

Will You Believe Plain Truth, Be Compelled, or Even Mock Believers on The Evolution Question?

Earlier in this book, in the section on BYU's evolution teaching, we became acquainted with a chorus of **voices in the church calling to set aside the scriptures and trust the experts**. An *abbreviated overview* of some of their claims is important to mention this part of the book is as follows:

1. Spackman: It's very clear that apostles, prophets and scriptures reject evolution
2. Spackman: Science Falsely So Called: How Latter-Day Saints Came To Misread Scripture As Science
3. Spackman: The church's position on evolution is that evolution happened, but did you know that this is also contrary to scripture in some sense and wasn't the church's teaching for a while (Spackman)
4. Spackman: We're seeing in the church today is professionalization. ... it took a while for us to have professional historians, but now we're seeing the fruits of that with the Joseph Smith Papers Project, with the Gospel Topics essays. (Spackman)
5. Perego: Look I think Genesis is a story it's not science but it's a story
6. Wootton: So do you allow your science department to teach evolution? I replied that if any professor in our biological science department did not teach the theory of evolution, I would seriously question his competence.
7. Wootton: What I would do if I were asked [by higher Church leadership] to 'shut down' our biology professor on evolution. I said I would answer honestly, but not meaning to presume any special courage, because I didn't think it would come up. "I wouldn't do it."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks **warned of the consequences of leaving things to scholars**. He said, "I have seen some persons attempt to understand or undertake to criticize the gospel or the Church by the method of reason alone, **unaccompanied by the use or recognition of revelation**. When reason is adopted as the only—or even the principal—method of judging the gospel, the outcome is predetermined. One cannot find God or understand His doctrines and ordinances by closing the door on the means He has prescribed for receiving the truths of his gospel. **That is why gospel truths have been corrupted and gospel ordinances have been lost when left to the interpretation and sponsorship of scholars who lack the authority and reject the revelations of God.**" (Elder Dallin H. Oaks

Alternate Voices, April 1989)



As Elder Oaks predicted, the rule of scholars is having negative consequences. This shift toward professionalism Spackman speaks of may not be going the way we had hoped. On one of John Dehlin's "Mormon Stories" whose themes are to air grievances against the church, in an episode with Matt Harris, it was said, that among the most frequent answers from faith crisis workshop attendees to the question "what caused your crisis of faith?" are Richard Bushman's Rough Stone Rolling and the Gospel Topics essays. (The LDS Gospel Topics Essays - A History by Dr. Matt Harris - Mormon Stories 1365, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ro-gUmOD4wk&t=6968s>) Note: The Gospel Topics Essays are a collection of explanations of Church History related topics, emphasizing the interpretations of scholars in the church (found here: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics-essays?lang=eng>).

Ezra Taft Benson dealt with revisionist historians in his own day. He said, "Historians and educational writers ... classified as "revisionists." Their purpose has been and is to create a "new history." **By their own admission, they are more influenced by their own training and other humanistic and scientific disciplines than any religious conviction.** This detachment provides them, they say, with an objectivity that the older historians did not have. Many of the older historians, I should point out, were defenders of the [Joseph] patriots and [his] their noble efforts. Feeling no obligation to perpetuate the ideals of the founding fathers, some of the so-called "new historians" have recast a new body of beliefs for their secular faith. Their efforts, in some cases, have resulted in a **new interpretation** of our nation's [church's] history. ... I know the philosophy behind this practice—"to tell it as it is." All too often those who subscribe to this philosophy are not hampered by too many facts. When will we awaken to the fact that the defamation of our dead heroes only serves to undermine faith in the principles for which they stood, and the institutions which they established? Some have termed this practice as "historical realism" or moderately call it "debunking." **I call it slander and defamation. I repeat, those who are guilty of it in their writing or teaching will answer to a higher tribunal.** ... This humanistic emphasis on history is not confined only to secular history; **there have been and continue to be attempts made to bring this philosophy into our own Church history.** Again the emphasis is to underplay revelation and God's intervention in significant events and to inordinately humanize the prophets of God so that their human frailties become more apparent than their spiritual qualities. It is a state of mind and spirit characterized by one history buff, who asked: "Do you believe the Church has arrived at a sufficient state of maturity where we can begin to tell our *real* story?" Implied in that question is the accusation that the Church has not been telling the truth. Unfortunately, too many of those who have been intellectually gifted become so imbued with criticism that they become disaffected spiritually. Some of these have attempted to reinterpret Joseph Smith and his revelations; they offer what they call a **psychological interpretation** of his motives and actions. This interpretation suggests that whether or not Joseph Smith actually saw God, the Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, or other visions is really unimportant. What matters is that he *thought* he did. To those who have **not** sought after or received a testimony of Joseph Smith's divine calling, he will ever remain what one called "the enigma from Palmyra." (Elder Ezra Taft Benson, March 28, 1977, God's Hand in the Nation's History, BYU Speeches, <https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/ezra-taft-benson/gods-hand-nations-history/>)

Note that when we talk about a revision of our Churches history, that includes revisions about our stance teachings and history on organic evolution!



Are Christians willing to be mocked for their stance against worldly theories? Jesus taught doubting Thomas: blessed are those who see and believe, but even more blessed are those who believe without seeing (John 20:29). Will you wait for science to vindicate the prophets, or will you boldly stand with them today, when the scientific community has successfully buried most research which disproves evolution? The theory of evolution is on its way out - now is the time to stand for the right without being compelled.

President Ezra Taft Benson called for standing with the prophets rather than the learned. He said, “Sometimes there are those who feel their earthly knowledge on a certain subject is superior to the heavenly knowledge which God gives to His Prophet on the same subject. They **feel the prophet must have the same earthly credentials or training which they have had before they will accept anything the prophet has to say that might contradict their earthly schooling.** How much earthly schooling did Joseph Smith have? . . . We encourage earthly knowledge in many areas, but remember, if there is ever a conflict between earthly knowledge and the words of the prophet, **you stand with the prophet,** and you’ll be blessed and **time** will vindicate you.” (Ezra Taft Benson, Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet, <https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/ezra-taft-benson/fourteen-fundamentals-following-prophet/>)

Elsewhere, Benson taught that the greatest injuries to the Church come from within. He initially quotes President McKay they expounds. Here is the quote: "The Church," says President McKay, "is little, if at all, injured by persecution and calumnies from ignorant, misinformed, or malicious enemies." (The Instructor, February 1956, p. 33.) **It is from within the Church that the greatest hindrance comes.** And so, it seems, it has been. Now the question arises, will we stick with the kingdom and **can we avoid being deceived?** Certainly this is an important question, for the Lord has said that in the last days the devil will "rage in the hearts of . . . men," (2 Nephi 28:20) and if it were possible he shall "deceive the very elect." (Joseph Smith 1:5-37.) (Ezra Taft Benson, Be Not Deceived, Oct. 1963)

In that address, Benson laid out 3 steps for not being deceived.

1. What do the standard works have to say about it?
2. What do the latter-day Presidents of the Church say about the subject—particularly the living President?
3. The third and final test is the Holy Ghost—the test of the Spirit. (Ezra Taft Benson, Be Not Deceived, Oct. 1963)

Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught of the supremacy of revelation compared to worldly learning. He said, “When **Moses** was schooled by the Egyptians, what he learned there did **not** compare in eternal significance to what he learned from God’s revelations, **things he said he “never had supposed”** (Acts 7:22; Moses 1:10–33).” (The Inexhaustible Gospel, August 18, 1992 • BYU Devotional, <https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/neal-a-maxwell/inexhaustible-gospel/>)

Jacob warns against rejecting plain truth for sophisticated godless theories: “**But behold, the Jews were a stiffnecked people; and they despised the words of plainness, and killed the prophets, and sought for things that they could not understand. Wherefore, because of their blindness, which blindness came by looking beyond the mark, they must needs fall; for God hath taken away his plainness from them, and delivered unto them many things which they cannot understand, because they desired it. And because they desired it God hath done it, that they may stumble.**” (Jacob 4:14)

In today’s world, killing the prophets (as referred to in Jacob 4:14) can be doing things which undermine the teachings of the prophets, causing people to discount and disbelieve them. There are more effective ways to silence people than bloodshed.

President Packer, referring to progressive attacks on church doctrine, warned that not all the persecution against the saints comes from outside of the church. He said, “Atheists and agnostics make nonbelief their religion and today organize in unprecedented ways to attack faith and belief. They are now organized, and they pursue political power. You will be hearing much about them and from them. Much of their attack is indirect in mocking the faithful, in mocking religion. The types of Sherem, Nehor, and Korihor live among us today (see Jacob 7:1–21; Alma 1:1–15; Alma 30:6–60). Their arguments are not so different from those in the Book of Mormon. You who are young will see many things that will try your courage and test your faith. **All of the mocking does not come from outside of the Church.** Let me say that again: All of the mocking does not come from outside of the Church. Be careful that you do not fall into the category of mocking.” (President Boyd K Packer, Jan. 16 2007 [Lehi’s Dream and You - Boyd K. Packer - BYU Speeches](#))

Elder Benson taught that the Church is not divided, there’s just people who aren’t in harmony with it, and yes, they write in our Church publications. Benson said, **Sometimes we hear someone refer to a division in the Church. In reality, the**

Church is not divided. It simply means that there are some who, for the time being at least, are members of the Church but not in harmony with it. These people have a **temporary** membership and influence in the Church; but unless they repent, they will be missing when the final membership records are recorded. It is well that our people understand this principle, so they will not be misled by those apostates **within the Church** who have not yet repented or been cut off. But there is a cleansing coming. The Lord says that his vengeance shall be poured out "upon the inhabitants of the earth . . . And upon my house shall it begin, and from my house shall it go forth, saith the Lord; First among those among you, saith the Lord, who have professed to know my name and have not known me" (D&C 112:24-26). I look forward to that cleansing; **its need within the Church is becoming increasingly apparent. Not only are there apostates within our midst, but there are also apostate doctrines that are sometimes taught in our classes and from our pulpits and that appear in our publications. And these apostate precepts of men cause our people to stumble. As the Book of Mormon, speaking of our day, states: ". . . they have all gone astray save it a few, who are the humble followers of Christ; nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because they are taught by the precepts of men" (2 Ne. 28: 14).** The world worships the learning of man. They trust in the arm of flesh. To them, men's reasoning is greater than God's revelations. The precepts of man have gone so far in subverting our educational system that in many cases a higher degree today, in the so-called social sciences, can be tantamount to a major investment in error. Very few men build firmly enough on the rock of revelation to go through this kind of an indoctrination and come out untainted. Unfortunately, of those who succumb, some use their higher degree to get teaching positions even in our Church educational system, where they spread the falsehoods they have been taught. **President Joseph F. Smith was right when he said that false educational ideas would be one of the three threats to the Church within (Gospel Doctrine, pp. 312-13).**" (Ezra Taft Benson, To The Humble Followers of Christ, April 1969, <http://www.gapages.com/divided.htm>)

In the same address, Benson equates Jesus' appointing with Judas the traitor with elements existing in the latter-day church. He said, "The Lord strengthened the faith of the early apostles by pointing out Judas as a traitor, even before this apostle had completed his iniquitous work (John 13:21-30). So also **in our day** the Lord has told us of the **tares within the wheat** that will **eventually be hewn** down when they are fully ripe." (Ezra Taft Benson, To The Humble Followers of Christ, April 1969, <http://www.gapages.com/divided.htm>)

Ezra Taft Benson quoted President Kimball in teaching that many in the church reject the current prophet and try to get the prophet to not speak on evolution etc. He said, "It is the living Prophet who really upsets the world. **"Even in the Church"**, said President Kimball, "many are prone to garnish the sepulchers of yesterday's prophets **and mentally stone the living ones.**" Why? Because the living prophet gets at what we need to know now, and the world prefers that prophets either be dead or mind their own business. Some so-called experts of political science want the prophet to keep still on politics. **Some would-be authorities on evolution want the prophet to keep still on evolution.** And so the list goes on." (Elder Ezra Taft Benson, The 14 Fundamentals of Following the Prophet; <https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/ezra-taft-benson/fourteen-fundamentals-following-prophet/>)

Elder Neal A. Maxwell also warned of these wolves among the flock. He said, "True, the enemies and the critics of the Lord's work will not relent; they only regroup. **Even among the flock**, here and there and from time to time, are a few wolves, wearing various styles of sheep's clothing—ironically, just before the shearing season! A few defectors and "high-minded" traitors (2 Tim. 3:4) even go directly to the "great and spacious building" to hire on (1 Ne. 8:26). Their recruits are celebrated and feted until—like their predecessors—they have faded into the dark swamps of history." ("For I Will Lead You Along" By Elder Neal A. Maxwell, Apr. 1988, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1988/04/for-i-will-lead-you-along?lang=eng>)

Elder Maxwell further encourages us to stay on the right course, knowing that these worldly philosophers will be overturned. He said, "We surely have been warned and forewarned about **our time**, a period in which the compression of challenges may make a year seem like a decade. Members **will be** cleverly mocked and scorned by those in the "**great and spacious building**," representing the pride of the world (1 Ne. 8:26, 1 Ne. 11:36). No matter, for ere long, **He** who

was raised on the third day will raze that spacious but third-class hotel!” (Elder Neal A. Maxwell, “Overcome ... Even As I Also Overcame” Apr. 1987)

In case we had any doubt about who was in that great and spacious building, President Monson specifically identified it as those who reject scripture. He said, “**The great and spacious building** in Lehi’s vision represents those in the world who mock God’s word and who ridicule those who **embrace** it and who **love** the Savior and **live** the commandments.” (President Thomas S. Monson, *May You Have Courage*, April, 2009)

In our rejection of worldly philosophers, Church leaders can stand as a guide for taking the right direction. Elder Ezra Taft Benson taught, “If we want to know how well we stand with the Lord, then let us ask ourselves how well we stand with His mortal captain. **How closely do our lives harmonize with the words of the Lord’s anointed** — the living Prophet, the President of the Church, and with the Quorum of the First Presidency?” (Elder Ezra Taft Benson, *The 14 Fundamentals of Following the Prophet*, <https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/ezra-taft-benson/fourteen-fundamentals-following-prophet/>)

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

To those who are allergic to taking a stand on matters like this, remember that just this year Elder Ronald A. Rasband urged the saints to be **proactive** in **defending prophetic teachings**. He said, referring to the prophet, “**We do not sit quietly by but actively defend him.**” (October 2024 General Conference)

Church founder and dispensation head Joseph Smith was not shy of correcting the learned. He said, “I wish to correct an error among men that profess to be learned, liberal and wise; and I do it the more cheerfully because I hope **sober-thinking** and **sound-reasoning** people will sooner listen to the voice of truth than be led astray by the vain pretensions of the self-wise.” (<https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-of-joseph-smith/67>)



A VALIENT EXAMPLE

One profound example of being learned and yet holding fast to the teachings of the prophets against evolution is seen in Elder Milton R. Hunter, a member of the First Council of Seventy. In an address “Archaeology and the Book of Mormon” to BYU students he related the following:

“I believe in scholarship; I believe in going to school. I used to tell my students at Logan and I have also told a number of audiences similar to the one to which I am speaking, “It won’t hurt you to go to school, and you can take all the classes you want and take all the sciences you want, **if you have sense enough to believe the truth and not believe that which isn’t true**, because the professors will give you both kinds of teachings.”

Then I have had my students ask, "Well, how can you tell which is true?" My reply has been, "When any teaching is contrary to the teachings of the Book of Mormon, then just decide that teaching is not true. When the facts presented are contrary to the teachings of Christ or those of the Prophet Joseph Smith, or of the Doctrine and Covenants, or of the Pearl of Great Price, be assured that those teachings are not true. If you hold to that premise, you will keep your faith and your scholarship won't hurt you."

"We do have people in the church who have gone on for higher education. They think they are intellectuals; in fact, they even claim to be such. They admire and nearly worship their worldly scholarship, having rejected many of the doctrines and teachings of the Church. They think what they have learned in the universities is superior to what God has revealed to His prophets. Of course, they are off on the wrong premise. Don't any of you as college students get off on the wrong premise that way. Go on to school and get your education, but let wisdom guide you while doing so."

"I went far enough to get a Ph.D., a doctor's degree, and I have been reprimanded by some people who have doctor's degrees. They have said to me: "Now, you studied evolution and took the same subjects as we did and then you went ahead and wrote *The Gospel through the Ages*: and I don't see how you did it when you know that you learned that we evolved from lower forms of life."

Well, I said, "I learned such material from the professors, but I didn't believe it." I didn't have to believe all the professors told me. In fact, I told one good man, "The only difference between you and me was that you believed all the professors told you; and when there was a difference in opinion, I believed what the prophets said."

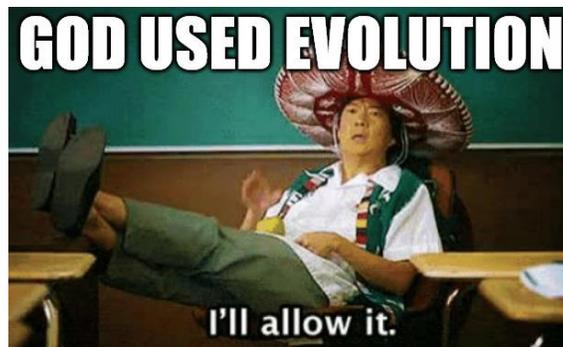
He said, "if Joseph Smith said something and the smartest man in the world said something different, which would you believe?" I said, "Joseph Smith."

"Well, if 100 agreed against the Prophet?" I replied, "A thousand, a million, I would still believe Joseph Smith."

If somebody says something and it is based on a false premise and it is repeated all over the world, it doesn't make it true. It is still false.

That holds very true for archaeology and the Book of Mormon. Practically everything that is of an archaeological nature in the Book of Mormon, scholars have taught contrary to the truth. Most the things they still teach are contrary to the truth."

(Elder Milton R. Hunter, Member of the First Council of Seventy, *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*, Address given to the BYU summer student body, July 19, 1966)



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