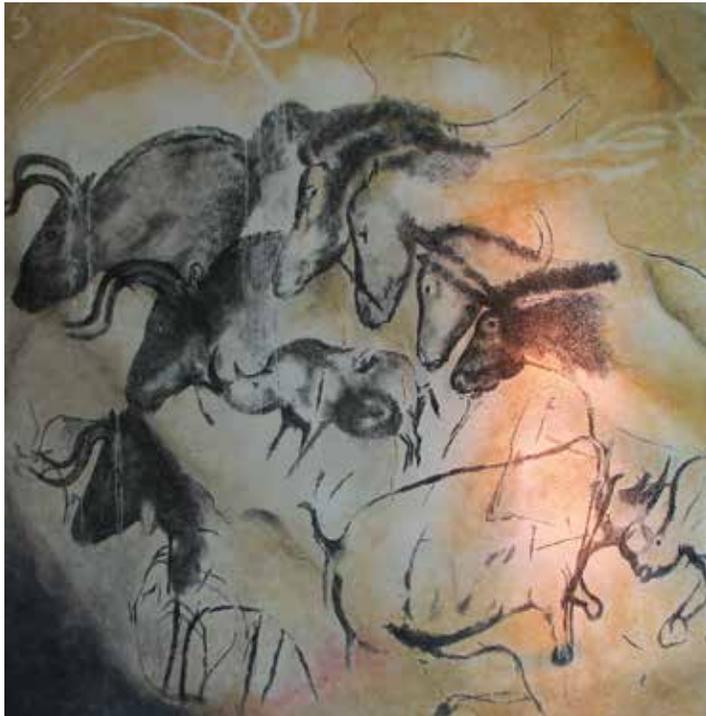
2016



# WHO IS ADAM?

Trent D. Stephens

On December 18, 1994, three explorers, Eliette Brunel-Deschamps, Christian Hillaire, and Jean-Marie Chauvet, discovered a most remarkable cave along the Ardèche River in southern France, now known as Chauvet Cave. The deepest, darkest recesses of the cave housed a unique, spectacular art gallery. Mostly created in charcoal, with some red ochre, the paintings on the cave walls, which had been scraped down to a light, prepared surface, depict at least thirteen different species of animals in such remarkable detail that the artists clearly had first-hand knowledge of the subject animals — many of them now long-since extinct.



A female cave lion is shown snarling at her apparent mate. A now extinct horse is shown with its mouth open as though winded from running. Several paintings show animals as though in motion, as though seen in time-lapse drawings. The hand prints of one artist found in several places in the cave exhibit the detail of a crooked little finger. The sensitivity, the humanity, the individuality of this art is remarkable.

These paintings are among the greatest works of art in the world. In technique, in quality, in artistic ability, they rank among the best works of art ever created. The pieces have the freshness of having been painted yesterday — but carbon-14 dating puts them at 30,000 to 35,000 years ago. The cave entrance collapsed some 29,000 years ago sealing the cave as a time capsule until its discovery in 1994.

The works of art suggest that their creators had a deep spiritual side. Bone flutes found nearby can play the same notes that we use in composing music today. Were these sensitive, artistic, spiritual people the children of Adam? Did the Garden of Eden exist sometime in the distant past — sometime before 35,000 years ago?

There were also Neanderthals roaming the Ardèche River Valley when the cave paintings were being created. Recent DNA evidence suggests that the early human cave artists interbred with the Neanderthals. We today carry DNA markers from those Neanderthal ancestors, as well as from those remote cave artists. Are the Neanderthals also the children of Adam?



*Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden*  
Cathedral of St. Michael and St. Gudula, Brussels

Some calculations, based entirely on Biblical chronology, place Adam and the Garden of Eden at a time approximately 6,000 years ago. In fact, Archbishop James Ussher calculated the first day of creation to have occurred 6,020 years ago, on October 23, 4004 BC. If Adam was the “first man,” then how does his proposed presence 6,000 years ago square with the presence of artistic, spiritually minded humans 35,000 years ago?

There are two common solutions to this apparent dilemma:

1. The 35,000-year date must be wrong because we “know” that Adam was indeed the first man, who lived 6,000 years ago, and no humans could have existed before him. Proposed older dates for the existence of any living thing, let alone humans, is the fabrication of godless scientists who are trying to destroy faith.
2. The whole notion of Adam is a myth — the fabrication of superstitious, frightened minds. Alternatively, in an attempt to modernize the myth, it is claimed that “Adam” is only figurative and not a single, literal person.

For most people, one of these two explanations is the only one possible. These two dichotomous ideas create the basis of a great chasm between science and faith. For at least the past 150 years, most people have lined up on one side of the chasm or the other, and have often hated those on the other side of the rift.

But where do these two opposing solutions leave a person of faith who is also a scientist? How does a person of faith in the power of God, who also has faith in the power of the scientific method, reconcile this apparent chasm between belief in a literal, actual Adam and acceptance of data revealing actual people, capable of creating sensitive, spiritual paintings 35,000 years ago? Is there any way to bridge the chasm?

Some people have attempted to solve the dilemma by suggesting that hominids living 35,000 years ago, before Adam, were not actually human and that Adam was the first true human, the first to have a spirit. Others propose that Adam lived earlier than 6,000 years ago, at a time when *Homo sapiens* first gained spiritual insight. If the cave artists of 35,000 years ago were exhibiting spiritual insight, then Adam must have predated them. Burial rites, which may be characterized as evidence of religious behavior, date as far back as 300,000 years ago, to the first appearance of *Homo sapiens* and even *Homo neanderthalensis*. There is clear evidence of anatomically modern human ritual burials from 100,000 years ago in Israel, where the bones were deliberately stained with red ochre. By 27,000 years ago, burials included grave goods, such as shells, clothing, dolls, and jewelry, suggesting belief in an after-life. Where does Adam fall into this timeline of human spirituality?

It is my opinion that chasing after an elusive date to place Adam as the first man to have spiritual insight, to believe in God and an after-life, is problematic in the extreme. Furthermore, the story of Adam and Eve, as given in the scriptures, is clearly an agricultural story, placing the events no more than 12,000 years ago, when the first signs of plant and animal domestication appear: "... Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground."<sup>1</sup>

The solution of denying spirits to pre-Adamic people is not at all satisfactory to me for it denies the obvious spirituality of those very talented cave artists, whose paintings and music can rank with the very best created today. The solution of trying to place Adam at the beginning of human spirituality is equally problematic because such a solution places him long before the agricultural era, thus negating the story of Adam and Eve in the scriptures. The idea of making Adam plural and suggesting that the stories of Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel in the scriptures are only figurative is also not a satisfactory solution in my mind because it tends to render modern scripture referring to Adam as a specific individual as merely figurative. Is there no way to reconcile a literal Adam, living some 6,000 — 12,000 years ago with modern scientific data?

There must be some other, more satisfactory answer. After wrestling with this dilemma for years, I have come to another, very unusual conclusion. My conclusion



*Jehovah Creates the Earth, 2000, Walter Rane (1949-)*

is so far outside the box, it is likely I may become a target for both the religious and the scientific side of the chasm, both of whom would probably very happily join forces in tossing me over the brink into the depths of the rift.

We, who are faithful members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, understand that we all lived as premortal spirit children of God before we were born on earth.<sup>2</sup> We also understand that there was a Grand Council in Heaven before the foundation of the World. We apparently all attended that council and marveled at the great plan of our God<sup>3</sup> and shouted for joy at its outcome.<sup>4</sup> At that council, Satan, who was from the beginning, "... came before ... [God], saying — Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor."<sup>5</sup> Then God's "... Beloved, which was my Beloved and Chosen from the beginning, said unto me — Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever." We are told that Satan then rebelled against God, "... and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down; And he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice."<sup>6</sup>

Abraham 3:22-28 gives a slightly different, more poetic account of the council:

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 I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; 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 who 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. And the Lord said: Whom shall I send? And one answered like unto the Son of Man: Here am I, send me. And another answered and said: Here am I, send me. And the Lord said: I will send the first. And the second was angry, and kept not his first estate; and, at that day, many followed after him.

We are all quite familiar with this part of the story of the Grand Council. Once God had announced that He would send his Beloved and Chosen Firstborn to be his Only Begotten Son, each of us had the choice to accept or reject the plan. Satan did not give up easily. He initiated a War in Heaven in which he was able to draw away the third part of Heaven's host after him. The casting out of Satan and his host is described most poetically in Revelation 12:7 and 12:4: "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels. ... And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth." This number is confirmed in modern revelation:<sup>7</sup> "the devil ... rebelled against me, saying, Give me thine honor, which is my power; and also a third part of the hosts of heaven turned he away from me because of their agency."

But what about the other half of the Great Plan of the Creator, which was presented in the Grand Council? Many Christians seem to believe that God was taken by surprise by Adam's disobedience in the Garden of Eden. Such belief flies in the face of the notion that God is omniscient. Not only was Adam and Eve's behavior in the Garden not a surprise to God, it was foreseen from the beginning as part of the plan presented to us in the Grand Council. Lehi, in his blessing to Jacob, taught:<sup>8</sup>

if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end. And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin. But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things. Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.

In accepting the great Plan of Salvation, we accepted both Adam's and Christ's part in the plan. Without a Fall there was no need of a Redemption: "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."<sup>9</sup> We are all partakers of the "flesh and blood" given us by Adam,<sup>9</sup> just as we are all partakers of Christ's redemption.<sup>10</sup> Paul stated in his letter to the Romans:<sup>11</sup>

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Jacob<sup>12</sup> described the infinite nature of the atonement:

For as death hath passed upon all men, to fulfil the merciful plan of the great Creator, there must needs be a power of resurrection, and the resurrection must needs come unto man by reason of the fall; and the fall came by reason of transgression; and because man became fallen they were cut off from the presence of the Lord. Wherefore, it must needs be an infinite atonement — save it should be an infinite atonement this corruption could not put on incorruption. Wherefore, the first judgment which came upon man must needs have remained to an endless duration. And if so, this flesh must have lain down to rot and to crumble to its mother earth, to rise no more. O the wisdom of God, his mercy and grace! For behold, if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more. And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself; yea, to that being who beguiled our first parents, who transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light, and stirreth up the children of men unto secret combinations of murder and all manner of secret works of darkness. O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell, which I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit. And because of the way of deliverance of our God, the Holy One of Israel, this death, of which I have spoken, which is the temporal, shall deliver up its dead; which death is the grave. And this death of which I have spoken, which is the spiritual death, shall deliver up its dead; which spiritual death is hell; wherefore, death and hell must deliver up their dead, and hell must deliver up its captive spirits, and the grave must deliver up its captive bodies, and the bodies and the spirits of men will be restored one to the other; and it is by the power of the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel. O how great the plan of our God! For on the other hand, the paradise of God must deliver up the spirits of the righteous,



*Saint Peter and Saint John Run to the Sepulchre*, 1886-1894, J. James Tissot (1836-1902)

and the grave deliver up the body of the righteous; and the spirit and the body is restored to itself again, and all men become incorruptible, and immortal, and they are living souls, having a perfect knowledge like unto us in the flesh, save it be that our knowledge shall be perfect.

Jacob stated, first, that “death hath passed upon all men, to fulfil the merciful plan of the great Creator,” and, second, that “the resurrection must needs come unto man by reason of the fall;”<sup>13</sup> third, the Atonement, “must needs be an infinite atonement.”<sup>14</sup> Had it not been infinite, “the first judgment which came upon man must needs have remained to an endless duration.”<sup>15</sup> Fourth, “the bodies and the spirits of men will

be restored one to the other; and it is by the power of the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel ... and all men become incorruptible, and immortal, and they are living souls, having a perfect knowledge like unto us in the flesh, save it be that our knowledge shall be perfect.”<sup>16</sup> In the previous two paragraphs, the parallel between the fall and the atonement has been emphasized by the scriptures, “... as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”<sup>17</sup> Jacob<sup>18</sup> pointed out that the atonement was an infinite atonement affecting *all* men. He also stated that the Fall passed upon *all* men. It seems reasonable to also call the Fall an *infinite* Fall.

It is clear that the Atonement and resurrection did not just affect those born after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Indeed, at the time of Christ’s resurrection, we know that “the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose.”<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the resurrection was infinite, not only in affecting all humans who would live afterward, but all those born before Christ’s resurrection. The resurrection was both anticipatory and retroactive.

What about the Fall of Adam and Eve? Is it possible that the Fall was also both anticipatory and retroactive? In other words, could it be the case that not only those who lived after Adam and Eve but also that there were many who lived *before* Adam and Eve who partook of the Fall as well as the Atonement?

We are told “that this is the man who receiveth salvation, through the atonement which was prepared from the foundation of the world for all mankind, which ever were since the fall of Adam, or who are, or who ever shall be, even unto the end of the world.”<sup>20</sup> We are also informed that death fulfilled “the merciful plan of the great Creator.”<sup>21</sup> Adam was Michael, who led the heavenly hosts against Satan and his hosts.<sup>22</sup> He was given the title prince, archangel,<sup>23</sup> the father of all, the prince of all, the ancient of days.<sup>24</sup> Adam was told by God that “I have set thee to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of thee, and thou art a prince over them forever.”<sup>25</sup> Adam was “called and prepared from the foundation of the world.”<sup>26</sup> Adam was also not just a name but also a title, “Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.”<sup>27</sup> Adam had the right of the High Priesthood, “he right of the firstborn, or the first man, who is Adam, or first father” from before the foundation of the earth.<sup>28</sup> Adam presided over the first patriarchal generation, “in the days of the first patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam.”<sup>29</sup> Adam also was called the “first flesh.”<sup>30</sup> Eve was also a title as well as a name: “And Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living; for thus have I, the Lord God, called the first of all women, which are many.”<sup>31</sup>

We call Adam the “first man.”<sup>32</sup> This term has always been used as a statement of Adam’s position in the line of humanity, and recognizes him as “the first man of what we would call the human race.”<sup>33</sup> But I still wonder whether “first man” could be viewed as a title instead. In Moses 3:7, Adam was also called the “first flesh,” yet the same verse also says that man was made “from the dust of the ground,” which we understand to be figurative. Just as Christ was chosen in the Council in Heaven to be the “firstfruits”<sup>34</sup> of the resurrection, so was Adam chosen in the same council to be the “first man.” He represents all humanity in the Fall, which perhaps, like the Atonement, might be both anticipatory and retroactive. We are told in Mosiah 3:11, 16:

For behold, and also his blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam, who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned. And even if it were possible that little children could sin they could not be saved; but I say unto you they are blessed; for behold, as in Adam, or by nature, they fall, even so the blood of Christ atoneth for their sins.

We are sure that the blessings of the Atonement extend to countless people who were born before and after the time of Jesus Christ, who never heard His name. It is my hope and belief that God will extend as many blessings as is possible to the prehistoric individuals born before Adam, who never heard of Adam during their mortal lives — those who with such great care and talent painted the walls of Chauvet Cave some 35,000 years ago — those from ancient times who are loved by the same Lord and Creator of all.

**Endnotes**

- 1, Genesis 4:2.
- 2, Jeremiah 1:5; Acts 17:28; Romans 8:29; Ephesians 1:4; Hebrews 12:9; Alma 13:3; Helaman 14:17; D&C 38:1; 49:17; 93:29; 138:56; Moses 3:5; 6:36; Abraham 3:22-23; 5:7.
3. 2 Nephi 9:13.
4. Job 38:7.
5. Moses 4:1.
6. Moses 4:2, 4.
7. D&C 29:36.
8. 2 Nephi 2:22-25.
9. 1 Corinthians 15:22.
10. Hebrews 3:14.
11. Romans 5:12-21.
12. 2 Nephi 9:6-13.
13. 2 Nephi 9:6.
14. 2 Nephi 9:7.
15. 2 Nephi 9:7.
16. 2 Nephi 9:12-13.
17. 1 Corinthians 15:22.
18. 2 Nephi 9:6.
19. Matthew 27: 52.
20. Mosiah 4:7. See also Alma 12:33 and 22:13.
21. 2 Nephi 9:6.
22. D&C 107:54.
23. D&C 107:54.
24. D&C 27:11.
25. D&C 107:54.

26. Alma 13:3.
27. Genesis 5:2. See also Moses 6:9.
28. Abraham 1:3.
29. Abraham 1:26.
30. Moses 3:7.
31. Moses 4:26.
32. Moses 1:34; 3:7; Abraham 1:3.
33. President Gordon B. Hinckley, 2002, cited in Larry A. Witham, *Where Darwin Meets the Bible: Creationists and Evolutionists in America*. New York City, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 177.
34. 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23.

# TRENT D. STEPHENS



Trent Stephens graduated in 1966 from Raft River High School, Malta, Idaho. He served a mission to the Great Lakes (1967-1969) and then married Kathleen Brown in 1971. He graduated from Brigham Young University in 1973 with a BS in Microbiology and a BS in Zoology. He earned an MS in Zoology from BYU in 1974 and a PhD in Anatomy from the University of Pennsylvania in 1977. He completed a post doc in Pediatrics at the University of Washington in 1981 and took a position teaching Anatomy and Developmental Biology in the Idaho Dental Education Program at Idaho State University the same year. He retired in 2011 after teaching at ISU for thirty years. However, he continues to teach Gross Anatomy every year to the dental students and PA students. He was selected as the ISU Distinguished Teacher (1992) and Outstanding Researcher (2000).

Trent's research is the study of normal and abnormal biological form, including birth defects. He has published approximately one hundred papers and books on the subject, including several scholarly works on the relationship between birth defects and medieval beliefs. He has been building toy and model castles for forty years. He has a castle website ([buildmodelcastles.com](http://buildmodelcastles.com)) and has been teaching classes about the history of castle construction, life in medieval castles, and the modeling of medieval castles for over twenty years. With his daughter Brittani Hobson and niece Carrie Reed, he is launching a huge international party website called Frolic Parties.

Trent has authored or co-authored about twenty books, including several leading-selling Anatomy and Physiology textbooks and the critically acclaimed history of thalidomide (Stephens and Brynner, *Dark Remedy: The Impact of Thalidomide and Its Revival as a Vital Medicine*, Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 2001). Trent is considered one of the world's leading authorities on thalidomide, and has been invited to speak at several international conferences. Beginning in 2012, he has functioned as an expert consultant to several law firms and has helped identify over 200 thalidomide victims (now in their early 50s) in Australia, New Zealand, the UK, and the US. He has also coauthored books on the relationship between science and religion (Stephens, Meldrum, and Peterson, *Evolution and Mormonism: A Quest for Understanding*, SLC, Utah: Signature Books, 2001; Meldrum and Stephens, *Who Are the Children of Lehi? DNA and the Book of Mormon*, SLC, Utah: Kofford, 2007).

Trent is an Eagle Scout and Silver Beaver awardee (1991). He served for many years as Cubmaster and Scoutmaster. He has been an Elders Quorum President and has taught Gospel Doctrine, Teacher Development, and Family History courses. He has served as a counselor in a bishopric and as bishop twice. He has served on a High Council and as High Priest Group Leader. He has also been a temple worker in the Idaho Falls Temple.