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SCIENCE & MORMONISM SERIES 1

COSMOS, EARTH, AND MAN

DAVID H. BAILEY, JEFFREY M. BRADSHAW, JOHN S. LEWIS,
GREGORY L. SMITH, AND MICHAEL R. STARK



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SCIENCE AND MORMONISM 1: COSMOS, EARTH, AND MAN

David H. Bailey, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, John S. Lewis,
Gregory L. Smith, and Michael R. Stark

The Interpreter Foundation
Eborn Books

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BYU Packet on Evolution and the Origin of Man, 1992¹

October, 1992

Evolution and the Origin of Man

This packet contains, as far as could be found, all statements issued by the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on the subject of evolution and the origin of man, and a statement on the Church's attitude toward science. The earliest First Presidency Statement, "The Origin of Man," was issued during the administration of President Joseph F. Smith in 1909. This was followed by a First Presidency Message in 1910 that included brief comments related to the study of these topics. The second statement, "Mormon View of Evolution," was issued during the administration of President Heber J. Grant in 1925. Although there has never been a formal declaration from the First Presidency addressing the general matter of organic evolution as a process for development of biological species, these documents make clear the official position of the Church regarding the origin of man.

This packet also contains the article on evolution from the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, published in 1992. The current First Presidency authorized inclusion of the excerpt from the First Presidency minutes of 1931 in the 1992 Encyclopedia article.

Various views have been expressed by other Church leaders on this subject over many decades; however, formal statements by the First Presidency are the definitive source of official Church positions. It is hoped that these materials will provide a firm foundation for individual study in a context of faith in the restored gospel.

Approved by the BYU Board of Trustees

June, 1992

Improvement Era 13:1, pp. 75-81. Nov. 1909.

Editor's Table: The Origin of Man

By The First Presidency of the Church.

“God created man in his own image.”

Inquiries arise from time to time respecting the attitude of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints upon questions which, though not vital from a doctrinal standpoint, are closely connected with the fundamental principles of salvation. The latest inquiry of this kind that has reached us is in relation to the origin of man. It is believed that a statement of the position held by the Church upon this important subject will be timely and productive of good.

In presenting the statement that follows we are not conscious of putting forth anything essentially new; neither is it our desire so to do. Truth is what we wish to present, and truth — eternal truth — is fundamentally old. A restatement of the original attitude of the Church relative to this matter is all that will be attempted here. To tell the truth as God has revealed it, and commend it to the acceptance of those who need to conform their opinions thereto, is the sole purpose of this presentation.

“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, “learned,” as we are told, “in all the wisdom of the Egyptians,” when making this important announcement, was not voicing a mere opinion, a theory derived from his researches into the occult lore of that ancient people. He was speaking as the mouthpiece of God, and his solemn declaration was for all time and for all people. No subsequent revelator of the truth has contradicted the great leader and lawgiver 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 with each other. The omnipotent Creator, the maker of heaven and earth — had shown unto Moses everything pertaining to this planet, including the facts relating to man's origin, and the authoritative pronouncement of that mighty prophet and seer to the house of Israel, and through Israel to the whole world, is couched in the simple clause: “God created man in his own image” (Genesis 1:27; Moses 1:27-41).

The creation was twofold — firstly spiritual, secondly temporal. This truth, also, Moses plainly taught — much more plainly than it has come down to us in the imperfect translations of the Bible that are now in use. Therein the fact of a spiritual creation, antedating the temporal creation, is strongly implied, but the proof of it is

not so clear and conclusive as in other records held by the Latter-day Saints to be of equal authority with the Jewish scriptures. The partial obscurity of the latter upon the point in question is owing, no doubt, to the loss of those “plain and precious” parts of sacred writ, which, as the Book of Mormon informs us, have been taken away from the Bible during its passage down the centuries (1 Nephi 13:24-29). Some of these missing parts the Prophet Joseph Smith undertook to restore when he revised those scriptures by the spirit of revelation, the result being that more complete account of the creation which is found in the book of Moses, previously cited. Note the following passages:

And now, behold, I say unto you, that these are the generations of the heaven and of the earth, when they were created, in the day that I, the Lord God, made the heaven and the earth;

And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew.

For I, the Lord God, created all things of which I have spoken, spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth. For I, the Lord God, had not caused it to rain upon the face of the earth.

And I, the Lord God, had created all the children of men, and not yet a man to till the ground; for in heaven created I them, and there was not yet flesh upon the earth, neither in the water, neither in the air.

But, I, the Lord God, spake, and there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

And I, the Lord God, formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul, the first flesh upon the earth, the first man also.

Nevertheless, all things were before created, but spiritually were they created and made, according to my word (Moses 3:4-7. See also chapters 1 and 2, and compare with Genesis 1 and 2).

These two points being established, namely, the creation of man in the image of God, and the two-fold character of the creation, let us now inquire: What was the form of man, in the spirit and in the body, as originally created? In a general way the answer is given in the words chosen as the text of this treatise. “God created man in his own image.” It is more explicitly rendered in the Book of Mormon thus: “All men were created in the beginning after mine own image” (Ether 3:15). It is the Father who is speaking. If, therefore, we can ascertain the form of the “Father of spirits,” “The God of the spirits of all flesh,” we shall be able to discover the form of the original man.

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, as 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

alone ought to solve the problem to the satisfaction of every thoughtful, reverent mind. The conclusion is irresistible, that if the Son of God be the express image (that is, likeness) of His Father's person, then His Father is in the form of man; for that was the form of the Son of God, not only during His mortal life, but before His mortal birth, and after His resurrection. It was in this form that the Father and the Son, as two personages, appeared to Joseph Smith, when, as a boy of fourteen years, he received his first vision. Then if God made man — the first man — in His own image and likeness, he must have made him like unto Christ, and consequently like unto men of Christ's time and of the present day. That man was made in the image of Christ is positively stated in the book of Moses: "And I, God, said unto mine Only Begotten, which was with me from the beginning, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and it was so. * * * * And I, God, created man in mine own image, in the image of mine Only Begotten created I him, male and female created I them" (Moses 2:26, 27).

The Father of Jesus 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 firstborn 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 universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity.

"God created man in His own image." This is just as true of the spirit as it is of the body, which is only the clothing of the spirit, its complement; the two together constituting the soul. The spirit of man is in the form of man, and the spirits of all creatures are in the likeness of their bodies. This was plainly taught by the Prophet Joseph Smith (Doctrine and Covenants 77:2).

Here is further evidence of the fact. More than seven hundred years before Moses was shown the things pertaining to this earth, another great prophet, known to us as the brother of Jared, was similarly favored by the Lord. He was even permitted to behold the spirit-body of the foreordained Savior, prior to His incarnation; and so like the body of a man was gazing upon a being of flesh and blood. He first saw the finger and then the entire body of the Lord — all in the spirit. The Book of Mormon says of this wonderful manifestation:

And it came to pass that when the brother of Jared had said these words, behold the Lord stretched forth His hand and touched the stones one by one with His finger; and the veil was taken from off the eyes of the brother of Jared, and he saw the finger of the Lord; and it was as the finger of a man, like unto flesh and blood; and the brother of Jared fell down before the Lord, for he was struck with fear.

And the Lord saw that the brother of Jared had fallen to the earth; and the Lord said unto him, Arise, why hast thou fallen?

And he saith unto the Lord, I saw the finger of the Lord, and I feared lest he should smite me; for I knew not that the Lord had flesh and blood.

And the Lord said unto him, Because of thy faith thou hast seen that I shall take upon me flesh and blood; and never has man come before me with such exceeding faith as thou hast; for were it not so, ye could not have seen my finger. Sawest thou more than this?

And he answered, Nay, Lord, show thyself unto me.

And the Lord said unto him, Believest thou the words which I shall speak?

And he answered, Yea, Lord, I know that thou speakest the truth, for thou art a God of truth and canst not lie.

And when he had said these words, behold, the Lord showed himself unto him, and said, Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I show myself unto you.

Behold, I am He who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ, I am the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have light, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters.

And never have I shewed myself unto man whom I have created, for never hath man believed in me as thou hast. Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created in the beginning after mine own image.

Behold, this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit, and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear unto thee to be in the spirit, will I appear unto my people in the flesh. (Ether 3:6-16.)

What more is needed to convince us that man, both in spirit and in body, is the image and likeness of God, and that God Himself is in the form of man?

When the divine Being whose spirit-body the brother of Jared beheld, took upon Him flesh and blood, He appeared as a man, having “body, parts and passions,” like other men, though vastly superior to all others, because He was God, even the Son of God, the Word made flesh: in Him “dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” And why should He not appear as a man? That was the form of His spirit, and it must needs have an appropriate covering, a suitable tabernacle. He came unto the world as He had promised to come (3 Nephi 1:13), taking an infant tabernacle, and developing it gradually to the fulness of His spirit stature. He came as man had been coming for ages, and as man has continued to come ever since. Jesus, however, as shown, was the only begotten of God in the flesh.

Adam, our great progenitor, “the first man,” was, like Christ, a preexistent 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 the preexistence, — revealed so plainly, particularly in latter days, pours a wonderful flood of light upon the otherwise mysterious problem of man’s origin. It shows that man, as a spirit, was begotten and born of heavenly parents, and reared to maturity in the eternal mansions of the Father, prior to coming upon the earth in a temporal body to undergo an experience

in mortality. It teaches that all men existed in the spirit before any man existed in the flesh, and that all who have inhabited the earth since Adam have taken bodies and become souls in like manner.

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 man of all men” (Moses 1:34), and we are therefore in duty bound to regard him as the primal parent of our race. It was shown to the brother of Jared that all men were created in the beginning after the image of God; and whether we take this to mean the spirit or the body, or both, it commits us to the same conclusion: Man began life as a human being, in the likeness of our heavenly Father.

True it is that the body of man enters upon its career as a tiny germ or embryo, which becomes an infant, quickened at a certain stage by the spirit whose tabernacle it is, and the child, after being born, develops into a man. There is nothing in this, however, to indicate that the original man, the first of our race, began life as anything less than a man, or less than the human germ or embryo that becomes a man.

Man, by searching, cannot find out God. Never, unaided, will he discover the truth about the beginning of human life. The Lord must reveal Himself, or remain unrevealed; and the same is true of the facts relating to the origin of Adam’s race — God alone can reveal them. Some of these facts, however, are already known, and what has been made known it is our duty to receive and retain.

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 lineal offspring of Deity. God Himself is an exalted man, perfected, enthroned, and supreme. By His almighty power He organized the earth, and all that it contains, from spirit and element, which exist co-eternally with Himself. He formed every plant that grows, and every animal that breathes, each after its own kind, spiritually and temporally — “that which is spiritual being in the likeness of that which is temporal, and that which is temporal in the likeness of that which is spiritual.” He made the tadpole and the ape, the lion and the elephant but He did not make them in His own image, nor endow them with Godlike reason and intelligence. Nevertheless, the whole animal creation will be perfected and perpetuated in the Hereafter, each class in its “distinct order or sphere,” and will enjoy “eternal felicity.” That fact has been made plain in this dispensation (Doctrine and Covenants 77:3).

Man is 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 due time of becoming a man, so the undeveloped offspring of celestial parentage is capable, by experience through ages and aeons, of evolving into a God.

Joseph F. Smith,
John R. Winder,
Anthon H. Lund,

First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Words in Season from the First Presidency

Deseret Evening News, Dec. 17, 1910, part 1, p. 3.

In this Christmas message, the First Presidency devoted several sentences to the Church's position with regard to questions raised by science:

Diversity of opinion does not necessitate intolerance of spirit, nor should it embitter or set rational beings against each other. The Christ taught kindness, patience, and charity.

Our religion is not hostile to real science. That which is demonstrated, we accept with joy; 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.

Editors' Table: "Mormon" View of Evolution

Improvement Era, Vol. XXVIII September, 1925 No. 11

"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 revelator 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.

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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 universal Father and Mother, and are literally sons and daughters of Deity.

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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 lineal 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 is 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 due time of becoming a man, so the undeveloped offspring of celestial parentage is capable, by experience through ages and aeons, of evolving into a God.

Heber J. Grant,
Anthony W. Ivins,
Charles W. Nibley.

First Presidency.

Evolution

Encyclopedia of Mormonism, Vol. 2

William E. Evenson

The position of the Church on the origin of man was published by the First Presidency in 1909 and stated again by a different First Presidency in 1925:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, basing its belief on divine revelation, ancient and modern, declares man to be the direct and lineal offspring of Deity. ... Man is the child of God, formed in the divine image and endowed with divine attributes [see statement of the First Presidency above].

The scriptures tell why man was created, but they do not tell how, though the Lord has promised that he will tell that when he comes again (D&C 101:32-33). In 1931, when there was intense discussion on the issue of organic evolution, the First Presidency of the Church, then consisting of Presidents Heber J. Grant, Anthony W. Ivins, and Charles W. Nibley, addressed all of the General Authorities of the Church on the matter, and concluded,

Upon the fundamental doctrines of the Church we are all agreed. Our mission is to bear the message of the restored gospel to 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.

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" [First Presidency Minutes, Apr. 7, 1931]

Background of the BYU Packet

In response to student questions about the view of the Church on organic evolution and the origin of man, a packet was approved by Brigham Young University's Board of Trustees — consisting of the First Presidency, some members of the Quorum of the Twelve, and other General Authorities and officers. Following approval, the packet was made available to students and faculty of BYU, and in 1999 it was distributed to all teachers in the Church Education System. The following article, from page 3 of the November 12, 1992 issue of BYU's student newspaper *The Daily Universe*, explains the origins of the packet. The author of the article is William E. Evenson, who at that time was Dean of the College of Physical and Mathematical Sciences and Professor of Physics at BYU. Following this article, background material relating to the statements in the packet is provided.

William E. Evenson: BYU Packet Defined, 1992

In the interest of clarifying the background and purpose of the library packet on evolution and the origin of man, which was announced in the *Daily Universe* on Thursday, Oct. 29, I provide the following information about the development of this packet and the motivation for it.

As appropriate at any university, the subject of organic evolution and the origin of man comes up in BYU courses in several departments. In these courses, students naturally wish to know the official position of the LDS Church on this subject. Some faculty members in the sciences and in Religious Education have gathered material on these topics to distribute to their students. Students might receive one set of statements by Church leaders from one professor and a different set from another professor.

Several faculty members and administrators felt the diversity of materials on these subjects, which were often selected to emphasize the views of the professor, tended to create confusion in the minds of the students and accentuate the potential for controversy about the Church's position. In 1991, in response to questions from students about the Church position on evolution, [BYU] President Rex E. Lee authorized that one of these packets be placed in the [Harold B. Lee Library] Reserve Library as a source for information about the Church's position on evolution and the origin of man.

Purpose of Packet. Because of my experience in preparing the evolution article for the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, I was asked by Provost Bruce Hafen to consider a packet that could be made available to students as the official and fundamental Church position on this subject. It was immediately clear that the selection of material for such a packet could not depend on the content of the statements. The goal is not to achieve some kind of "balance" among the views that have been expressed, but to give students the full range of official views so that they can judge the different

positions they encounter. The full range of official views should provide the basis for the evaluation of other views that have been expressed but that do not have the status of official positions.

In line with this philosophical stance, I prepared an initial draft of the packet, which contained the First Presidency statements and all published statements made by presidents of the Church during the time they held that office. It also included the speech given in 1931 by James Talmage of the Quorum of the Twelve, which was reviewed and approved by the First Presidency and officially published by the Church. Finally, this draft packet included the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* article because of the excerpt from the First Presidency Minutes in 1931 about the Church's stance toward scientific studies of evolution and the origin of man. This packet was made entirely of materials with official status and included all of the statements published by or with the authorization of the First Presidency.

The draft packet's contents were discussed amicably with Dean Robert Millet of Religious Education and Provost Hafen. After considerable discussion, we agreed that the official university packet should contain only those items that represent the official position of the Church, i.e., statements from the First Presidency. The encyclopedia article was kept because of the First Presidency Minutes item included in it, which is not otherwise available to the public. The final packet was then reviewed by BYU's Board of Trustees — consisting of the First Presidency, many members of the Quorum of the Twelve and other general authorities and officers. They approved the packet.

Balance not the issue. Again, I emphasize that balance was not the issue. The issue was providing only those materials that could clearly be said to be the official, declared position of the Church.

None of us involved in preparing this packet for Board review anticipate that professors will be limited from distributing other materials to their students. It is only requested that BYU faculty members refer students to the materials in this specific packet along with the other items they may choose to distribute. When other items are distributed, they should be clearly separated and given as a supplement to this material and include a fair sampling of the diverse viewpoints among LDS leaders. For example, if one included statements by LDS apostles in a handout on evolution, the range of views would include some statements against evolution, some sympathetic to evolution and several shades of opinion in between. We want to avoid the implication that a greater sense of unanimity or resolution of this topic exists than is actually the case, and we are eager to avoid contention. The university has also suggested that faculty members limit supplemental LDS material on the subject of evolution and the origin of man to published documents, avoiding private letters or other private material.

The process was one of constructive and harmonious effort to provide materials from which students could see clearly the foundation of LDS doctrine on this subject and distinguish it from the wide variety of opinions encountered in LDS literature.

Context for Statements in the BYU Packet

First Presidency Statement: The Origin of Man, 1909. The year 1909 was both the centennial of Charles Darwin's birth and the 50-year anniversary of the publication of his *The Origin of Species*. Regarding the circumstances of the issuance of this statement, James R. Clark writes:

What prompted the First Presidency to issue this definite statement on the Origin of Man at this particular time could not be determined by the writer of these notes.

However, there had appeared in the April, 1908, issue of the *Improvement Era* an article announcing the death of [British mathematical physicist] William Thompson or Lord Kelvin on December 17, 1907. The article was written by a prominent LDS scientist, Dr. John A. Widtsoe, President of the Agricultural College of Utah at Logan, now Utah State University.

Since *The Improvement Era* was an official organ of the LDS Church and widely read throughout the Church, some of the statements in the Widtsoe article may have been responsible for some of the 'Inquiries... respecting the attitude of the Church...' on the subject.

Pertinent to the subject of the Origin of Man are the following quotations from Widtsoe's review of the views of Lord Kelvin on this subject:

Not only did Lord Kelvin believe that God lives and rules, but he had no sympathy with the idle notion of the day that life began upon this earth and will disappear with death. He believed in the eternity of life, and that life had come to this earth from other heavenly bodies. True, he did not understand the full philosophy of life's beginnings on the earth, but certainly with all the power at his command as the great scientist of his day, he refuted many of the modern theories which teach the origin of life on this earth without the intervention of an overruling Providence (IE 11:402).

After quoting again from the writings of Lord Kelvin, Widtsoe comments:

Carefully read, this paragraph [from Kelvin] will be found to teach that life is eternal; that life on this earth came from other spheres, that the law of natural selection is imperfect, and does not account for the variety of living things; that the law of evolution is true only as it conforms to the law of progression; that the whole of nature teaches the existence of a great designer or great governing power; and that finally; the power of free agency encircles our lives (IE 11:403).

Widtsoe then quotes at length from the Presidential Address of Lord Kelvin to the British Association, Edinburgh, 1871, including Kelvin's statement that he could not accept the hypothesis of the origin of species by natural selection, 'because

I have always felt that this hypothesis does not contain the true theory of evolution, if evolution there has been, in biology.’

Widtsoe’s final paragraph had said:

Does Mormonism agree with the same talks of Lord Kelvin? All who understand it will say, yes. The science of the world is, and can be no more than one phase of the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ which embraces all truth....

This statement of the First Presidency in 1909 still remains perhaps the most thorough and complete statement on the subject issued by the First Presidency to date (1969). [The] statement by President Heber J. Grant and his counselors in the First Presidency in 1925 and entitled ‘The Mormon View of Evolution’ [included in this appendix] will be seen by comparison between the two to be a briefer version of the same statement in the identical language.²

Terryl L. Givens, *Wrestling*, pp. 217-218, has made pertinent observations with respect to the following statement:

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 declared that Adam was “the first man of all men” (Moses 1:34), and we are therefore in duty bound to regard him as the primal parent of our race.

Givens notes that the statement “cautioned against but did not repudiate the theory” of evolution:

The real purport of the statement was to sideline the question of human origins as unimportant and impossible of definitive resolution: only “some of these facts” touching on human creation are known, it urged. What is certain is that “man is the child of God, formed in the divine image and endowed with divine attributes.” Following the Scopes trial, the Church ... [reissued] their statement but with the cautionary language about the “theories of men” conspicuously absent.

First Presidency Statement: Words in Season, 1910. Nothing is known about the specific background of the 1910 statement, however its timing in light of other writings by President Smith and his associates in Church publications and of the controversies on curriculum content at Church schools seems to suggest a perceived need to reaffirm that “Our religion is not hostile to real science.”

First Presidency Statement: “Mormon” View of Evolution, 1925. James R. Clark writes:

The predecessor of this statement on the “Mormon View of Evolution” is the statement of the First Presidency on “The Origin of Man” published November, 1909.³ In fact, the present statement in paragraphs 1 through 5 constitutes extracts from paragraphs 3, 13, 14, 30, 34, and 35, respectively, of the 1909 statement, It

therefore constitutes a shortened or condensed form of the statement issued by the former First Presidency — Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder and Anthon H. Lund.

The occasion prompting the issuance of this later condensed version by President Heber J. Grant and his counselors is not given in the *Improvement Era* where it was published.

However, in July, 1925, Darwinism had attracted international attention when John T. Scopes, a young high school teacher, had disobeyed the law of the State of Tennessee by teaching Darwinism or evolution. He was convicted and the results of the trial had national and international repercussions. Discussion was widespread in LDS circles. Under these circumstances, the title of the message itself is not without significance.⁴

Encyclopedia of Mormonism: Evolution, 1991. Regarding the background of this article, the author William E. Evenson has written:

Because of a fairly broad science background as a physics professor with research interests in evolutionary biology, I was asked to write the article on evolution for the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*. This article went through a long process of refinement and review. It was originally to be 1,000 words long, then was revised to 2,500 words, to 3,500 words, and to 4,500 words. Finally, in the spring of 1991, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve reviewed my last two versions, and a more anti-evolutionary revision of my article by someone else connected with the *Encyclopedia*. The Brethren decided that they wanted only a short article referring to the First Presidency statements on this subject, which are the only definitive sources of Church doctrine. The resulting entry in the *Encyclopedia* is only 258 words long.⁵

In this article is a quote from the 1931 minutes of the First Presidency, recorded at a time “when there was intense discussion on the issue of organic evolution.” Specifically, doctrinal issues relating to a decision about the publication of Elder B. H. Roberts’ manuscript *The Truth, the Way, the Life*⁶ were then under consideration. As Evenson points out, however, these discussions “were not centered on the scientific theories of origins of life forms. Rather, the central point of concern was whether death occurred on Earth before the Fall of Adam.”⁷ Roberts found evolutionary theory to be inadequate, and thus formulated his own theory as an attempt to reconcile the scriptures with science.

Though the 1931 First Presidency statement was specifically made in response to the question of death before the Fall that was raised by Roberts’ manuscript, its application to the broader context of evolution was deemed appropriate by later Church leaders. Writes Evenson:

It was at [the] initiative [of the First Presidency and members of the Twelve], and specifically by the action of then-First Counselor Gordon B. Hinckley, that the 1931 counsel was supplied to be used in the *Encyclopedia* to indicate the church’s position in 1992. This updates the 1931 counsel and gives it focus directly to

modern conditions. The *Encyclopedia* and other writers are quite correct in citing it as a currently valid statement.⁸

The quotation of the 1909 statement of the First Presidency in the article erroneously substitutes the word “declares” for “proclaims.” The statement should read as follows (emphasis added):

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 lineal offspring of Deity.

Additional Statements Relating to Evolution and the Origin of Man

This section contains all known statements relating to evolution and the origin of man from Presidents of the Church that were made while they served as president, and that were not already part of the BYU Packet. Private letters to individuals have not been included.

In addition, an article from the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* by John L. Sorenson on the origin of man is reprinted here. Although the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* is not an official publication of the Church, the front matter of the *Encyclopedia* explains the role of General Authorities in the publication project:

Two members of the [BYU] Board of Trustees of the university, who are also members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, were appointed by the First Presidency to serve as advisers to the project: Elder Neal A. Maxwell and Elder Dallin H. Oaks. Other General Authorities who accepted special assignments related to the project include four members of the Quorum of Seventy: Elders Dean L. Larsen, Carlos E. Asay, Marlin K. Jensen, and Jeffrey R. Holland.

President Brigham Young: The Human Species Are Linked to the Animal⁹

[The President] observed that naturalists have divided the kingdom into parts. This is not so, as the human species are linked to the animal and the creation to all one according to its several gradations. It is the design of the Father to continually protect us through numerous gradations to increase the intelligence of the human family for their enjoyment, even all those who yield to the teachings of the spirit and obey the law of their probation. Those who deny the Holy Ghost will return to native element and lose their identity.

President John Taylor: Immutability of Living Forms, 1882¹⁰

The animal and vegetable creations are governed by certain laws, and are composed of certain elements peculiar to themselves. This applies to man, to the beasts, fowls, fish and creeping things, to the insects and to all animated nature; each one possessing its own distinctive features, each requiring a specific sustenance, each having an organism and faculties governed by prescribed laws to perpetuate its own kind. So accurate is the formation of the various living creatures that an intelligent student of nature can tell by any particular bone of the skeleton of an animal to what class or order it belongs.

These principles do not change, as represented by evolutionists of the Darwinian school, but the primitive organisms of all living beings exist in the same form as when they first received their impress from the Maker. There are, indeed, some very slight exceptions, as for instance, the ass may mix with the mare and produce the mule; but there it ends, the violation of the laws of procreation receives a check, and its operations can go no further. Yet this is not the normal, but an abnormal condition with them, as with animals, birds, etc.; and if we take man, he is said to have been made in the image of God, for the simple reason that he is a son of God; and being His son, he is, of course, His offspring, an emanation from God, in whose likeness, we are told, he is made. He did not originate from a chaotic mass of matter, moving or inert, but came forth possessing, in an embryonic state, all the faculties and powers of a God. And when he shall be perfected, and have progressed to maturity, he will be like his Father — a God, being indeed His offspring. As the horse, the ox, the sheep, and every living creature, including man, propagates its own species and perpetuates its own kind, so does God perpetuate His.

President Joseph F. Smith et al.: Creation of Adam and Eve, 1910¹¹

“In just what manner did the mortal bodies of Adam and Eve come into existence on this earth?” This question comes from several High Priests’ quorums.

Of course, all are familiar with the statements in Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7; also in the Book of Moses, Pearl of Great Price, 2:27; and in the book of Abraham 5:7. The latter statement reads: “And the Gods formed man from the dust of the ground, and took his spirit (that is, the man’s spirit) and put it into him; and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.”

These are the authentic statements of the scriptures, ancient and modern, and it is best to rest with these, until the Lord shall see fit to give more light on the subject. Whether the mortal bodies of man evolved in natural processes to present perfection, through the direction and power of God; whether the first parents of our generations, Adam and Eve, were transplanted from another sphere, with immortal tabernacles, which became corrupted through sin and the partaking of natural foods, in the process of time; whether they were born here in mortality, as other mortals have been, are questions not fully answered in the revealed word of God. For helpful discussion of the subject, see *Improvement Era*, Vol. XI, August 1908, No. 10, page 778, article, Creation and Growth of Adam; also article by the First Presidency, Origin of Man, Vol. XIII, No. 1, page 75, 1909.

President Joseph F. Smith: Philosophy and the Church Schools, 1915¹²

Some questions have arisen about the attitude of the Church on certain discussions of philosophy in the Church schools. Philosophical discussions as we understand them, are open questions about which men of science are very greatly at variance. As a rule we do not think it advisable to dwell on questions that are in controversy, and especially questions of a certain character, in the courses of instruction given by our institutions. In the first place it is the mission of our institutions of learning to qualify our young people for the practical duties of life. It is much to be preferred that they emphasize the industrial and practical side of education. Students are very apt to draw the conclusion that whichever side of a controversial question they adopt is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; and it is very doubtful therefore, whether the great mass of our students have sufficient discriminating judgment to understand very much about some of the advanced theories of philosophy or science.

Some subjects are in themselves, perhaps, perfectly harmless, and any amount of discussion over them would not be injurious to the faith of our young people. We are told, for example, that the theory of gravitation is at best a hypothesis and that such is the atomic theory. These theories help to explain certain things about nature. Whether they are ultimately true can not make much difference to the religious convictions of our young people. On the other hand there are speculations which touch the origin of life and the relationship of God to his children. In a very limited degree that relationship has been defined by revelation, and until we receive more light upon the subject 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 confine their so-called course of study in biology to that knowledge of the insect world which would help us to eradicate the pests that threaten the destruction of our crops and our fruit, such instruction would answer much better the aims of the Church school, than theories which deal with the origin of life.

These theories may have a fascination for our teachers and they may find interest in the study of them, but they are not properly within the scope of the purpose for which these schools were organized.

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. They are not old enough and learned enough to

discriminate, or put proper limitations upon a theory which we believe is more or less a fallacy. In reaching the conclusion that evolution would be best left out of discussions 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 can not 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. Even if it were harmless from the standpoint of our faith, we think there are things more important to the daily affairs of life and the practical welfare of our young people. The Church itself has no philosophy about the *modus operandi* employed by the Lord in His creation of the world, and much of the talk therefore, about the philosophy of Mormonism is altogether misleading. God has revealed to us a simple and effectual way of serving Him, and we should regret very much to see the simplicity of those revelations involved in all sorts of philosophical speculations. If we encouraged them it would not be long before we should have a theological scholastic aristocracy in the Church, and we should therefore not enjoy the brotherhood that now is, or should be common to rich and poor, learned and unlearned among the Saints.

President David O. McKay: Design Permeating All Creation, 1952¹³

“The most choice opportunity of the religious teacher should be to lead the child to see through the trouble and turmoil of a troubled world that,” note students, “in all His dispensation God is at work for our good. In prosperity he tries our gratitude, in mediocrity, our contentment, in misfortune, our submission, in darkness, our faith, under temptation our steadfastness, and at all times our obedience and trust in Him.” There is a perpetual design permeating all purposes of Creation. On these thoughts, science again leads the student up to a certain point and sometimes leads him with his soul unanchored. Millikan is right when he says, “Science without religion obviously may become a curse rather than a blessing to mankind.” But, science dominated by the spirit of religion is the key progress and the hope of the future. For example, evolution’s beautiful theory of the creation of the world offers many perplexing problems to the inquiring mind. Inevitably, a teacher who denies divine agency in Creation, who insists there is no intelligent purpose in it, will [infect] the student with the thought that all may be chance. I say, that no youth should be so led without a counter-balancing thought. Even the skeptic teacher should be fair enough to see that even Charles Darwin, when he faced this great question of annihilation, that the Creation is dominated only by chance wrote: “It is an intolerable thought that man and all other sentient beings are doomed to complete annihilation after such long, continued slow progress.”

And another good authority, Raymond West, said, “Why this vast [expenditure] of time and pain and blood?” Why should man come so far if he’s destined to go no farther? A creature that travels such distances and fought such battles and won such victories deserves what we are compelled to say, “To conquer death and rob the grave of its victory.” The public school teacher will probably, even if he says that much, will go no farther. In the Church school the teacher is unhampered. In the Brigham Young University and every other church school the teacher can say God is at the helm. God is the Creator of the earth, He’s the Father of our souls and spirits. No question about it. You have your testimony — if you haven’t you shouldn’t be on the faculty. Fosdick said that “Perpetuation of personality is the highest thing in creation.” Church school teachers can add the Lord revealed to Prophet Joseph Smith the sublime truth: “This is my work and glory. To bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

President David O. McKay: Honest Convictions Can Be Expressed, 1956¹⁴

And now I have just time to comment on the opportunity of the BYU to teach these fundamental truths. This thought was expressed by Dr. Sidney B. Sperry in the opening prayer, that here in this school [BYU], destined to become the greatest in the world, opportunities are given to guide students in this higher quality of life, this guide, this anchor, this cord leading into the depths of the forest. Whatever the subject may be, the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ may be elaborated upon without fear of anyone's objecting, and the teacher can be free to express his honest conviction regarding it, whether that subject be in geology, the history of the world, the millions of years that it took to prepare the physical world, whether it be in engineering, literature, art — any principles of the gospel may be briefly or extensively touched upon for the anchoring of the student who is seeking to know the truth.

President Harold B. Lee: Finding Answers in the Scriptures, 1972¹⁵

I was somewhat sorrowed recently to hear someone, a sister who comes from a church family, ask, “What about the pre-Adamic people?” Here was someone who I thought was fully grounded in the faith.

I asked, “What about the pre-Adamic people?”

She replied, “Well, aren’t there evidences that people preceded the Adamic period of the earth?”

I said, “Have you forgotten the scriptures that says, ‘And I, the Lord God, formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul, the first flesh upon the earth, the first man also ...’” (Moses 3:7.) I asked, “Do you believe that?”

She wondered about the creation because she had read the theories of the scientists, and the question that she was really asking was: How do you reconcile science with religion? The answer must be, If science is not true, you cannot reconcile truth with error.

Missionaries going out into the field often ask how we reconcile the teachings of the scriptures with the teachings of the scientists in accordance with the temple ordinances. In reply I occasionally refer to the revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith in Kirtland in 1833, concerning the great event that is to take place at the commencement of the millennial reign when the Lord shall come; the Lord said:

Yea, verily I say unto you, in that day when the Lord shall come, he shall reveal all things—

Things which have passed, and hidden things which no man knew, things of the earth, by which it was made, and the purpose and the end thereof—

Things most precious, things that are above, and things that are beneath, things that are in the earth, and upon the earth, and in heaven.” (D&C 101:32–34)

Then I say, “If you and I are there when the Lord reveals all this, then I’ll answer your questions — how the earth was made, how man came to be placed upon the earth. Until that time till we have is the support and security that we have in the scriptures, and we must accept the rest by faith.”

President Joseph F. Smith said: “Our young people are diligent students. They reach out for truth and knowledge with commendable zeal, and in so doing they must necessarily adopt for temporary use, the theories of men. As long, however, as they recognize them as scaffolding useful for research purposes, there can be no special harm in them. It is when these theories are settled upon as basic truth that trouble appears, and the searcher then stands in grave danger of being led hopelessly from the right way.” (*Gospel Doctrine* [Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 38.)

Dr. Henry Eyring, one of our great scientists, in a class that I was privileged to attend some years ago, was asked, “Dr. Eyring, why hasn’t the Lord explained how

these things came about?” And he said something to the effect, as I remember — “Well, I suppose it would be like trying to explain the theory of atomic energy to an eight-year-old child. The eight-year-old child couldn’t understand it. Until we come to an understanding, we will have to depend solely upon what the Lord has said.”

Dr. Eyring has written: “I have often met this question: ‘Dr. Eyring, as a scientist, how can you accept revealed religion?’ The answer is simple. The Gospel commits us only to the truth. The same pragmatic tests that apply in science apply to religion. Try it. Does it work? The conception of a God ruling in the universe and concerned with how it works is impossible for me without the corollary that He should be interested in man, the most remarkable phenomenon in the world. Being interested in man, it is natural that He would provide a plan for man’s development and welfare. This plan is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

“... The Gospel is indeed the plan which the Creator of the universe has devised to guide His children and bring them back to Him. Through the ages, He has chosen from among His worthy sons prophets to act as guides to His children. Today, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is presided over by good and wise men who instruct and counsel those who have the wisdom to listen.” (*The Faith of a Scientist* [Bookcraft, 1967], pp. 103–104.)

President Spencer W. Kimball: Creation of Adam and Eve, 1976¹⁶

The Creators breathed into their nostrils the breath of life and man and woman became living souls. We don't know exactly how their coming into this world happened, and when we're able to understand it the Lord will tell us.

President Ezra Taft Benson: Worldly Trends and Teachings, 1988¹⁷

Statement a. Our families may be corrupted by worldly trends and teachings unless we know how to use the book (Book of Mormon) to expose and combat the falsehoods in socialism, organic evolution, rationalism, humanism, etc.

Statement b. Our families may be corrupted by worldly trends and teachings unless we know how to use the book to expose and combat the falsehoods in socialism, rationalism, etc.

John L. Sorenson: Origin of Man, 1991¹⁸

The view of the “origin of man” in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints differs significantly from that in most other modern traditions. Its prime concern is to affirm that humans were created as spirits by and in the image of God, which determined their form and nature long before they became earthly organisms. Questions about what biological or cultural mechanisms might have produced *Homo sapiens* and over what period of time that often dominate secular discussions are of limited interest for Latter-day Saints.

The clearest presentation of the Church position may be a 1909 statement by the First Presidency entitled “The Origin of Man,” where four essential points are made: (1) God created humans (Genesis 1:26-27); (2) God created Adam, “the origin of the human family” and “the first man”; (3) creation was sequential: first spiritual, later physical; and (4) each human body displays the characteristics of the individual premortal spirit that inhabits it. Other ideas included in the statement are that humanity was not “a development from the lower orders of creation” but a “fall” from a higher state of existence; that an understanding of all the details about the origin of man is not vital to one’s salvation, although the matter is related to several important truths; that the subject cannot be fully clarified by human learning alone; and that only certain relevant facts are now known, to which the Church adheres.

Subsequent official statements indicate that the details of how Adam became “the first man” [Moses 3:7; Abraham 1:3] are considered not to have been revealed clearly enough to settle questions of process. Emphasized instead is an eternal perspective wherein the individual as an “undeveloped offspring of celestial parentage is capable, by experience through ages and aeons, of evolving into a God” ([*Improvement Era*] 28:1091).

Since the rise of Darwinism in 1860, individual Latter-day Saints, both leaders and members, have occasionally participated in public discussion about evolution, since the official position of the Church on man’s origin is not definitive in all respects. Mormons have expressed a wide range of views that are reminiscent of the well-known debates among Christians. Since a large number of Latter-day Saints entered careers in science early in this century, some have attempted to reconcile scientific facts and ideas with statements from the scriptures and prophetic leaders that are emphasized in the LDS tradition. Others have argued that in this area science merely offers “theories of men” and should therefore be discounted.

Many sympathetic to science interpret certain statements in LDS scripture to mean that God used a version of evolution to prepare bodies and environmental surrounding suitable for the premortal spirits. For example, one scriptural description of creation says, “the Gods *organized the earth to bring forth ... every thing that creepeth upon the earth after its kind*” (Abraham 4:25 [emphasis added]). Certain statements of various General Authorities are also used by proponents of this idea to justify their opinions.

Other Latter-day Saints accept a more literal reading of scriptural passages that suggest to them an abrupt creation. Proponents of this view also support their positions with statements from scripture and General Authorities.

While the current state of revealed truth on the LDS doctrine of man's origin may permit some differences of opinion concerning the relationship of science and religion, it clearly affirms that God created man, that the fall of Adam was foreknown of God and was real and significant, and that the Atonement of Christ was foreordained and necessary to reverse the effects of the Fall. Perhaps because these claims embrace the main doctrinal issues relevant to the condition of man, the description of the actual creation process does not receive much attention from the general membership of the Church or from the authorities.

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President Gordon B. Hinckley: Organic Evolution, 1997¹⁹

People ask me every now and again if I believe in evolution. I tell them I am not concerned with organic evolution. I do not worry about it. I passed through that argument long ago.

Hinckley, Gordon B. The Origin of Man, 2002²⁰

What the Church requires is only belief “that Adam was the first man of what we would call the human race,” says Gordon Hinckley, the church’s living prophet. Scientists can speculate on the rest, he says, recalling his own study of anthropology and geology: “Studied all about it. Didn’t worry me then. Doesn’t worry me now.”

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Endnotes

1. The BYU Packet on Evolution and the Origin of Man, along with additional statements, has been published previously with commentary in W. E. Evenson et al., *Mormonism and Evolution*.
2. J. R. Clark, *Messages*, 4:199-200.
3. See *ibid.*, 4:199-206.
4. See *ibid.*, 5:243.
5. W. E. Evenson, *LDS Doctrine*, p. xxxi.
6. B. H. Roberts, *The Truth*.
7. W. E. Evenson, in B. H. Roberts, *The Truth*, p. cxxiii.
8. W. E. Evenson, *Counsel Valid*.
9. B. Young, *Collected Discourses*, Brigham Young Office Journals, 27 December 1859, 3:1531. It is not clear how this statement about the oneness of the human species and the animal kingdom should be reconciled with President Young's belief, expressed elsewhere, that Adam's body "was begotten by *his Father* in heaven" (B. Young, 9 April 1852, p. 50. Cf., e.g., J. Smith, Jr., 1903 reminiscence of B. F. Johnson cited in E. D. LeBaron, *Benjamin F. Johnson*, p. 230; J. F. Smith in J. R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 4:266-267; J. F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, p. 62). Hugh Nibley observed: "Brigham Young recognized that many people were not prepared to understand the mysteries of God and godhood. 'I could tell you much more about this,' he said, speaking of the role of Adam, but checked himself, recognizing that the world would probably misinterpret his teaching" (H. W. Nibley, *BY Teachings*, p. 1610. See B. Young, 9 April 1852, p. 51). It is

certain, however, that President Young believed that Adam was not fashioned by hand from the dust of the earth as one would create a brick. Instead, he asserted: “He was made as you and I are made, and no person was made upon any other principle” (B. Young, 20 April 1856, p. 420).

In a letter to his son Willard on October 19, 1876, President Young wrote (Brigham Young, *My Dear Son*, p. 199):

We have enough and to spare, at present in these mountains, of schools where young infidels are made because the teachers are so tender-footed that they dare not mention the principles of the gospel to their pupils, but have no hesitancy in introducing into the classroom the theories of Huxley, of Darwin, or of Miall and the false political economy which contends against co-operation and the United Order. This course I am resolutely and uncompromisingly opposed to, and I hope to see the day when the doctrines of the gospel will be taught in all our schools, when the revelation of the Lord will be our texts, and our books will be written and manufactured by ourselves and in our own midst. As a beginning in this direction I have endowed the Brigham Young Academy at Provo and [am] now seeking to do the same thing in this city.

Other statements by President Young make it clear that he did not oppose the claims of science and scholarship generally, specifically including the ideas of a very old earth, the presence of figurative symbolism the Bible stories of Creation, and a biological affinity between man and the animals. His complaint above is that theories of all kinds are presented openly in local classrooms while at the same time teachers are hesitant to mention the principles of the Gospel. Hence, his motive in creating an academy where the Gospel can be taught vigorously alongside all other subjects. His desire was have a school where, as Karl G. Maeser famously remembered it, “neither the alphabet nor the multiplication table should be taught without the Spirit of God” (K. G. Maeser, *History of the Academy*, 2. For other statements by Brigham Young on the importance of merging the spiritual and the temporal in education, see A. L. Richards, *Called to Teach*, pp. 360-363). Incidentally, according to his biographer, Maeser himself “did not oppose evolution as a theory unless it was claimed to be a ‘final cause,’ replacing the Creator” (ibid., p. 551).

Note that the mention of “Miall” in the quote from Brigham Young above refers to Edward Miall (1829-1881), “the staunch advocate of the British Anti-State-Church Association” (ibid., p. 384 n. 14).

10. J. Taylor, *Mediation and Atonement*, pp. 164-165.
11. J. F. Smith et al., *Editorial*. President Joseph F. Smith and Edward H. Anderson served as editors for the *Improvement Era* at this time. The editorial was prepared in reply to questions from “several High Priests’ quorums,” where the 1909 statement of the First Presidency had no doubt been a subject of continuing discussion. Moreover, the 1910 Manual for the Priests Quorum prepared by

Elder B. H. Roberts had contained the following statement, which also may have engendered questions (B. H. Roberts, *Divine Mission*, Lesson 14 — The Creation of Man, p. 35):

Man has descended from God; in fact, he is of the same race as the Gods. His descent has not been from a lower form of life, but from the Highest Form of Life; in other words, man is, in the most literal sense, a child of God. This is not only true of the spirit of man, but of his body also.

12. J. F. Smith, *Philosophy*. Although the *Improvement Era* editorial is unsigned and could have been initially prepared by co-editor Edward H. Anderson, the other editor of the publication was President Joseph F. Smith, who normally would have at least reviewed such articles (D. E. Jeffery, *We Don't Know*, p. 32).

“In the latter part of 1910, the questions of academic freedom and curriculum content in the Church school system came into critical focus. ... ‘Higher criticism’ and ‘evolution’ were the subjects of stated concern, ... four professors were eventually terminated at BYU, and President Joseph F. Smith undertook to explain the matter to the Church in editorials in the April 1911 issues of the *Era* and the *Juvenile Instructor*” (ibid., pp. 32-33). The focus of President Smith’s statement is the observation that the preferred emphasis of Church schools at the time was to be the “industrial and practical side of education.” With respect to the topic of evolution, he makes it clear that “in reaching the conclusion that evolution would be best left out of discussions in our Church schools” it was a “question of propriety” and not a matter of saying “how much of evolution is true, or how much is false. ... The Church itself has no philosophy about the *modus operandi* employed by the Lord in His creation of the world, and much of the talk therefore about the philosophy of Mormonism is altogether misleading.”

Since 1911, the academic mission of Church schools has understandably broadened beyond its initial more wholly vocational focus. The first formal class in evolution was instituted at BYU in the fall of 1971 with the First Presidency’s approval, and is currently a required part of the core curriculum of all BYU students in the biological sciences. Evolutionary biology (see Biology) has since become “one of the largest and most successful graduate programs at BYU” (M. R. Ash, *Myth*, pp. 32-33), with professors publishing in major evolutionary conferences and journals. See T. L. Givens, *Paradox*, pp. 209-210, 378-379 nn. 59-64 for a brief summary of efforts of Mormon scientists that “not only incorporate evolutionary science, but break new ground in the field.” Elsewhere Givens specifically cites the contributions of Keith Crandall, Michael Whiting, and Jack Sites in molecular evolution, noting that all three are “major players in the National Science Foundation’s ‘Tree of Life’ project” (T. L. Givens, *Wrestling*, p. 369 n. 132). Given adds: “Neither Creationism nor Intelligent Design find a home in the science departments of the LDS-owned school” (T. L. Givens, *Wrestling*, p. 219).

13. D. O. McKay, Message. During the previous two years, President McKay had responded to several inquiries about the official position of the Church regarding evolution and the age of the earth (G. A. Prince et al., *McKay*, pp. 45-49).
14. D. O. McKay, Anchor. With respect to what should be taught in public school classrooms, the Church has declined to take part in any debate of the issue, and an effort to require the schools to teach that not all scientists agree about the origin of life was soundly defeated in the Utah legislature in 2006 (E. Jarvik, *Beliefs*).
15. H. B. Lee, Find the Answers, pp. 2-3.
16. Church Educational System, *Religion 327*, p. 9; S. W. Kimball, Blessings.
17. During his apostolic years, President Ezra Taft Benson publicly stated his concerns about the theory of evolution on several occasions. For example, the following statement from the October 1970 General Conference was reprinted in 1975 and 1988 within a collection of his teachings (E. T. Benson, *Loyalties*, p. 225; E. T. Benson, *Teachings 1988*, p. 307):

As a watchman on the tower, I feel to warn you that one of the chief means of misleading our youth and destroying the family unit is our educational institutions. President Joseph F. Smith referred to false educational ideas as one of the three threatening dangers among our Church members. There is more than one reason why the Church is advising our youth to attend colleges close to their homes where institutes of religion are available. It gives the parents the opportunity to stay close to their children, and if they become alerted and informed, these parents can help expose some of the deceptions of men like Sigmund Freud, Charles Darwin, John Dewey, Karl Marx, John Keynes, and others.

Statement a was first given part of a General Conference address of April 1975 that was given while President Benson was an apostle. It was published in the *Ensign* at the time (E. T. Benson, *Book of Mormon Is the Word of God 1975*, p. 65), but is included here because it was published again with no changes during his presidency (E. T. Benson, *Witness and a Warning*, p. 6).

Statement b is taken from a different version of the same talk. When the talk was republished in the *Ensign* during President Benson's administration in 1988, the specific references to organic evolution and humanism were omitted (E. T. Benson, *Book of Mormon Is the Word of God 1988*, p. 5).

18. J. L. Sorenson, Origin.
19. G. B. Hinckley, Ogden Institute, p. 379. On 15 April 1997, President Gordon B. Hinckley delivered this speech to students at the LDS Institute in Ogden, Utah. "The speech is a series of responses to students' questions, exhorting them to good living and high commitments, building to a response about evolution, and then to personal testimony. A variety of interpretations can be sustained

in the context of the overall speech; we suggest readers consult the speech in its entirety. The kernel statement about evolution is given here” (W. E. Evenson et al., *Evolution*, p. 108).

In a 1978 address he gave as an apostle, Gordon B. Hinckley said (“Four imperatives for Religious Educators,” Church Educational System Address, September 15, 1978, reprinted in part in G. B. Hinckley, *Teachings 1997*, p. 298):

None of us ... knows enough. The learning process is an endless process. We must read, we must observe, we must assimilate, and we must ponder that to which we expose our minds. I believe in evolution, not organic evolution, as it is called, but in the evolution of the mind, the heart, and the soul of man. I believe in improvement. I believe in growth.

20. G. B. Hinckley, 2002, cited in L. A. Witham, *Darwin*, p. 177 and reprinted in E. Jarvik, *Beliefs*. President Hinckley made this remark in an interview with Larry A. Witham, who assured authors Evenson and Jeffery that the statement “was accurately transcribed from his tape-recorded interview” (W. E. Evenson et al., *Evolution*, p. 110).