

Organic Evolution—a review, by Dr. Daniel S. Burdett, 4/9/2024  
<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/history/topics/organic-evolution?lang=eng#note5>

**This is another example of why so many Latter-day Saints have come to mistrust the scholars and historians who are writing about Church history.**

The modern science of evolution can be traced back to the work of Charles Darwin and Gregor Mendel in the mid-1800s. {Charles Darwin tried unsuccessfully to explain inheritance through a theory of pangenesis. *The Variation of Animals and Plants Under Domestication*, 1868, does not get much attention today because Darwin's hypothetical mechanism for heredity, which he called pangenesis, proved entirely wrong, but not before deeply influencing his work in evolution. Darwin knew nothing about Mendel's successful heredity work. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregor\\_Mendel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregor_Mendel).}

Based on his study of animal species, Darwin noted that environmental conditions favor some individuals within a population better than others. Members of a species that developed certain traits were better suited to survive and reproduce across generations. Over generations, he argued, this process of “natural selection” could give rise to new species.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, Mendel tracked variations in plant reproduction and argued that some of their traits are transmitted through genes. {The profound significance of Mendel's work was not recognized until the turn of the 20th century (more than three decades later) with the rediscovery of his laws. Erich von Tschermak, Hugo de Vries and Carl Correns independently verified several of Mendel's experimental findings in 1900, ushering in the modern age of genetics. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregor\\_Mendel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregor_Mendel).}

As scientists debated Darwin's and Mendel's theories over the following decades, people of faith grappled with the implications of organic evolution for human origins, the Creation of the earth, and the meaning of scripture.<sup>3</sup> In the early 20th century, public controversy about evolution centered on “Darwinism,” or Darwin's explanation of natural selection through random mutation. Theologians were divided over whether the findings of scientists attested to God's creative power or denied His role in the Creation.<sup>4</sup> {non-LDS theologians and non LDS & LDS scientists were divided on the theory of evolution. In the restored Church of Jesus Christ, The Q12 and 1<sup>st</sup> Presidency were united in 1909, the time period mentioned.} Leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at the time did not take an official stance on the theory of evolution, but they did take steps to clarify the Church's teachings related to human origins. {This is **disinformation**. In 1909 the First Presidency's Statement on *The Origin of Man* is the official stance of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. It was released due to arising questions provoked by the popular theories, published by Darwin in *The Origin of the Species*} In 1909, President Joseph F. Smith and his counselors in the First Presidency published an official declaration entitled “The Origin of Man.” {In 1909, more than 400 scientists and dignitaries from 167 countries met in Cambridge to honor Darwin's contributions and to discuss vigorously the recent discoveries and related theories contesting for acceptance. **This**

**was a widely reported event of public interest.**<sup>[3][4]</sup> Also in 1909, on 12 February, the 100th birth anniversary of Darwin and the 50th anniversary of the publication of *On The Origin of Species* were celebrated by the New York Academy of Sciences at the American Museum of Natural History. A bronze bust of Darwin was unveiled.<sup>[5]</sup> On 2 June 1909 the Royal Society of New Zealand held a "Darwin Celebration". It was in this historical context that the statement on "The Origin of Man" was created. From September 27 to October 15, 1909, members of the First Presidency **and** Quorum of the Twelve, including John A. Widtsoe and James Talmage "two professional scientists", met to discuss and revise a draft of the **1909 statement on the Origin of Man**. The final statement was approved by the Quorum of the Twelve on October 20, 1909 (p.276). *Thomas G. Alexander, Mormonism in Transition. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986* } Drafted by Elder Orson F. Whitney, the declaration affirmed our divine nature as children of God.<sup>5</sup> {This sentence minimizes the unanimously approved statement on *The Origin of Man* by the 17 who participated in its creation and approval.} The next year, President Smith urged Church leaders not to undertake "to say how much of evolution is true, or how much is false."<sup>6</sup> {No Link, Why? Because this is taken out of context and is disinformation. See the link below. This is deliberate, whoever wrote it knows what Joseph F. Smith stated in this article they cited. No historical context of the 1911 controversy at BYU was provided.} <https://archive.org/details/juvenileinstruct464geor/page/200/mode/2up?view=theater> <https://archive.org/details/improvementera1406unse/page/548/mode/2up?view=theater>

Some example paragraphs from the linked articles.

#### *Juvenile Instructor*

"Some of **our teachers** are anxious to explain how much of the theory of evolution, in their judgment, is true, and what is false, but that only leaves their students in an unsettled frame of mind. ... **In reaching the conclusion that evolution would be best left out of discussion in our Church Schools** we are deciding a question of propriety and **are not undertaking to say how much of evolution is true, or how much is false.** We think that while it is a hypothesis, on both sides of which the most eminent scientific men of the world are arrayed, that **it is folly to take up its discussion in our institutions of learning:** and we cannot see wherein such discussions are likely to promote the faith of our young people."

"On the other hand we have abundant evidence that many of those who have adopted in its fulness **the theory of evolution** have discarded **the Bible**, or at least refused to accept it as **the inspired word of God**. It is **not**, then, the question of the liberty of **any teacher** to entertain whatever views he may have upon this hypothesis of **evolution**, **but rather the right of the Church to say that it does not think it profitable or wise to introduce controversies relative to evolution in its schools.**"

**"...we deem it best to refrain from the discussion of certain philosophical theories which rather destroy than build up the faith of our young people. One thing about this so-called philosophy of religion that is very undesirable, lies in the fact that as soon as we convert our religion into a system of philosophy none but philosophers can understand, appreciate, or enjoy it. God, in his revelation to man, has made His word so simple that the humblest of men without especial training, may enjoy great faith, comprehend the teachings of the Gospel, and enjoy undisturbed their religious convictions. For that reason, we are averse to the discussion of certain philosophical theories in our religious instructions. If our church schools would ..."**

#### *Improvement Era*

"Recently there was some trouble of this kind in one of the leading Church schools—**BYU**—where three **professors advanced certain theories on evolution as applied to the origin of man**, and certain opinions on "higher criticism," as conclusive and demonstrated truths. This was done

although it is well known that evolution and the “higher criticism”—though perhaps containing many truths—are **in conflict** on some matters with the scriptures, including some **modern revelation**.”

“The committee met with the Professors Henry Peterson, Joseph Peterson and Ralph V. Chamberlin ... The professors frankly admitted that they held to and taught the **theories of evolution** as at present set forth in the text books, and also theories relating to the Bible known as “**higher criticism**,” which they appeared to view as conclusive and demonstrated; so that when these ideas and enunciations were in conflict with the **scripture**, ancient and modern, **it required the modification of the latter to come into harmony with the former**, carrying the impression that all **revelation** combines a human element with the divine impression and should be subject to such modification.”

“**The Church on the contrary**, holds to the **definite authority of divine revelation which must be the standard**; and that, as so-called “science” has changed from age to age in its deductions, and **as divine revelation is truth**, and must abide forever, **views as to the lesser should conform to the positive statements of the greater**; and, further, that **in institutions founded by the Church** for the teaching of theology, as well as other branches of education, **its instructors must be in harmony in their teachings with its principles and doctrines**.”

“**There was no inclination to interfere with the freedom of thought and expression of the opinion of the professors, but the committee, after carefully weighing the matter, concluded that as teachers in a Church school they could not be given opportunity to inculcate theories that were out of harmony with the recognized doctrines of the Church, and hence that they be required from so doing**.”



“**The committee so reported to the trustees of BYU. This body later held a meeting at which they unanimously resolved, “that no doctrine should be taught in BYU not in harmony with the revealed word of God as interpreted and construed by the Presidency and Apostles of the Church; and that the power and authority of determining whether any professor or other instructor of the institution is out of harmony with the doctrines and attitude of the Church, be delegated to the presidency of the university.**”

**The religion of the Latter-day Saints is not hostile to any truth, nor to scientific search for truth. “That which is demonstrated, we accept with joy,” said the First Presidency in their Christmas greeting to the Saints, “but vain philosophy, human theory and mere speculations of men, we do not accept, nor do we adopt anything contrary to divine revelation or to good, common sense. But everything that tends to right conduct, that harmonizes with sound morality and increases faith in Deity, finds favor with us, no matter where it may be found.”**



The First Presidency in 1909.

In 1925, a high school science instructor named John Scopes stood trial in the southern United States for teaching human evolution in violation of a Tennessee state law prohibiting the promotion of “any theory that denies the story of the Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible.”<sup>z</sup> During this trial, courtroom arguments over science and scriptural interpretation attracted widespread attention, amplifying the debate about the Bible’s account of human origins.<sup>8</sup> [John Scopes was a substitute teacher and not a high school instructor, disinformation.](#)

As international interest in the trial grew, several prominent newspapers asked Church leaders for the position of Latter-day Saints on evolution. The First Presidency issued a condensed version of “The Origin of Man” in 1925 that reiterated, “All men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother and are literally sons and daughters of Deity.” Both versions of this statement affirmed the doctrine of human divinity, as supported by ancient and modern scripture, and used the term “evolve” in a positive sense, pointing forward to the “ages and eons” of the eternities in which human beings could continue to progress toward godhood themselves.<sup>9</sup> [\[No Link to the Mormon View of Evolution. The citation to an article by](#)

T. Benjamin Spackman, “*The 1909 and 1925 First Presidency Statements in Historical and Scientific Contexts*,” *BYU Studies Quarterly*, vol. 62, no. 2 (2022) has **not** been printed. This email was received on 03/13/24. When Vol. 62, no. 2 was printed in 2023 with the Spackman article **not** published, when an inquiry was made. The response received follows:

Hi Daniel,

Ben Spackman’s article hasn’t been published yet and isn’t scheduled to be published in the next few issues, so I don’t know when it will be available. I can leave myself a note to contact you when it is published, but it may not be for quite a while. I’m sorry I couldn’t be more helpful.

Best wishes,

*Melanie von Bose*

Office Coordinator

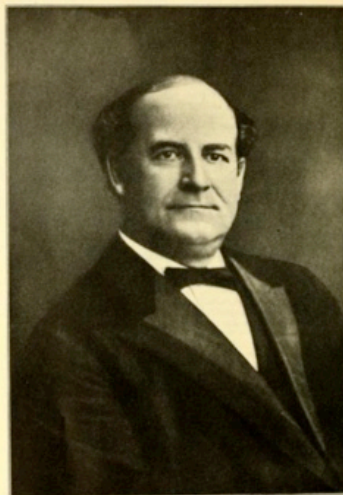
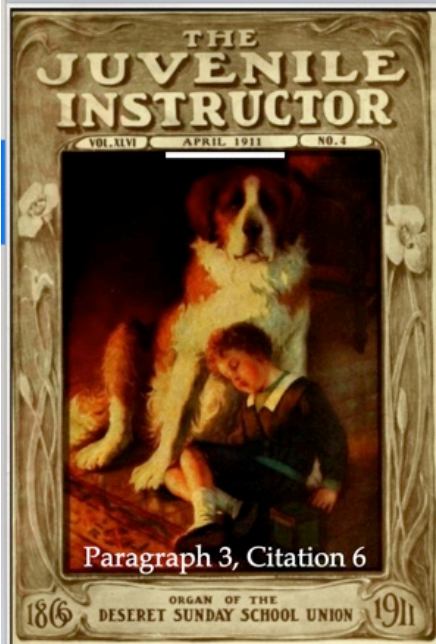
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In the wake of the Scopes trial, Christians in the United States became increasingly divided over the question of human origins. “Modernist” Christians embraced scientific discovery and reasoning and were open to many approaches to biblical interpretation. Christians who opposed modernism, often labeled “fundamentalists,” regarded the idea that humankind evolved from other species as blasphemous.<sup>10</sup> {This Prophet, Howard W. Hunter, not mentioned here regarding Modernist. Which side was he on? Read the talk President Hunter delivered in GC. } <https://scriptures.byu.edu/#:t719:p46b> t

Latter-day Saints and their leaders found themselves on both sides of this issue. James E. Talmage and John A. Widtsoe, two professional scientists who became Apostles, regarded scientific discovery of truth as evidence of God’s use of natural laws to govern the universe.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, Apostle and future Church President Joseph Fielding Smith believed that the Biblical account of the Creation did not allow for the long spans required for species to multiply through evolution.<sup>12</sup> {Those writing this do not and have not accurately represented President Joseph Fielding Smith’s position. To position Talmage and Widtsoe against Joseph Fielding Smith is misleading. Did Widtsoe and Talmage not participate in the creation of the 1909 statement? Widtsoe compiled *Gospel Doctrine* and included Presidents Smith’s statements against evolution and did not alter or misrepresent President Smith. Widtsoe even includes a statement from the *Juvenile Instructor* article issue previously cited in *Gospel Doctrine*. The slide below shows an article that was in the same April 1911 issue of the *Juvenile Instructor*, by William Jennings Bryan. His name was never mentioned in this Organic Evolution essay. Not mentioning him is another example of historian bias. President George Albert Smith quotes Bryan in General Conference also shown and cited below. William Jennings Bryan was eulogized in the *Improvement Era*, the very same issue as the 1925 First Presidency message, *Mormon View of Evolution*. Bryan’s argument on the anti-evolution law was also published in the *Improvement Era*. David O. McKay also quotes him in general conference, and President Monsen quotes Scopes attorney. see below.}



HON. WILLIAM J. BRYAN.

### Total Abstinence

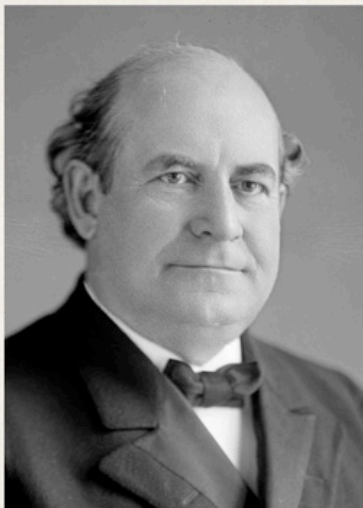
THE ethical comes first. Man is not to be measured by his muscular strength or by his mental alertness alone. The seat of his power—the center of his influence—is the heart. His ideals control him and his associates know him by those ideals. The first thing he has to do is to bring himself into harmony with the Divine Will, and the second to reflect as perfectly as possible the light which he receives from above. Man cannot serve his God without recognizing his responsibility to God for every thought, word and act, and cannot serve his fellow-men without a full realization of the importance of making his example helpful to all who come into contact with him, and that he can not do less he is willing to make such sacrifice as may be necessary to strengthen his weaker brother.

The use of liquor as a beverage can be condemned on the ground that it is a needless expense at best and on the further ground that it is a dangerous habit to acquire under any circumstances, but the Christian finds a third reason for total abstinence; namely, that he loves his brother more than he loves drink and finds more pleasure in setting him an example that would be helpful, than he could possibly find in the gratification of his taste for alcohol.

WILLIAM J. BRYAN.

*Written for the Juvenile Instructor.*

<https://archive.org/details/juvenileinstruct464geor/page/200/mode/2up?view=theater>



William Jennings Bryan  
March 19, 1860 - July 26, 1925 (aged 65)

**“I am not yet convinced that man is a lineal descendant of the lower animals. I do not mean to find fault with you if you want to accept the theory; all I mean to say is that while you may trace your ancestry back to the monkey if you find pleasure or pride in doing so, you shall not connect me with your family tree without more evidence than has yet been produced (p.14,15, *The Prince of Peace*).**





President  
George Albert Smith,  
Conference Report,  
April 1946, pp. 181-186

The Genealogical Society is another marvelous organization. It has the task of gathering the names of those who have passed on, generations ago, bringing them into a great depository where they may be sorted over and classified, so that we may trace our ancestry. I said to a man one day. "You can find out all about your ancestors if you will go with me to the Genealogical Library." He said, "I don't want to know anything about them." I wouldn't either if I thought my ancestors could be traced back to an orangutan or a baboon. But like William Jennings Bryan, those who have any pride in that kind of ancestry will not connect me with their family tree.

<https://archive.org/details/improvementera28011unse/page/1090/mode/2up?view=theater>

1090 IMPROVEMENT ERA

William Jennings Bryan

When William Jennings Bryan, the great Congressman, died July 26, 1923, at Dayton, Tennessee, the nation lost a remarkable character and Christianity, an earnest defender. He died without any previous indication of the approach of the end. He had paraded a heavy mail, then retired to take a rest. That was his last. He went to sleep to awake no more in this life. Seated on the porch, Mr. Bryan thought his husband was sleeping longer than usual. At 4 p. m. Mrs. Sorensen, Mrs. Bryan's nurse, passed through the bedroom, seeing an unusual pallor on Mr. Bryan's face. She bent over him. The spirit had gone; death had come, apparently without pain or struggle.

Mr. Bryan, senator, orator, and public official, was born in Salem, Illinois, in 1856. He was a member of Congress 1891-5, and subsequently, in his long and well-known political career, was a candidate several times for the Presidency, and acted as secretary of State for a time under President Woodrow Wilson. He was a staunch Democrat for many years. He visited Utah several times and each time took much interest in the religion of the Latter-day Saints. At one time, particularly, he visited a conference in the Tabernacle and became very much interested in the speeches that were there delivered on the Latter-day Saints' idea and belief in God. He came often also on political missions, in the heyday of his life many years ago, and later. Recently he came into prominence in defense of the Bible in the case of the Copps trial in Tennessee which involved the question of the constitutionality of the Tennessee anti-evolution law, making it a misdemeanor for a school teacher to teach the children of Tennessee that a man is descended from a lower order of animals. He has often defended the Bible. Speaking in 1923 before the legislature of West Virginia, which was then considering a bill to prohibit the teaching of the so-called Darwin theory in the schools of that state, Mr. Bryan said:

"School teachers paid by taxation should not be permitted to teach under the guise of science or philosophy anything that undermines faith in God, impairs belief in the Bible or discounts the love of God as the source of the world's happiness and the source of the grace which bestows the measure of his duty and the triumph of his mission. They should teach faith in the Bible as the source of the miracle and the supernatural, and by drawing from the Bible all the conflicts with their theories. They render the Book a wisp of paper."

Later, in an address in New York, Mr. Bryan declared that in the schools evolution, as taught, was undermining Christianity. He said:

"I don't object to scientific truth, for so truth disabuses religion. What we object to is for any creature to put forth his guess, and demand that we subscribe it for the word of God. Evolution is an enemy of the Bible and founders a respectable excuse for men to deny the Bible."

He came to Dayton to defend the Bible against attacks by atheistic evolutionists, and on the witness stand he declared his faith with child-like strength and purity. In his last testimony in the world, in reply to the opposing attorneys, Mr. Darrow, he said:

"I have from the Bible all the information I need to live by and die by. Have you ever pondered on what would have happened if the earth could split?" asked Mr. Darrow.

"No, the God I believe in would have taken care of that, Mr. Darrow."

When Mr. Darrow asked specific questions as to the Bible miracles, Bryan replied: "The Bible states it; it must be so."

This may be considered the last testimony of Mr. Bryan to the world. He prepared an argument, however, in the defense of the Tennessee evolution law, but did not deliver it owing to the early termination of the case. On the 26th of July Mrs. Bryan gave out this address for publication, and it was interpreted throughout the country and printed in many of the papers. It is a long, remarkable address and enables William Jennings Bryan to be called "Defender of the Bible." This address, we expect later, to print in the Improvement Era, believing our readers will be deeply interested in its contents.—A.

Editors' Table

"Mormon" View of Evolution

A statement by the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

"God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them."

In these plain and pointed words the inspired author of the book of Genesis made known to the world the truth concerning the origin of the human family. Moses, the prophet-historian, who was "learned" we are told, "in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," when making this important announcement, was not voicing a mere opinion. He was speaking as the mouthpiece of God, and his solemn declaration was for all time and for all people. No subsequent revelation of the truth has contradicted the great leader and law-giver of Israel. All who have since spoken by divine authority upon this theme have confirmed his simple and sublime proclamation. Nor could it be otherwise. Truth has but one source, and all revelations from heaven are harmonious one with the other.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is "the express image" of his Father's person (Hebrews 1:3). He walked the earth as a human being, in a perfect man, and said, in answer to a question put to him: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). This divine insight to solve the problem as to the nature of every thoughtful, sensitive mind. It was in this form that the Father and the Son, as two distinct personages, appeared to Joseph Smith, when, in a boy of fourteen years, he received his first vision.

The Father of Jesus Christ is our Father also. Jesus himself taught this truth, when he instructed his disciples how to pray: "Our Father which art in heaven," etc. Jesus, however, is the first born among all the sons of God—the first begotten in the spirit, and the only begotten in the flesh. He is our elder brother, and we, like him, are in the image of God. All men and women are in the similitude of the eternal Father and Mother, and are literally sons and daughters of Deity.

Adam, our great progenitor, "the first man," was, like Christ, a pre-existent spirit, and, like Christ, he took upon him an appropriate body, the body of a man, and so became a "living soul." The doctrine of pre-existence gives wonderful insight upon the otherwise mysterious problem of man's origin. It shows that man, as a spirit, was begotten and born of heavenly parents, and existed in the earth in a temporal body to undergo an experience in mortality.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, basing its belief

on divine revelation, ancient and modern, proclaims man to be the direct and literal offspring of Deity. By his Almighty power God organized the earth, and all that it contains, from spirit and element, which exist co-eternally with himself.

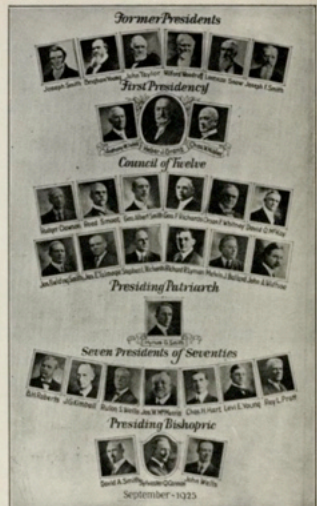
Man as the child of God, formed in the divine image and endowed with divine attributes, and even as the infant son of an earthly father and mother is capable in the time of becoming a man, so the undeveloped offspring of celestial parentage is capable, by exposure through ages and aeons, of evolving into a God.

HERBERT J. GRANT,  
ANTHONY W. IVINS,  
CHARLES W. NISLEY,  
First Presidency.



The 1925 First Presidency statement constitutes a shortened or condensed form of the statement issued by the former 1909 First Presidency statement on "The Origin of Man." Paragraphs 1-5 are extracts from paragraphs 3, 13, 14, 30, 34 and 35 of the 1909 statement.

<https://archive.org/details/improvementera28012unse/page/n7/mode/2up>



FORMER PRESIDENTS OF THE CHURCH AND THE GENERAL CHURCH AUTHORITIES AS AT PRESENT CONSTITUTED

## IMPROVEMENT ERA

Vol. XXVIII      OCTOBER, 1925      No. 12

### THE TENNESSEE CASE The Undelivered Argument on the Anti-Evolution Law

By WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

[Because of an early termination of the Dayton trial, the Communique was prevented from delivering this speech prepared in the defense of the anti-evolution law; but on July 28, 1925, following the death of her husband, July 26, Mrs. Bryan made its text known to the world. An introductory note to the address reads:

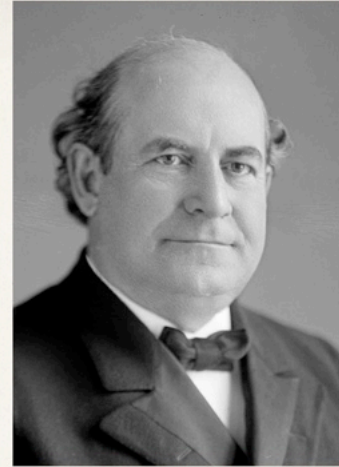
"A sudden decision of the defense to submit the case without argument and permit a verdict of guilty, prevented the delivery of the speech. As it presents the issues involved and the reasons for the law prohibiting the teaching in public schools of any hypothesis that makes man a descendant of an lower form of life, it is prepared for the information of the general public."

Mr. Bryan declared in the address that the case was no longer local, but that it has assumed the proportions of a battle-royal between belief and unbelief in the Christian faith and Bible. We are certain that our readers will find much to interest them in the speech.—Editors.]

May it please the court, and gentlemen of the jury:  
Demosthenes, the greatest of ancient orators, in his "Oration on the Crown," the most famous of his speeches, began by supplicating the favor of all the gods and goddesses of Greece. If, in a case which involved only his own fame and fate, he felt justified in petitioning the heathen gods of his country, surely we, who deal with the momentous issues involved in this case, may well pray to the Ruler of the Universe for wisdom to guide us in the performance of our several parts in this historic trial.

Let me, in the first place, congratulate our cause that circumstances have committed the trial to a community like this and entrusted the decision to a jury made up largely of the yeomanry of the state.

Entered at the Post Office, Salt Lake City, Utah, as second class matter. Approved for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Section 1103, Act of October 3, 1917, authorized on July 2, 1918, \$2 per annum. Address Room 416, Church Office Building, Salt Lake City, Utah.



President  
David O. McKay,  
Conference Report,  
April 1963, pp. 96-99

Sitting in the audience on that occasion was a statesman who had won national and international eminence, not only as a great leader in the political world, but also as a speaker and writer on religious topics. He was **William Jennings Bryan**, who only a few months before had written an article for a current magazine entitled "In the World, of the World, and for the World," wherein he outlined a number of ways in which he thought the church could make the world a better place in which to live. "My suggestion, therefore," I read from his article, "is that an effort should be made to set up a **Christian standard for Christian communities**, and to create an environment that will be helpful to the Church and the spiritual things for which the Church stands."

"Today, as always, the skeptic's voice challenges the word of God, and each must choose to whom he will listen. Clarence Darrow, the famous lawyer and agnostic, declared, "No life is of much value, and ... every death is [but a] little loss."<sup>4</sup> [The Story of My Life (1932), chapter 47, paragraph 34.] Schopenhauer, the German philosopher and pessimist, wrote, "To desire immortality is to desire the eternal perpetuation of a great mistake."<sup>5</sup> [Arthur Schopenhauer, in The Home Book of Quotations, ed. Barton Stevenson (1934), 969.] And to their words are added those of new generations, as foolish men crucify the Christ anew—for they modify His miracles, doubt His divinity, and reject His Resurrection." (Pres. Monson, April, 2007, I Know that My Redeemer Lives!)



Addressing these differing opinions, Church President Heber J. Grant and his counselors in the First Presidency urged leaders not to take sides on the issue, requesting in 1931 that they “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.”<sup>13</sup> {On April 7, [1931] the day after general conference, the First Presidency called the Twelve and other general authorities together to settle the dispute. ... They urged the men to preach the core doctrine of the restored gospel. ... As far as the origins of life were concerned, they had no more to say than the First Presidency had already said in their 1909 statement, “The Origin of Man””<sup>14</sup>(Saints, p.320-321). President Grant did take sides, He participated in the creation and approved the 1909 First Presidency statement, was also on the 1911 committee and was the President of the Church for the 1925 First Presidency Statment. President Grant also praises William Jennings Bryan in General Conference Oct. 1925.

“At one of our general conferences some years ago we were honored with the presence of Senator Owen from Oklahoma and **Honorable William Jennings Bryan**. These gentlemen remained until after the conference session, when an informal organ recital was given in their honor. Perhaps a hundred or a hundred and fifty people were present and following the recital, requests came from different parts of the small audience that Senator Owen and Mr. Bryan make some remarks. They did so, and from the press reports of the occasion we read the following”

"**Mr. Bryan** said the truths he had heard expounded there that day he should endeavor to carry with him throughout life, and he believed that through him many people might hear the truth concerning 'Mormonism,' for he would-endeavor to give an exposition of what he had heard in plain truth to the people with whom he associated. **Mr. Bryan** said he had been undecided about coming to Salt Lake. He had been asked to speak in Los Angeles Monday, but he had obeyed a whim almost and had come to Salt Lake. He did not know why, but now he said he believed it was providential. At any rate he said he had heard truths uttered that impressed him deeply, and he knows that he is better equipped to perform his work in the world for having heard 'Mormonism' expounded. Particularly was he impressed, **Mr. Bryan** said, with the 'Mormon' belief in the personality of God. It is a beautiful belief, he said, and one by which the world might profit. He referred to the application of the gospel in the lives of the 'Mormon' people, and said such principles applied to the problems of the world would in very deed solve the difficulties with which the world is beset. He referred to the single standard of morality, as expounded by one of the speakers, and said that in very truth that is a principle that might well he applied to the lives of all men."

"The publishing house of Revell & Co. have published a book containing the last address of William Jennings Bryan, which address was prepared for the celebrated evolution case in Tennessee but was never delivered. I have had the privilege of reading and rereading the book. It shows that he had perfect faith in God our heavenly Father and in my judgement, it is a very strong defense of the divinity of Christ and of the Godhood of our Father in heaven. I had the pleasure of visiting with **Mr. Bryan**, after his remarks following our conference, and he said that he was expected to deliver three speeches in California before leaving, but that he believed the world at large would get more benefit from what he had learned in our conference than the people would have received had he remained in California and delivered those three speeches. He promised to send me a little pamphlet containing his ideas about God. After reading it I remember saying to my family that **William Jennings Bryan** ought to be a Latter-day Saint, because many of **his views were in perfect harmony with our faith**. Every Latter-day Saint upon the face of the earth believes in the individuality and personality of God our Father, and of the Lord Jesus Christ. A man who does not so believe has no right to be called a

Latter-day Saint. Every Latter-day Saint believes absolutely that God conversed with Joseph Smith and introduced to him the Lord Jesus Christ as his well-beloved Son.

<https://archive.org/details/ConferenceReports1920s/page/n2009/mode/2up>

As time went on, faithful Latter-day Saints continued to hold diverse views on the topic of evolution.<sup>14</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith in his influential writings maintained the reliability of scripture as a guide to the Creation timeline.

Henry Eyring, a prominent scientist and Sunday School general board member, welcomed evidence of evolutionary change and reiterated the teachings of Brigham Young, who taught that the gospel encompassed all truth, scientific or otherwise.<sup>15</sup> {No mention of the “prominent scientist” Melvin A. Cook, who wrote an Introduction to *Man His Origin and Destiny*. Here is an example of what President Young thought about the theory of evolution: “He (President Young) unmistakably declares **man’s origin** to be altogether of a celestial character — that not only is his spirit of heavenly descent, but his bodily organization too, — that the latter is not taken from the lower animals, but from the originally celestial body of the great Father of humanity.

Taking the doctrine of **man’s origin** as seen from this higher point of view and comparing it with the low assumptive theories of uninspired men, such as those we have alluded to (Pouchet, Darwin) how great the contrast appears! *The Millennial Star*, Sat. Oct. 12, 1861, *The Origin of Man*, p. 651-654} In 1965, Church President David O. McKay worked with Bertrand F. Harrison, a botany professor at Brigham Young University, to foster greater understanding between Saints with differing viewpoints on evolution.<sup>16</sup> {No mention of this disclaimer at the beginning of the article. Link provided in the essay for this article.}

In publishing the articles in this series, “I Believe,” we sincerely agree with *2 Nephi* 9:29: “But to be learned is good if they (men) hearken unto the counsels of God.”

This article by Brother Harrison has been read and approved for publication by the editor and associate editors of *The Instructor*. Like other articles in this series, it is presented not as Church doctrine but as a statement worthy of serious study, written by a faithful Latter-day Saint who is competent to speak as a scholar in his field.

In the late 20th century, Church-sponsored schools expanded their educational offerings in the sciences. In 1992, the First Presidency and board of trustees at Brigham Young University approved a packet of reading material for use in science classes that presented the official 1909 and 1925 statements and other statements from members of the First Presidency on the faithful application of scientific truth.<sup>17</sup> The packet also included an entry from the 1992 publication *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, produced with Church

leader approval, which explained that “the scriptures tell why man was created, but they do not tell how.”<sup>18</sup> In 2016, the Church’s youth magazine published articles on the pursuit of scientific truth. These articles reiterated that “the Church has no official position on the theory of evolution” and characterized it as a “matter for scientific study.” Echoing countless statements of Church leaders, the articles once again affirmed God’s role in creation and our relationship to our Heavenly Father as His children.<sup>19</sup> Here are the “countless church leaders who spoke against Darwin’s theory of evolution” and supported the 1909 First Presidency statement on the Origin of Man. I would like to see their list.



Is the unsigned article that appeared in 2016 meant correct these mistaken Church Leaders?

1. Martinez Hewlett, "Evolution: The Controversy with Creationism," in Lindsay Jones, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed., 14 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 2005), 5:2908–9; Phillip Sloan, "[Darwin: From Origin of Species to Descent of Man](#)," in Edward N. Zalta, ed., *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2019 ed., <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/origin-descent>.
2. Sloan, "Darwin." Although concepts of natural changes to species dated to ancient philosophers, Darwin argued that random mutations within a species' population could lead to new, more complex forms of life. See Phillip Sloan, "[Evolutionary Thought before Darwin](#)," in Edward N. Zalta, ed., *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2019 ed., <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/evolution-before-darwin>.
3. Robert C. Fuller, "Religious Responses to Modern Science, 1865–1945," chapter 24 in Stephen J. Stein, ed., *The Cambridge History of Religions in America*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 2:523–44; see also Ronald L. Numbers, *Darwinism Comes to America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998).
4. Fuller, "Religious Responses," 2:526–28.
5. Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund, "The Origin of Man," *Improvement Era*, vol. 8, no. 1 (Nov. 1909), 75–81 [{no link}](#); "[What Does the Church Believe about Evolution?](#)" *New Era*, Oct. 2016, <https://churchofjesuschrist.org/study/new-era/2016/10/to-the-point/what-does-the-church-believe-about-evolution>.
6. Joseph F. Smith, "Philosophy and the Church Schools," *The Juvenile Instructor*, vol. 46, no. 4 (Apr. 1911), 208–9. [{no link}](#);
7. Numbers, *Darwinism Comes to America*, 77–78.
8. Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion* (New York: Basic Books, 1997); Stefaan Blancke, Hans Henrik Hjermitsev, and Peter C. Kjærgaard, eds., *Creationism in Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 3, 9–13, 229; Numbers, *Darwinism Comes to America*, 4–23, 88; Fuller, "Religious Responses," 2:541–43.
9. "Mormon' View of Evolution," *Deseret News*, July 18, 1925, section 3, 5; [{no link}](#); see also T. Benjamin Spackman, "The 1909 and 1925 First Presidency Statements in Historical and Scientific Contexts," *BYU Studies Quarterly*, vol. 62, no. 2 (2022). [{Has yet to be published}](#);
10. George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3–4, 234.
11. James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith: A Series of Lectures on the Principal Doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1899), 3, 30–34; John A. Widtsoe, *Joseph Smith as Scientist: A Contribution to Mormon Philosophy* (Salt

Lake City: Young Men's Mutual Improvement Associations General Board, 1908), 1–2, 103–14; John A. Widtsoe, "Evidences and Reconciliations: To What Extent Should the Doctrine of Evolution Be Accepted?," *Improvement Era*, vol. 42, no. 7 (Jul. 1939), 417, 444–45, 447.

12. Erich Robert Paul, *Science, Religion, and Mormon Cosmology* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 179; see also Joseph Fielding Smith, "Faith Leads to a Fulness of Truth and Righteousness," *The Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, vol. 21, no. 4 (Oct. 1930), 145–158; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Man: His Origin and Destiny* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954) [{no link}](#);

13. First Presidency, Memorandum to the Council of the Twelve, First Council of the Seventy, and Presiding Bishopric, 5 April 1931, Document C, in William E. Evenson and Duane E. Jeffery, *Mormonism and Evolution: The Authoritative LDS Statements* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2005), 54–67.

14. Compare Paul R. Green, comp., *Science and Your Faith in God: A Selected Compilation of Writings and Talks by Prominent Latter-day Saints Scientists on the Subjects of Science and Religion* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958); Marion G. Romney, in Conference Report, Apr. 1959, 10; Marion G. Romney, "[Records of Great Worth](#)," *Ensign*, Sept. 1980, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1980/09/records-of-great-worth>; Russell M. Nelson, "[The Magnificence of Man](#)" (Brigham Young University devotional, Mar. 29, 1987), <https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/russell-m-nelson/magnificence-man>; William S. Bradshaw, Andrea J. Phillips, Seth M. Bybee, Richard A. Gill, Steven L. Peck, and Jamie L. Jensen, "[A Longitudinal Study of Attitudes toward Evolution among Undergraduates Who Are Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints](#)," *PLoS One*, vol. 13, no. 11 (Nov. 7, 2018), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6221276>.

15. See Henry J. Eyring, *Mormon Scientist: The Life and Faith of Henry Eyring* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2007), 60–70; Henry Eyring, *The Faith of a Scientist* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1967); Joseph Fielding Smith, *Man: His Origin and Destiny*; Joseph Fielding Smith, "Evolution," chapter 9 in *Doctrines of Salvation: Sermons and Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954), 1:139–51. See also "[The Gospel Defined](#)," chapter 2 in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young*, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/teachings-brigham-young/chapter-2>.

16. Bertrand F. Harrison, "[The Relatedness of Living Things](#)," *The Instructor*, Jul. 1965, 272–76, <https://archive.org/details/instructor1007dese/page/n17/mode/2up>.

17. William E. Evenson, "Evolution Packet Defined," *The Daily Universe*, Nov. 12, 1992, 3, in Evolution Packet, Collection on Brigham Young University Evolution Packet, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

18. William E. Evenson, "Evolution," in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 478.

19. Alicia K. Stanton, "[Science and Our Search for Truth](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/new-era/2016/07/science-and-our-search-for-truth)," *New Era*, July 2016, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/new-era/2016/07/science-and-our-search-for-truth>; "[What Does the Church Believe about Evolution?](https://churchofjesuschrist.org/study/new-era/2016/10/to-the-point/what-does-the-church-believe-about-evolution)," *New Era*, Oct. 2016, <https://churchofjesuschrist.org/study/new-era/2016/10/to-the-point/what-does-the-church-believe-about-evolution>.

**Disinformation: Information that is deliberately misleading or biased. Generated by counter-intelligence groups, interest groups. Can easily turn into misinformation when shared by people who believe it to be true. Disinformation is a systematic campaign to tell lies and suppress the truth. Those responsible for this article clearly have misrepresented the positions of past Presidents of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter. For them, the teachings of Apostles and Prophets are nothing more than the philosophies of men mingled with scripture. **The above article on Organic Evolution is yet another example of why so many Latter-day Saints have come to mistrust and have no confidence in the scholars and historians who are writing about Church history.****