

brother you -
do you have B.H. Roberts -
50 page paper in defense
of the theory? from 1st Pres.

Beautiful
Adam &
Creation

April 5, 1931

TO THE COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE,
THE FIRST COUNCIL OF SEVENTY,
AND THE PRESIDING BISHOPRIC.

Dear Brethren:

On the 5th of April, 1930, at a conference of the Genealogical Society of Utah, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith delivered a sermon under the title "Faith Leads to a Fulness of Truth and Righteousness."

This sermon was published in the Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine, and copies of it in pamphlet form were distributed, which gave it wide circulation.

In the sermon referred to, Elder Smith devotes the greater portion of his remarks to the subject of the creation of the earth and the relationship of our Father Adam to it and its inhabitants. He refers to the conflict which exists between geologists and the scripture dates which are given, in regard to the period of time that has elapsed since the creation to the present, and definitely states that there was no death upon the earth, either vegetable, insect or animal, prior to the fall of man, and that human life did not exist upon the earth prior to Adam.

On the 15th of December, 1930, Elder B. H. Roberts submitted the following letter to the First Presidency:

"President Heber J. Grant, and
Counselors; Building.

Dear Brethren: I am writing you to ask if the article published in the Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine of October, 1930, under the title "Faith Leads to a Fulness of Truth and Righteousness," dealing mainly with the antiquity of life and death upon the earth and treated as a discourse by Elder Joseph Fielding Smith on the 5th of April, 1930, is a treatise on that subject that was submitted to and approved by the Council of the First Presidency and perhaps the Quorum of the Twelve? And is it put forth as the official declaration of the Church on the subject treated? Or is it the unofficial and personal declaration of the opinion only of Elder Smith?

In the latter event then I feel that that fact should have been expressed in the discourse; or if it is an official pronouncement of the Church then that fact should have been avowed; for the strictly dogmatical and the pronounced finality of the discourse demand the suggested explanation in either case.

If the discourse of Elder Smith is merely his personal opinion, while not questioning his right to such opinions, and also the right to express them, when avowed as his personal opinions, yet I object to the dogmatic and finality spirit of the pronouncement and the apparent official announcement of them, as if speaking with final authority.

If Elder Smith is merely putting forth his own opinions I call in question his competency to utter such dogmatism either as a scholar or as an Apostle. I am sure he is not competent to speak in such manner from general learning or special research work on the subject; nor as an Apostle, as in that case he would be in conflict with the plain implication at least of the scriptures, both ancient and modern, and with the teaching of a more experienced and learned and earlier Apostle than himself, and a contemporary of the Prophet Joseph Smith--whose public discourse on the subject appears in the Journal of Discourses and was publicly endorsed by President Brigham Young, all which would have more weight in setting forth doctrine than this last dictum of Elder Smith.

My question is important as affecting, finally, the faith and status of a very large portion of the Priesthood and educated membership of the Church, I am sure; and I trust the matter will receive early consideration. All which is respectfully submitted.

Very truly your brother,
(signed) B.H. Roberts"

The sermon referred to, with this letter, was handed by the Presidency to the Council of Twelve with the request that the matter be taken up, and the difference of opinion which existed between the two brethren be composed.

At a meeting of the Council of Twelve, Elder Roberts was invited to be present and submit his findings upon the question at issue, the principal point involved being: Is the age of the earth greater than that set forth in the scripture, as it is given in the Bible, and was Adam the first human life upon it, or does he represent the first of the human race that now occupy it, and may human life have existed prior to his advent.

Elder Roberts appeared before the Council of Twelve and submitted a paper of fifty pages, in which he quotes copiously from the sermon of Elder Smith, and then proceeds to discuss the following statements made in the sermon:

"All life in the sea, on the earth, in the air, was without death. Things were not changing, as we find them changing in this mortal existence, for mortality had not come. I denounce as absolutely false the opinion of some that this earth was peopled by a race before Adam. I do not care what scientists say in regard to dinosaurs and other creatures upon the earth millions of years ago, that lived and died, and fought and struggled for existence."

Elder Roberts quotes from the scripture and extensively from the conclusions reached by the leading scientists of the world, to show that the earth is older than the time given to its creation in Genesis indicates. He places much stress upon the command of the Lord to Adam in which he says: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth". The word replenish he defines to mean to do a thing which has been done before, or refill that which has been made empty.

He quotes a statement made by Apostle Orson Hyde who, at a general conference of the Church, held October, 1854, declared that there were people upon the earth prior to the advent of Adam. Brigham Young and other of the presiding officers were present, and after the remarks made by Elder Hyde, President Young arose and said: "I do not wish to eradicate any items from the lecture Elder Hyde has given us this evening, but simply to give you my views in a few words on the portion touching Bishops and Deacons. We have had a splendid address from Brother Hyde, for which I am grateful. I say to the congregation treasure up in your hearts what you have heard tonight, and at all other times."

Two weeks after Elder Roberts had submitted his paper Elder Smith appeared before the Council of Twelve and submitted a paper consisting of fifty-eight pages, in which he answers the arguments advanced by Elder Roberts, his contention being that Adam was the first man to come to this earth, and that consequently it could not have been previously inhabited by man; that there was no death upon the earth prior to the fall, neither vegetable, insect, or animal, which of course includes man.

In support of his argument he quotes extensively from the scripture, and from sermons of presiding men of the Church, particularly from the sermons of Orson Pratt, who refers to Adam as the first man, the first of all men, the Ancient of Days, etc. To meet the argument of Elder Roberts in the application of the word replenish he shows that the word may be used, and signifies, to fill as well as to fill again.

To meet the statement of Orson Hyde, Elder Smith says that Orson Hyde was not discussing the subject of Pre-Adamites, but was preaching upon marriage, and referred to Pre-Adamites incidentally. He admits that President Young was present, and that he endorsed the remarks made.

While there are many quotations cited by Elder Smith which refer to Adam as the first man, the following is the only one in which a pre-Adamic race is referred to. It is quoted under the heading: "Testimony of Charles W. Penrose":

"It is held by some that Adam was not the first man upon this earth, and that the original human being was a development from lower orders of the animal creation. These, however, are the theories of men. The word of the Lord declares that Adam was the first of all men, (Moses 1:34) and we are therefore in duty bound to regard him as the primal parent of our race."

(signed) Joseph F. Smith
John R. Winder
Anthon H. Lund."

While this quotation is signed by the Presidency of the Church, it is given under the heading of "Testimony of President Charles W. Penrose."

After hearing granted to Elder Smith the following communication was received by the Presidency:

January 21, 1931

President Heber J. Grant & Counselors,
Dear Brethren:

We, the Council of the Twelve, to whom was referred the letter of Elder B.H. Roberts addressed to the First Presidency, a criticism of a certain discourse delivered by Elder Joseph Fielding Smith and published in the Genealogical Magazine, October, 1930, beg leave to report that we have given the time of three rather lengthy meetings to this matter.

At the first meeting Elder Roberts read and submitted a paper embodying his views at some length on the theory of pre-Adamic races, based on scientific investigation - a theory, we understand, which Elder Roberts has promulgated in some of his public utterances among the Latter-day Saints.

At the third meeting Elder Joseph Fielding Smith read and submitted a paper in which he defended the claim he made in the sermon published in the Genealogical Magazine above referred to, viz.; that pre-Adamic races on the earth is simply a theory and not a Church doctrine, and is not true. This he sought to prove by quoting Joseph Smith, the Prophet, Brigham Young, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, John Taylor and other high Church Authorities, particularly the late First Presidency, Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder and Anthon H. Lund.

He also quoted a number of passages from the Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine & Covenants and Pearl of Great Price, pointing to the facts, as he construed them, that there were no pre-Adamic races of man on the earth, neither was there death upon the earth prior to the time of Adam.

We quote a sentence from Elder Roberts' letter: "If Elder Smith is merely putting forth his own opinions I call in question his competency to utter such dogmatism either as a scholar or as an Apostle. I am sure he is not competent to speak in such manner from general learning or special research work on the plain implication at least of the scriptures, both ancient and modern, and with the teaching of a more experienced and learned and earlier Apostle than himself, and a contemporary of the Prophet Joseph Smith."

This reference and language we regard as very offensive on the part of Elder Roberts, who fails to show the deference due from one brother to another brother of higher rank in the Priesthood. However, it may be said that these brethren affirmed at the close of the meeting that they entertained no ill feeling, one toward the other.

Elder Roberts' letter is herewith returned, and the two papers alluded to are now submitted to the Presidency. The Twelve await your further instructions relative to this matter, if you have any to give.

Sincerely your brethren,

The Council of the Twelve

By (signed) Rudger Clawson, Pres."

It will be observed that no suggestion is made in this communication regarding the attitude of the Council of Twelve in respect to the question involved in the controversy under consideration.

On February 9th the following communication was received from Elder Roberts:

"President Heber J. Grant and Counselors,
Building

Dear Brethren:

I feel almost as if I ought to apologize in addressing this letter to you lest you think that I am over-persistent in the representation of things referred to herein.

You will recall that the letter I wrote to you asking the questions in relation to the status of Elder Joseph Fielding Smith's discourse published in the Genealogical Magazine for October last, was referred to the Twelve for consideration. Agreeably to a request of theirs I submitted a paper (fifty typewritten pages) setting forth precisely some of the objections I had to the discourse. Two weeks later, bringing us to January 21, Elder Smith submitted a paper of about the same length to the Apostles, myself being present. Since which time I have understood that a report was made to the First Presidency of which I have no copy. That is now three weeks ago and just what the status of the discussion or action upon it is I have not, up to the present, learned.

The questions involved are of very great importance from my standpoint. As for instance, I would not like the matter to go to judgment as matters now stand until I have an opportunity to point out what to me are the weakness and inconsistency of Elder Smith's paper. There was really no discussion on the subject before the Twelve, except the presentation of these two papers, and they represent solely the basis of discussion, not the discussion itself. And I have much more to present after hearing Elder Smith's reply to my paper, which should be said before any decision is rendered.

To me both the discourse on the points questioned and the paper in defense of them is slighter than a house of cards. Yet it was on such pabulum as this that suspended the publication of my book - now in manuscript - "The Truth, The Way, The Life!" This book from my judgment of it is the most important work that I have yet contributed to the Church, the six-volumed Comprehensive History of the Church not omitted.

Life at my years and with an incurable ailment is very precarious, and I should dislike very much to pass on without completing and publishing this work. I therefore ask that in any arrangement that may be made for a further hearing, I may be permitted to present my views on Elder Smith's paper in reply to mine, and if the position he has taken can be met successfully, then I think the principal cause of suspending the publication of my work, "The Truth, The Way, The Life" will be removed.

All which is respectfully submitted,

Very truly your brother,
(signed) B.H. Roberts"

After receipt of this latter communication the Presidency carefully reviewed the papers which had been submitted to the Council of Twelve, and after prayerful consideration decided that nothing would be gained by a continuation of the discussion of the subject under consideration.

The statement made by Elder Smith that the existence of pre-Adamites is not a doctrine of the Church is true. It is just as true that the statement : "There were not pre-Adamites upon the earth", is not a doctrine of the Church. Neither side of the controversy has been accepted as a doctrine at all.

Both parties make the scripture and the statements of men who have been prominent in the affairs of the Church the basis of their contention; neither has produced definite proof in support of his views.

We quote the following from the Millennial Star, February 19, 1931:

"The sun is giving out energy daily. In a few million (or billion) years its energy will be gone. The other heavenly bodies are radiating and losing their heat; and in time they will be no better off than the age-bitten sun. The universe will run down. Then, on earth, there will be no summer and winter, perhaps no light and day, but just eternal twilight of middle African temperature, in the monotony of which all life will perish. So warns Sir James Jeans, famous British scientist, and brilliant writer and lecturer. Well for us that day is distant - a billion years or so - but, think of the grandchildren.

There is a ray of hope.

Dr. Robert A. Millikan, famous American scientist, and brilliant writer and lecturer, has discovered cosmic rays, sources of energy, that come from the uttermost confines of the universe to replenish the energy we lose by radiation. Out in the depths of space, by means unknown to us, the lost energy is assembled, converted, concentrated and sent back to delay the evil day. In short, Dr. Millikan says that this is a self-winding, self-repairing deathless universe. Day and night, summer and winter, may follow one another endlessly. That is more cheerful.

Whom are we to believe? These men are both world famous; both experimenters of the first rank, both honest men. Perhaps Dr. Millikan gives us a clue in his address as retiring president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, delivered last Christmas week. He says:

'If Sir James Jeans prefers to hold one view and I another on this question, no one can say us nay. The one thing of which you may all be quite sure is that neither of us knows anything about it.'

This is the frank and truthful admission of one of the foremost scientists of the world, an honest man, earnestly searching after truth, which he admits has not been definitely discovered.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said: "Oh, ye elders of Israel, hearken to my voice; and when you are sent into the world to preach, tell those things you are sent to tell; preach, and cry aloud, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand; repent and believe the Gospel." Declare the first principles, and let mysteries alone, lest ye be overthrown.... Elder Brown, when you go to Palmyra say nothing about the four beasts, but preach those things the Lord has told you to preach about—repentance and baptism for the remission of sins."

We call attention to the fact that when one of the general authorities of the Church makes a definite statement in regard to any doctrine, particularly when the statement is made in a dogmatic declaration of finality, whether he express it as his opinion or not, he is regarded as voicing the Church, and his statements are accepted as the approved doctrines of the Church, which they should be.

Upon the fundamental doctrines of the Church we are all agreed. Our mission is to bear the message of the restored gospel to the people of the world. Leave Geology, Biology, Archaeology and Anthropology, no one of which has to do with the salvation of the souls of mankind, to scientific research, while we magnify our calling in the realm of the Church.

We can see no advantage to be gained by a continuation of the discussion to which reference is here made, but on the contrary are certain that it would lead to confusion, division and misunderstanding if carried further. Upon one thing we should all be able to agree, namely, that Presidents Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder and Anthon H. Lund were right when they said: "Adam is the primal parent of our race."

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EVOLUTION
B.H. Roberts-

1931

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