

Seers, Savants and Evolution: The Uncomfortable Interface*

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Ever since his great synthesis, Darwin's name has been a source of discomfort to the religious world. Too sweeping to be fully fathomed, too revolutionary to be easily accepted, but too well documented to be ignored, his concepts of evolution¹ by natural selection have been hotly debated now for well over a century.² The facts of evolution as a current and

*In the years since its initial publication (Vol. 8, No. 3/4 [Autumn/Winter 1974]: 41-75), this paper has been immeasurably strengthened by a number of excellent studies of evolution, science, and Mormonism. Efforts by Richard Sherlock, Jeffrey Keller, Erich Paul, David Bailey, and William Evenson have been particularly useful. The year 1992 saw two major developments. First came the publication of the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* with an article on evolution initially generated by Evenson, which was reviewed and refined by the First Presidency. Second came the generation of a formal "BYU Packet," outlining the official position of the church and including the formally-signed statements by the First Presidency (1909, 1910, 1925, etc.). This was approved by the First Presidency and seven apostles as members of the BYU Board of Trustees. It is regrettable that this packet has not yet found its way into more broadly-distributed church literature.

Notable also is the recent publication of *Evolution and Mormonism*, authored by Trent Stephens, Jeffrey Meldrum, and Forrest Peterson and published by Signature Books. This book, like earlier ones by William Lee Stokes, attempts a beginning rapprochement of science and Mormonism. That, it would seem, is the challenge for the future.

1. "Evolution" in this article refers only to the general concept that living things as we know them today have over a long period of time been developed by differentiation from a single or several primordial entities, i.e., descent with modification. Other tighter or more specialized definitions do not generally apply here; we shall be content with just the very general concept portrayed by Darwin, in his closing sentence to *The Origin of Species* (2d and all subsequent editions): "There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that. . . from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved."

2. Cf. I. M. Lerner, "The Concept of Natural Selection: A Centennial View," *Proc. Am. Philosophical Soc.* 103, no. 2 (1959): 173-82, reprinted in W. M. Laetsch, ed., *The Biological*

on-going process are there for the observation of any who will exercise the honesty and take the time to look. The question of whether species evolve is no longer open; it has long since been resolved affirmatively.

This is not to say, however, that we understand all the processes at work in evolving populations, or that we can answer unequivocally all the detailed questions concerning life forms in the distant past. Yet such shortcomings do not negate the fact that a great deal about evolutionary processes is known and is demonstrable; anyone who chooses to ignore the subject surely jeopardizes the development of an accurate view of the world around him.

Most Mormons, it would appear, have addressed the question only perfunctorily. The same weakness exists in the vast majority of our published literature on the subject; the level of discussion, unfortunately, is far from sophisticated. Available works are usually the product of individuals who labor under the apparent belief that the concept of evolution *per se* is a threat to the survival or vitality of Mormonism, and that by attacking evolution they become defenders of the faith. Not only do such authors perceive evolution as a deep and fundamental threat to their personal religious convictions, but by various devices they also try to convince us that their bias is also the official, or at least necessary, doctrine of the church. Statements to the effect that one cannot harbor any belief whatsoever in any version of evolution and still be a real Latter-day Saint, or that evolution is the deliberate doctrine of Satan and a counterfeit to the gospel, that it is atheistic, communistic, etc., are not at all rare in the Mormon culture and popular literature.

We do not propose here to consider the validity of the above positions, although readers should be fairly warned of the dangers inherent in a *prima facie* acceptance thereof. We direct ourselves instead to a more immediate concern: What is the doctrine of the church on the subject of evolution, if any? We assert immediately that, among mortals, only the president of the church can articulate a church position on anything. We have no desire to assume that role; the responsibility is awesome. How-

Perspective (Little, Brown & Co., 1969). An excellent statement of what natural selection is, and isn't, is Th. Dobzhansky, "Creative Evolution," *Diogenes* 60 (1967): 62-74. Materials pertinent to the current level of acceptance of the main body of evolutionary concepts are: H. J. Muller, "Biologists' Statement on Teaching Evolution," *Bull. Atom. Scientists* 23 (1967): 39-40, and S. Tax, ed., *Evolution After Darwin* (U. of Chicago Press, 1960), which encompasses in three volumes the proceedings of the Darwin Centennial Celebration (symposium) at the U. of Chicago in 1959. A rather critical but factually reliable appraisal of the current status of evolutionary knowledge, particularly as it applies to invertebrate animals, is G. A. Kerkut, *Implications of Evolution* (Pergamon Press, New York, 1960). Reviews of this work by J. T. Bonner, *Am. Sci.* 49 (1961): 240-44, and Th. Dobzhansky, *Science* 133 (1961): 752, will also prove valuable. The review by W. Bullock, *J. Am. Sci. Affil.* 16, no. 14 (1964): 125-26, will be of particular interest to those interested in religious correlations.

ever, there is a glaring lack, in all published Mormon literature, of analysis of what the response to evolution by "the church" really has been. To be sure, many publications bring together copious strings of quotes from general authorities, all carefully selected to fit the author's personal point of view. In a certain sense, the present development will suffer from the same weakness; we make no attempt to catalogue and analyze every statement by every general authority on the subject. We do claim, however, to try for the first time to document another, broader, point of view fundamentally different from those which have been most ardently presented in the past twenty years, and to examine in as complete a context as is currently sufficiently documented the statements of the prophets of the church on the matter.

Our account may be disturbing to some. It is not designed to be, but the nature and history of the subject make it virtually impossible to avoid affront to someone. We have gone to considerable lengths to circumvent unnecessary conflict. We hope that any who find the review offensive will extend themselves sufficiently to appreciate why this investigation is necessary in the first place. Since the footnotes supply additional discussion, we urge their consultation on critical points.

For statements on church doctrine, we are traditionally referred to the four standard works.³ However, the standard works are not of themselves always sufficient, and it is recognized that essentially authoritative statements can also be originated by the presiding prophet (the president) of the church.⁴ In addition, other priesthood holders may declare the mind of the Lord whenever they are "moved upon by the Holy Ghost."⁵ This latter criterion introduces a high degree of subjectivity into the matter: How does an audience know when a speaker or writer is so moved? President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., of the First Presidency, concluded that one knows only when he himself is so moved,⁶ a conclusion that is religiously sound enough, but still too open for scholarly analysis. For some degree of necessary control in the matter, we shall in this article confine ourselves primarily to statements by the presidents of the church. Recognizing, however, that counselors in the First Presidency of necessity share a very close relationship to the president, sharing with

3. *Improvement Era* (hereafter *Era*), 6 (1903): 233; H. B. Lee, *Ensign* 2, no. 12 (1972): 2-3.

4. First Presidency (Joseph F. Smith et al.), *Deseret News*, 2 Aug. 1913 (also in James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 4 (1970): 284-86; H. B. Lee, *Era* 73, no. 6 (1970): 63-65; *Ensign* 3, no. 1 (1973): 104-108.

5. *Doctrine and Covenants* (D&C) 68:2-4.

6. J. Reuben Clark, Jr., "When Are Church Leader's Words Entitled to Claim of Scripture?" *Church News*, 31 July 1954, 2f, (text of a speech to LDS Seminary and Institute Teachers, BYU, 7 July 1954) is by far the most candid and valuable analysis of this problem by a general authority.

him the responsibility for governing the affairs and doctrines of the church,⁷ we shall also on occasion extend ourselves to their testimony and counsel. The First Presidency, then, as the highest quorum in the church, becomes our source of authoritative statements. The many statements by other authorities will be discussed only as needed for perspective, since they are not binding or fully authoritative.⁸

It should be recognized at the outset that the authorities have never been comfortable with the ideas surrounding evolution. Yet that point must be kept in perspective: Much of their discomfort is shared by many other religionists, laymen, and scientists. It would appear that the primary reasons for discomfort lie not so much in the question of whether living forms have evolved through time. Rather, the concern seems to lie with the mechanisms responsible for such projected changes. To believe that evolution is deity's mode of creation is one thing; to ascribe it all to the action of blind chance is another. Darwin, of course, postulated natural selection as the major mechanism of change. In the century since, it has become plain that he was generally correct: Natural selection is the major identified mechanism. Other mechanisms (e.g., genetic drift) have since been identified as well, and the picture is still far from complete. But the real question is not whether these mechanisms are functional; it is whether they are *sufficient*. Can they, as presently understood, explain the incredible complexity observable in the living world? Of more direct concern to those theologically-oriented is the question: Is there any need for, or evidence of, any processes that would be classed as *divinely* operated or controlled? Therein lies the crux: No one really has any good ideas as to how to look for such possible instances of divine intervention. How would one identify them? It has long been fashionable, in literature both within and without the church, to implicate God wherever we lack adequate "natural" explanations; that is, God is present wherever there is a gap in our knowledge. This "god of the gap" approach is demonstrably tantamount to theological suicide; the gaps have a way of being filled in by further research, and one must keep shifting to ever-new and more subtle gaps. Perception of the self-destructive properties of this approach

7. The best statement known to me on the intimacies of this relationship is in Joseph F. Smith's pledge to the church upon assuming its presidency, 10 November 1901, *Conference Reports*, 82; also in James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 4 (1970):4-6.

8. To be very precise, it appears that no statement or revelation even from a president of the church is binding on the church as a body unless accepted by them by vote in conference (testimony of President Joseph F. Smith in *Proc. before the Committee on Privileges and Elections of the U. S. Senate* (the Reed Smoot Case), 1 (1904): 95-97). This distinction seems quite unnecessary in the current discussion, however, since neither lay members nor general authorities take cognizance of it in general practice.

seems to travel slowly, however, and it still remains the foundation stone of virtually every anti-evolution argument currently in vogue.⁹

The basic question of underlying and fundamental causes remains. If everything proceeds in a stochastic manner governed by the basic laws of chemistry, physics, and genetics, from whence come those laws? They appear to many to be orderly; does this indicate a purposeful design and a Designer?¹⁰ At this point the decision becomes largely a leap of faith; there is no demonstrated answer. Darwin confessed himself unable to decide,¹¹ and his successors, whatever their persuasion, have been able to demonstrate no better solution. President David O. McKay summed up his views on the matter for teachers in the church as follows:

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 [to] 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 infest the student with the thought that all may be chance. I say, that no youth should be so led without a counterbalancing 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." . . . The public school teacher will probably, even if he says that much. . . 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.¹²

9. I. G. Barbour, *Issues in Science and Religion* (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1966), analyzes the "gaps" problem nicely. Cf. also Th. Dobzhansky, *The Biology of Ultimate Concern* (New York: World Publishing Co., 1967), 12-34.

10. We make no attempt here to analyze the validity of the argument. As with all other points to be discussed here, we are interested only in presenting positions. Those who wish to pursue the subject would do well to begin with D. R. Burrill, ed., *The Cosmological Arguments, A Spectrum of Opinion* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1967).

11. Cf. Sir Gavin deBeer, *Charles Darwin, A Scientific Biography* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1963), 266-75; also F. Darwin, ed., *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin* (New York: Appleton, 1887), 2:146, and *More Letters of Charles Darwin* (New York: Appleton, 1903), 1:395.

12. David O. McKay, "A Message for LDS College Youth," BYU Address, 10 Oct. 1952, *BYU Extension Publications*, 6-7. The published version is poorly edited and proofed. We have corrected here the spelling of Millikan's name and added for clarity the word "to" shown in brackets. The deleted material is all consistent with the sentiments of the quote as here rendered, but too garbled for precise reconstruction.

Considerations as to God's possible role in evolutionary processes have not been characteristic of Mormon literature, especially not during the past two decades or so. The shift has been to an attack on evolution itself, fighting not "Godless evolution," but evolution *per se*. The question of whether this latter approach is legitimate brings us squarely back to our original task: a search for a church position.

The researcher soon faces an interesting problem: The available utterances on the subject are widely scattered and remarkably few. Compared with the output of other religious groups, Mormonism has produced a rather tiny body of literature that really deals directly with the matter of evolution.¹³ At first, this is rather frustrating. Commentaries on marriage systems, political involvement, and matters of church and state are extensive, and there is a sizeable literature on other social issues of the day, but there are very few direct confrontations with the questions raised by evolution. Why? Is it solely that the other items were more pressing? There can be no doubt that involvement with these other problems was contributory, but it is clear also that this alone is not a sufficient answer. The most likely further explanation appears to be that LDS doctrines central to the evolution issue were not well developed; they were still in a sufficient state of flux that no direct confrontation was really possible or necessary. Simply put, the church had no defined basic doctrines directly under attack.

On some matters, Mormonism was clearly on the side of "science" in the first place. In no real way could the church be classed as party to the literalistic views of the more orthodox Christian groups of the day. Indeed, Mormonism was a theologic maverick to nineteenth-century Christian orthodoxy. The differences were deep and profound, and on several issues, Mormonism was much more closely aligned with the prevailing concepts of science.¹⁴ Why then should the Mormon theologians rush to an attack on science as other groups did? They should not, and they did not.

13. An introduction to the non-LDS literature can be gained from: A. D. White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, 2 vols. (1896; reprint, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1960), and B. J. Loewenberg, *Darwinism Comes to America, 1859-1900* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969). There is as yet no satisfactory review and introduction to LDS materials on the subject.

14. Cf. O. K. White, Jr., "Mormonism—A Nineteenth Century Heresy," *J. Religious Thought* 26 (1969): 44-55. That Brigham Young perceived these deep distinctions is evident: ". . . we differ from the Christian world in our religious faith and belief; and so we do very materially. I am not astonished that infidelity prevails to a great extent among the inhabitants of the earth, for the religious teachers of the people advance many ideas and notions for truth which are in opposition to and contradict facts demonstrated by science, and which are generally understood" (*Journal of Discourses* 14: 115 [1817]; hereafter JD).

Such a view will not be apparent to many. Let us, therefore, quickly proceed to its examination.

For all intents and purposes, the modern story of evolution began November 24, 1859, the date of the release of Darwin's classic, *On the Origin of Species*. The earlier announcement of the theory of evolution by natural selection, presented as joint papers by Darwin and A. R. Wallace on the evening of July 1, 1858, to the Linnaean Society, had caused little stir. Not so the 1859 publication. Public response was immediate and heated. A recounting of that story is not necessary here, however, since it is readily available elsewhere.¹⁵ Our major concern is to identify the central points of the issues that were of interest in Mormon theology. Mayr¹⁶ has recently postulated six specific issues which seem to lie at the heart of the revolution of thought precipitated by Darwin. These do not translate easily to the LDS world view, however, so we would propose the following five basic concepts as useful for comparing Mormonism to the doctrinal positions taken by science and prevailing Christian theology of the last century.¹⁷ The theological posits are:

1. Belief in an *ex nihilo* creation, that is, creation out of nothing.
2. Belief that the earth was created in six twenty-four hour days, and is only about 6,000 years old.
3. Fixity or immutability of species; that all species were created originally in Eden by the Creator and do not change in any significant way.
4. Contention that life is dependent on an activating vital force which is immaterial and divine, i.e., spirit or soul.
5. Special creation of man; that God literally molded man's body from the dust of the ground and blew into it the breath of life, the spirit.¹⁸

Let us now examine the alignment of Mormonism on these issues. Was the doctrine of the church as of 1859 (and for, say, twenty or so years thereafter, the period of the hottest debates) such as to align it with the orthodox theologies of the day, or with science, or with neither?

1. CREATION EX NIHILLO

A formal definition of this view is "God brings the entire substance of a thing into existence from a state of non-existence. . . .[W]hat is pecu-

15. Of the many books available, L. Eiseley's *Darwin's Century* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1958) is probably the best single general work. Also recommended are W. Irvine's *Apes, Angels, and Victorians* (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1955), and Sir G. deBeer's *Charles Darwin, A Scientific Biography* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1963).

16. E. Mayr, "The Nature of the Darwinian Revolution," *Science* 176 (1972): 981-89.

17. It is a distortion to characterize the dispute as one between science and religion. The dispute was with specific theologies, not religion *per se*. This distinction is critical but usually overlooked.

liar to creation is the entire absence of any prior subject-matter.¹⁹ The doctrine is elsewhere explained as God's "speaking into being" everything except himself.²⁰ The doctrine in its contested form meant literally out of *nothing*; more recent attempts to cast it in the light of matter-energy conversions are distortions that betray the earlier meaning. The doctrine, of course, finds little place in contemporary science, which deals with conversions of matter and of energy, but is generally foreign to the idea of something coming from nothing.

It is difficult to find in Mormonism a philosophical doctrine that has been more consistently and fervently denounced, that is more incompatible with Mormon theology, than creation *ex nihilo*. The concept is usually derived straight from Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and it is right there that Joseph Smith chose to set the theologians straight:

Now I ask all the learned men who hear me, why the learned men who are preaching salvation say, that God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing, and the reason is they are unlearned; they account it blasphemy to contradict the idea, they will call you a fool—I know more than all the world put together, and the Holy Ghost within me comprehends more than all the world, and I will associate with it. The word create came from the word *bau-rau*; it does not mean so; it means to organize; the same as a man would organize a ship. Hence we infer that God had materials to organize the world out of chaos; chaotic matter, which is element, and in which dwells all the glory. Element had an existence from the time he had. The pure principles of element, are principles that can never be destroyed. They may be organized and re-organized; but not destroyed.²¹

This view of Joseph's has been affirmed ever since in Mormonism. Brigham Young continually preached it,²² as did his contemporaries among the general authorities.

18. The dispute over some of these issues, particularly the fourth, cannot be directly attributed to Darwin. There can be no doubt that his proposals intensified the concern over them, however, and they eventually became all part of one intermeshed debate. The inclusion here is thus not unjustified.

19. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Co., 1908), 4:470.

20. H. M. Morris, *Biblical Cosmology and Modern Science* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1970), 68. Cf. A. D. White, *History of the Warfare of Science*, 1:2-7, for variations on the theme.

21. *Times and Seasons* (hereafter T&S) 5 (1844): 615. An expanded and variant version of this statement appears in *History of the Church*, ed. B. H. Roberts, (2nd ed., 1962) 6:308-309; hereafter HC. In Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1958 printing), the same quote is given, 350-52. Although the latter compiler cites the *Times and Seasons* as his source, he actually gives the HC account.

22. See, for example, *Journal of Discourses* 11:120 (1865); 13:248 (1870); 14:116 (1871); 16:167 (1873), 18:231-32 (1876).

Creation *ex nihilo* has further meaning as well: that all things were created directly by God, and therefore have *contingent* being.²³ In this view, only God had *necessary* being; all else is dependent (contingent) on him for both its existence and continued maintenance. This concept leads to a morass of theological difficulties, not the least of which are responsibility for evil and denial of the free agency of man.²⁴ Mormonism, while it does not escape completely from some of these difficulties, begins from a completely different base. For one thing, God is not the creator of matter, as is indicated in the above statement from the founder of the faith. "Element had an existence from the time he had. . . it had no beginning, and can have no end." The statement (part of a funeral sermon) continues:

. . . so I must come to the resurrection of the dead, the soul, the mind of man, the immortal spirit. All men say God created it in the beginning. The very idea lessens man in my estimation; I do not believe the doctrine, I know better. Hear it all ye ends of the world, for God has told me so. I will make a man appear a fool before I get through, if you don't believe it. I am going to tell of things more noble—we say that God himself is a self existing God; who told you so? it is correct enough, but how did it get into your heads? Who told you that man did not exist in like manner upon the same principles? (refers to the old Bible,) how does it read in the Hebrew? It don't say so in the Hebrew, it says God made man out of the earth, and put into him Adam's spirit, and so became a living body.

The mind of man is as immortal as God himself. I know that my testimony is true, hence when I talk to these mourners; what have they lost, they are only seperated [sic.] from their bodies for a short season; their spirits existed co-equal with God, and they now exist in a place where they converse together, the same as we do on the earth. Is it logic to say that a spirit is immortal, and yet have a beginning? Because if a spirit have a beginning it will have an end; good logic. I want to reason more on the spirit of man, for

23. A good discussion of creation *ex nihilo* as it applies to Mormon thought is found in O. K. White, "The Social-Psychological Basis of Mormon New-Orthodoxy," master's thesis, Univ. of Utah 1967, 87ff; also: "The Transformation of Mormon Theology," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 5, no. 2 (1970): 9-24. White maintains, quite justifiably, that Mormon authors consistently miss the deeper or even essential meanings of the doctrine, that of *necessary* versus *contingent* being. We emphasize, however, that the pre-occupation on the simpler level, creation out of nothing, is not that of Mormon writers alone; it is so used and defended by non-Mormon Christian writers on a broad front. White correctly points out that either interpretation of the doctrine is contradicted by Mormon theology and pronouncements. Cf. also Truman Madsen, *Instructor* 99 (1964): 96-99; *Instructor* 99 (1964): 236f; and, for the most detailed treatment available in Mormon literature on the subject, S. M. McMurrin, *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* (Salt Lake City: Univ. of Utah Press, 1965).

24. Cf. B. H. Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), 2:404-406; hereafter CHC.

I am dwelling on the body of man, on the subject of the dead. I take my ring from my finger and liken it unto the mind of man, the immortal spirit, because it has no beginning. Suppose you cut it in two; but as the Lord lives there would be an end.—All the fools, learned and wise men, from the beginning of creation, who say that man had a beginning, proves that he must have an end and then the doctrine of annihilation would be true. But, if I am right I might with boldness proclaim from the house tops, that God never did have power to create the spirit of man at all. God himself could not create himself: intelligence exists upon a self-existent principle, it is a spirit from age to age, and there is no creation about it.²⁵

Thus both matter and the basic identity of man share necessary existence with God.²⁶ The doctrines have been taught continually and often by Joseph's successors.²⁷ As regards the first point of contention in the science-theology argument, Mormonism was unalterably opposed to the basic position of Christian theology.²⁸ In the dispute on this point between science and then-current theology, Mormonism was clearly allied much more closely with science.

2. AGE OF THE EARTH

The predominant doctrine of the nineteenth-century Christian theologians is too well known to need extensive documentation. While not all were as extreme as John Lightfoot, the vice-chancellor of the University of Cambridge, who insisted that the creation of the earth took place "on the twenty-third of October, 4004 B.C., at nine o'clock in the morning," the range of views for the earth's age were generally from about 4,000 years to 6,000 years before Christ.²⁹ Science, of course, could not

25. Joseph Smith, T&S 5:615, 1844. As with n. 21, an expanded version is found in B. H. Roberts's HC 6:310-11. It is Roberts who equates the term "co-equal" with "co-eternal." Once again, Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings*, 352-54, follows the Roberts's version. Cf. also Joseph Smith, T&S 3:745, 1842. The errors in grammar, spelling, etc., are in the original.

26. Cf. D&C 93:21-23, 29, 33-35; Book of Abraham (in *The Pearl of Great Price*, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, 1968 printing), 3:18.

27. Cf. Brigham Young: JD 1:116 (1853); 3:356 (1856); 7:285 (1859); 8:27 (1860); and W. O. Rich, *Distinctive Teachings of the Restoration* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1962), ch. 3.

28. Considering just this point alone, one is mystified as to how some well-meaning Mormons have been able to align themselves with such ardent modern exponents of creation *ex nihilo* as the Creation Research Society, which exacts as part of its membership requirement a subscription to the following statement of belief: "All basic types of living things, including man, were made by direct creative acts of God during the Creation Week described in Genesis."

29. A. D. White, *History of the Warfare of Science*, 1:5-10 and later. Suggestions were also made occasionally, though not forcefully, that the "days" were periods of indefinite length;

agree. Darwin, in the first edition of *The Origin*, had opted for an age of several hundreds of millions of years. Even devoutly religious scientists who opposed him, such as the physicist Lord Kelvin, produced estimates for the earth's age in the neighborhood of 20 million years. Estimates this small were painful to Darwin, since they seemed far too short for natural selection to have played the role he postulated for it.³⁰ However, they were even more painful to the orthodox theologians, since they demonstrated in virtually final fashion that a 6,000-year age was beyond defensibility. Kelvin's arguments, and others similar, have since been generally laid to rest. The age of the earth has been pushed ever farther back, and current estimates range from 4.5 to 5.0 billion years. While no really precise age has been determined, the main issue, that of an old earth or a young one, has been essentially resolved.³¹ Our concern here, however, is not how old the earth really is. Rather, it is: Where did the church line up on the issue? The answer is: nowhere—it was wide open on the matter.

Mormon speakers ranged widely in their expressions. Statements from the presiding quorum kept the church non-committed, but open for the long age. There seems to have been no one who opted for twenty-four hour creation days, unless one wishes to so interpret Oliver Cowdery's statement, published while he was Assistant (Associate) President of the church, that he believed the scriptures "are meant to be understood according to their *literal* reading, as those passages which teach us of the creation of the world" (emphasis his).³² Joseph Smith left no clear-cut statement on the matter. On the Christmas day after Joseph's death, his close associate W. W. Phelps wrote a letter to Joseph's brother William, who was in the east. Therein he refers, among other things, to the contributions of Joseph, and to the eventual triumph of truth and Mormonism. One of Joseph's accomplishments, of course, was the Book of Abraham, an incomplete text produced in conjunction with some Egyptian papyri. Phelps exults:

Well, now, Brother William, when the house of Israel begin to come into the glorious mysteries of the kingdom, and find that Jesus Christ, whose goings forth, as the prophets said, have been from of old, from eternity: and that eternity, agreeably to the records found in the catacombs of Egypt, has been

cf. J. C. Greene, *Darwin and the Modern World View* (Mentor Books, 1963), 18-19. Such views were lost in the melee, however.

30. Eiseley, *Darwin's Century*, 233f.

31. Opponents of this view exist, of course, both within Mormonism and without. Indeed, such dissident literature has been quite popular in Mormonism in recent years. The arguments advanced, however, have not been convincing to those professionally engaged in the specific fields of dispute—and, despite certain contrary rumors, the arguments have been honestly considered.

32. *Latter Day Saints Messenger and Advocate* 1 (Feb. 1835): 78.

going on in this system, (not this world) almost *two thousand five hundred and fifty five millions* of years: and to know at the same time, that deists, geologists and others are trying to prove that matter must have existed hundreds of thousands of years;—it almost tempts the flesh to fly to God, or muster faith like Enoch to be translated.³³

This reference has been cited many times in Mormon literature. Some have used it to indicate that the planet earth is 2.55 billion years old; others, taking careful note of the phrase in parentheses, insist that it has no such meaning, that it refers to a much larger physical system and has no bearing on the age of the earth. The latter view argues that “not this world” specifically rules out the earth as the object of reference. A critical examination of terms in Joseph’s vocabulary, however, indicates that he made definite distinctions between the terms “earth” and “world”: “Earth” was the planet upon which we live, “world” referred to “the human family.”³⁴ One also finds that Joseph did not, in his sermons, utilize these definitions consistently. The disagreement over the interpretation of the above passage, however, centers on how *Phelps* meant the term “world”—in the way Joseph had defined it or in some other sense. The question is moot, since Phelps nowhere clarified the statement. The very evident context, however, of Phelps’s rejoicing over the developing agreement between this statement and the efforts of “geologists” to establish long time-spans gives strong support to those who interpret the statement as applying to the planet Earth. The one certain point that can be drawn from this statement is that Joseph’s world view was not bounded by the orthodox Christian theologies of the day. His mind ranged far more widely, a point that is plentifully evident from even a casual analysis.

During the nineteenth century subsequent to Joseph’s death, one can find many further statements by Mormon authorities pertaining to the age of the earth. A prominent one, taught by certain apostles, was that the seven days of creation were each 1,000 years in duration, and the earth was therefore approximately 13,000 years old, calculating approximately 6,000 years since the Adamic fall. This concept received limited support from members of the First Presidency, but their statements carried also a sentiment of very different flavor: The age of the earth was really not known and did not matter; the important thing to realize was

33. T&S 5:758, published 1 Jan. 1845. Emphasis and parentheses are in the original. Certain passages from the D&C will be discussed hereafter.

34. Statement attributed to Joseph Smith; F. D. Richards and J. A. Little, comps., *A Compendium of the Doctrines of the Gospel*, stereotype ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Co., 1882), 287. An examination of the prophet’s speeches indicates that he usually followed this distinction.

that God created it. As Brigham Young expressed it, in a comment fraught with implications:

It is said in this book (the Bible) that God made the earth in six days. This is a mere term, but it matters not whether it took six days, six months, six years, or six thousand years. The creation occupied certain periods of time. We are not authorized to say what the duration of these days was, whether Moses penned these words as we have them, or whether the translators of the Bible have given the words their intended meaning. However, God created the world. If I were a sectarian I would say, according to their philosophy, as I have heard many of them say hundreds of times, "God created all things out of nothing; in six days he created the world out of nothing." You may be assured the Latter-day Saints do not believe any such thing. They believe God brought forth material out of which he formed this little *terra firma* upon which we roam. How long had this material been in existence? Forever and forever, in some shape, in some condition.³⁵

A further lengthy but valuable passage from Brigham Young voices the same sentiments, amplifies them in regard to the scriptures, and emphasizes that revelations then in possession of the church were insufficient to settle the matter, and that the truth would be obtained only if God were to give specific revelation on the subject:

It was observed here just now that we differ from the Christian world in our religious faith and belief; and so we do very materially. I am not astonished that infidelity prevails to a great extent among the inhabitants of the earth, for the religious teachers of the people advance many ideas and notions for truth which are in opposition to and contradict facts demonstrated by science, and which are generally understood. Says the scientific man, "I do not see your religion to be true; I do not understand the law, light, rules, religion, or whatever you call it, which you say God has revealed; it is confusion to me, and if I submit to and embrace your views and theories I must reject the facts which science demonstrates to me." This is the position, and the line of demarcation has been plainly drawn, by those who profess Christianity, between the sciences and revealed religion. You take, for instance, our geologists, and they tell us that this earth has been in existence for thousands and millions of years. They think, and they have good reason for their faith, that their researches and investigations enable them to demonstrate that this earth has been in existence as long as they assert it has; and they say, "If the Lord, as religionists declare, made the earth out of nothing in six days, six thousands years ago, our studies are all in vain; but by what we can learn from nature and the immutable laws of the Creator as revealed therein, we know that your theories are incorrect and consequently we must reject your religions as false and vain, we must be what you call infidels, with the

35. JD 18:231-32 (1876).

demonstrated truths of science in our possession; or, rejecting those truths, become enthusiasts in, what you call, Christianity.”

In these respects we differ from the Christian world, for our religion will not clash with or contradict the facts of science in any particular. You may take geology, for instance, and it is a true science, not that I would say for a moment that all the conclusions and deductions of its professors are true, but its leading principles are; they are facts—they are eternal; and to assert that the Lord made this earth out of nothing is preposterous and impossible. God never made something out of nothing; it is not in the economy or law by which the worlds were, are, or will exist. There is an eternity before us, and it is full of matter; and if we but understand enough of the Lord and his ways, we would say that he took of this matter and organized this earth from it. How long it has been organized it is not for me to say, and I do not care anything about it. As for the Bible account of the creation we may say that the Lord gave it to Moses, or rather Moses obtained the history and traditions of the fathers, and from these picked out what he considered necessary, and that account has been handed down from age to age, and we have got it, no matter whether it is correct or not, and whether the Lord found the earth empty and void, whether he made it out of nothing or out of the rude elements; or whether he made it in six days or in as many millions of years, is and will remain a matter of speculation in the minds of men unless he give revelation on the subject. If we understood the process of creation there would be no mystery about it, it would be all reasonable and plain, for there is no mystery except to the ignorant. This we know by what we have learned naturally. . . .³⁶

We need not belabor the issue. While Mormon speakers expressed a diversity of opinions, the First Presidency kept the door open, clearly opposed to orthodox Christian theology, clearly sympathetic to the position of science.

3. FIXITY OF SPECIES

If ever anyone bought a bad deal, it was when the theologians adopted the stance that species do not change, that they remain as “originally created.” The irony of the matter is that the concept of species is not a religious one at all, but an idea prematurely bought from science. The Genesis scriptures speak only of “kind,” which to this day no one has been able to define.³⁷ Indeed, no one worried much about it until

36. JD 14:115-16 (1871). Lest LDS geologists become overly smug from these statements, however, we point out that they too could share Brigham’s disdain, cf. JD, 13:248-49 (1870); *Deseret News*, 18 June 1873, 308. The statements are still consistent with the above, however.

37. There is no legitimate discussion of the word “kind” (Hebrew = *min*) in biological terms known to me in Mormon literature. For a beginning discussion, not LDS, see A. J. Jones, “A General Analysis of the Biblical ‘Kind’ (*Min*),” *Creation Research Society Quarterly*

about the seventeenth century, when John Ray (1627-1705) and Carl Linné (Linnaeus) (1707-78) laid the foundations of modern taxonomy and systematics.

Linné's case is particularly instructive. Few men have ever so completely dominated the intellectual thought of the time in which they have lived; he was indeed "a phenomenon rather than a man." His gift and passion for cataloguing organisms was unmatched and contagious. Everyone wanted to get into the act, and plants and animals were brought to him from all over the world for proper naming and classification. His passion was to name everything, to pigeonhole all living things into the neat compartments he attributed to the Genesis creations. He thus declared a fixity of species, that they were unchangeable entities each descended from a specific Edenic stock, by whose analysis one caught a glimpse of the Creator at work. However, the concept was an illusion, one which tragically escaped from his control. For it caught the human fancy, and when in his maturity Linné realized that it was worthless, he was powerless to change its hold upon the human mind. By then it had been seized upon as a classic demonstration of the neatness of creation. "Kind" had been construed as meaning "species," and the trap for theologians was thus laid, innocently but nonetheless surely. It was Linné's own fame and prodigious work which sprung the set. Not only did it become painfully evident to anyone who wished to look that there were just too many species to be explained so simply—if Adam had named them all in the Garden, he'd likely be at it yet—but their distributions, their intermediate grades, their hybridizations, were irrefutably beyond so neat a conception. Yet the damage was done: Theologians would have their species, and they would have them fixed.

Science, self-correcting as it eventually is, finally grew openly beyond the strictures of Linné's early concepts. Species quite obviously could change, and did, both in time and in space. The battle with theology was joined after Darwin proposed a mechanism (natural selection) for such change.³⁸

A very real problem was the lack of an adequate concept of what a species really is. We need not discuss the attempts at definition here, only point out that the concept is problematical. That does not indicate that species do not exist; they most definitely do. As with many other things, however, precise definitions are virtually impossible, and before

9, no. 1 (1972): 53-57; and "Boundaries of the Min: An Analysis of the Mosaic Lists of Clean and Unclean Animals," *ibid.* 9, no. 2 (1972): 114-23; and references cited therein. Most current writers consider "kind" to represent a biological grouping at approximately the Family level in the taxonomic hierarchy; few indeed are those who still try to equate it with "species."

38. Cf. Eiseley, *Darwin's Century*, or any good text of the history of biology.

one can really understand anyone else on the matter, he must know what definitions are being used.³⁹ Such a common word to hide such complexity! But statements on the subject, without definitions, are virtually meaningless.

What position on species fixity was being articulated by the leaders of Mormonism up to and during this critical time? It is readily apparent that the subject hardly ever caught their attention. Casual statements that God and man are of the same species occur periodically, but beyond that the treatment is sketchy. The following lean sampling represents all the authoritative statements that have come to our attention.

Speaking on divine decrees, Joseph Smith comments:

The sea also has its bounds which it cannot pass. God has set many signs on the earth, as well as in the heavens; for instance, the oak of the forest, the fruit of the tree, the herb of the field—all bear a sign that seed hath been planted there; for it is a decree of the Lord that every tree, plant, and herb bearing seed should bring forth of its kind, and cannot come forth after any other law or principle.⁴⁰

No mention here of species at all, just the generic “kind,” and no definition of that. For all its looseness, however, a certain sentiment is evidenced which tends to favor some sort of fixity.

Eighteen years later, in 1860, Brigham Young touched on the subject. In a sermon launched upon the matter of death and the resurrection, he asserts:

The whole Scriptures plainly teach us that we are the children of that God who framed the world. Let us look round and see whether we can find a father and son in this congregation. Do we see one an elephant, and the other a hen? No. Does a father that looks like a human being have a son like an ape, going on all fours? No; the son looks like his father. There is an endless variety of distinction in the few features that compose the human face, yet children have in their countenances and general expression of figure and temperament a greater or less likeness of their parents. You do not see brutes spring from human beings. Every species is true to its kind. The children of men are featured alike and walk erect.⁴¹

39. Cf. M. Ruse, “Definitions of Species in Biology,” *British Journal for Philosophy of Science* 20 (1969): 97-119, or any good text in systematics or evolution. Also of interest is C. Zirkle, “Species Before Darwin,” *Proc. Amer. Philosoph. Soc.* 103 (1959): 636-44.

40. Joseph Smith, as taken from Wilford Woodruff’s notes, in HC 4:554, from a speech delivered 20 March 1842; cf. also B. H. Roberts’ qualifying comments on the notes, *ibid.*, 556 n, which must be kept in mind regarding all such speech texts. We have not been able to locate any earlier published accounts.

41. JD 8:29-30 (1860).

The hyperbole here is evident and, strictly speaking, completely disrupts the point its author is making. As it is, it certainly does not constitute a statement against the scientific version of changes in species. Modern evolution texts carry many statements concerning developmental canalization and genetic homeostasis which express these same concepts. Yet with all that, there is still, in President Young's words, a sentiment toward fixity of species—again subject to whatever is meant by "species."

These would seem to constitute virtually all the authoritative statements that were applicable during the early Darwinian period. The extreme paucity and ambiguity of such addressments is evident from the fact that the favorite citation on the subject by current Mormon anti-evolutionists is cited, usually, as one from "President Charles W. Penrose, of the First Presidency." While it is slightly more explicit than the ones we have here discussed, it simply is not admissible, since it was in actuality made by *Elder* Charles W. Penrose nearly twenty years before he was called to be a general authority, let alone a member of the First Presidency.⁴²

In summary, the doctrine of species fixity was virtually ignored by official Mormon spokesmen. When they did broach the subject, their statements were very general and in no real way proscriptive from a professional's point of view. The authors were not speaking to professionals, however, and the sentiment of their statements took on the flavor of the theology of their day. In the light of subsequent research and observation, such a sentiment is unfortunate; it mars a rather neat record. It is quite evident, however, that a doctrine of species fixity was not a matter of prime concern in the nineteenth-century church.

4. VITALISM: NECESSITY FOR AN OUTSIDE "SPIRIT" OR VITAL FORCE

While not strictly a product of the Darwinian revolution, and in many ways antedating it, the question of the existence of a vital force became an important part of the discussion surrounding Darwinism. This was particularly true in later years of the furor, when vitalism was offered in various forms as an alternative to the causalistic theories which were more in vogue.⁴³ As with previous topics, our purpose here is only to look at the range of authoritative Mormon expression. We must restrict ourselves to a fairly superficial treatment, although the subject as treated in Mormonism virtually screams for a thorough and searching

42. JD 26:20 (1884).

43. G. G. Simpson, *The Meaning of Evolution* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1949), 124-29, 263-79. Simpson, usually pictured as quite insensitive to religious viewpoints, develops some concepts of the limitations and implications of materialism which have considerable interest to Mormons.

analysis. Also, while it is highly unlikely that any reviewer can wrap it all up in one neat package, it becomes quickly evident to the inquiring student that Mormon spokesmen have glimpsed a view radically different from the usual Christian positions and their tenets are very poorly appreciated in the church today. This lack of appreciation seems to result more from neglect than from any shift in doctrine. The basic conceptions, tentative though they are, have become so covered with the cobwebs of time that to most Mormons today even their basic outlines are obscured; the general concept in the church today is essentially standard Christian.

A recent treatment outlines the basic positions of vitalism and mechanism thusly:

Life, the subject matter of biology, is a phenomenon intimately connected with matter. Biology, therefore, must be concerned with the relationship between matter and the phenomenon we call life. Animate and inanimate things have matter in common, and it is in their materiality that the two can best be compared. In this comparison, two theories, vitalism and mechanism, compete for the mastery. The vitalist sees in a living organism the convergence of two essentially different factors. For him matter is shaped and dominated by a life principle; unaided, matter could never give rise to life. The mechanist, on the other hand, denies any joint action of two essentially different factors. He holds that matter is capable of giving rise to life by its own intrinsic forces. The mechanist considers matter to be "alive." The vitalist considers that something immaterial lives in and through matter.⁴⁴

To Mormons, the divergence between the two approaches is best seen in two basic issues: 1) whether an outside force is necessary to make a body "alive," and 2) whether such an outside force is material. The popular nineteenth-century theological view, of course, was that life is due to a non-material force. Science, profiting from a long series of investigations on spontaneous generation dating primarily from Redi in the seventeenth century to Pasteur and Tyndall in the 1870s, became associated with mechanism (materialism). The reason for this latter association is not that either view has been rigorously proved. It is rather that the materialistic view allows experimentation whereas the vitalist view does not, since one is hard pressed to experiment with immaterial "things." As Hardin has so aptly put it: "The mechanistic position, whether it is ultimately proved right or wrong, has been and will continue to be productive of new discoveries. Indeed, if vitalism is ultimately proved to be true, it is the mechanist who will prove it so."⁴⁵

44. R. Schubert-Soldern, *Mechanism and Vitalism, Philosophical Aspects of Biology*, ed. P. G. Fothergill (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962), 10-11.

45. G. Hardin, *Biology, Its Principles and Implications*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman and Co., 1966), 11.

It is doubtful that anyone can meaningfully pinpoint a consistent Mormon "doctrine" on the matter of spirit, life, vital force, etc. Teachings of the church in the nineteenth century were in a high state of flux when it came to issues beyond the simple basics. Terms were confused and misused, concepts were loosely defined and highly fragmented, speculation was rife. B. H. Roberts points out quite correctly that Joseph Smith sometimes used the terms "intelligence," "mind," "spirit," and "soul" interchangeably; "life," and even "light," could be added to the list as well.⁴⁶ There is no satisfactory synthesis of the subject, and it is doubtful that one could be produced. Andrus's imaginative treatment⁴⁷ is as wide-ranging as any available and should be consulted carefully if for no other reason than its references. Roberts's brief discussion⁴⁸ is valuable.

That Mormonism accepts the view that living things possess spirits is well known as a general concept. Man's spirit, of course, is said to be the result of a spirit birth in a pre-mortal state. That "spirit," "spirits," ("life," etc.), are *material* is likewise clear: "There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes; . . . it is all matter."⁴⁹ This canonized statement has been the justification for a long series of missionary tracts and doctrinal assertions that have spelled out very clearly that Mormonism is a materialistic system. There can be no identification whatever with sentiments of immateriality. Immateriality, to the early Mormons, was virtually synonymous with atheism: In either case, one ended up with his hopes pinned on nothing.

Beyond this point, however, the thinking becomes more tortuous. The philosophically minded Pratt brothers, Orson and Parley, were by far the most expansive and explicit on the matter. Yet certain aspects of Orson's writings eventually drew public denouncement from the First Presidency under Brigham Young.⁵⁰ Parley's master work, decades after his death, was subjected to a rather unscrupulous editing and reworking, anonymously and without any warning to subsequent readers. Later editions passed off as Parley's some teachings quite foreign to those of the original text.⁵¹ These incidents, as perhaps no others in Mormonism,

46. CHC 2:392. A close friend of Joseph Smith's, Benjamin F. Johnson, makes the "light- life-spirit" equation in his 1903 letter to Elder George F. Gibbs, 5, typescript copy; copy available in Brigham Young University library.

47. H. L. Andrus, *God, Man and the Universe* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968), 144-92.

48. CHC 2:381-412, esp. 399-401.

49. D&C 131:7-8.

50. *Deseret News* 10(21):162-63, 25 July 1860, and 14(47):372-73, 23 Aug. 1865; also in J. R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 2 (1965):214-23, 229-40.

51. Compare the first edition, *Key to the Science of Theology*, printed by J. Sadler, Liverpool, 1855, with later editions.

emphasize the fact that only the First Presidency comprises an authoritative source for doctrinal analysis.

However, from all the heady teachings on spirit during these decades comes a perception germane to our present consideration. The Pratts worried about the spirit natures of animals and plants, becoming in many ways almost Aristotelean, and these writings were not among those censured. The sentiment went further, to include the earth itself as a living thing by virtue of its having spirit or a spirit; indeed, it was taught that all matter was possessed of spirit, that spirit pervades all matter. The material of the body of a man is thus possessed of spirit independent from his spirit. Spirit or life is thus a property of matter itself. From here, we can do no better than to let Brigham Young develop it directly, in an 1856 discourse. Speaking of "natural, true philosophy," and developing the idea that the processes associated with death are really a manifestation of inherent life in matter, he continues:

What is commonly called death does not destroy the body, it only causes a separation of spirit and body, but the principle of life, inherent in the native elements, of which the body is composed, still continues with the particles of that body and causes it to decay, to dissolve itself into the elements of which it was composed, and all of which continue to have life. When the spirit given to man leaves the body, the tabernacle begins to decompose, is that death? No, death only separates the spirit and body, and a principle of life still operates in the untenanted tabernacle, but in a different way, and producing different effects from those observed while it was tenanted by the spirit. There is not a particle of element which is not filled with life, and all space is filled with element; there is no such thing as empty space, though some philosophers contend that there is.

Life in various proportions, combinations, conditions, etc., fills all matter. Is there life in a tree when it ceases to put forth leaves? You see it standing upright, and when it ceases to bear leaves and fruit you say it is dead, but that is a mistake. It still has life, but that life operates upon the tree in another way, and continues to operate until it resolves it to the native elements. It is life in another condition that begins to operate upon man, upon animal, upon vegetation, and upon minerals when we see the change termed dissolution. There is life in the material of the fleshly tabernacle, independent of the spirit given of God to undergo this probation. There is life in all matter, throughout the vast extent of all the eternities; it is in the rock, the sand, the dust, in water, air, the gases, and, in short, in every description and organization of matter, whether it be solid, liquid, or gaseous, particle operating with particle.⁵²

52. JD 3:276-77 (1856). Benjamin F. Johnson, letter to Elder George F. Gibbs, 5-6, indicates that essentially this same doctrine was taught by Joseph Smith.

Elsewhere President Young repeatedly refers to "organization" as a key factor in determining differences in life quality.⁵³ Taken with the concepts above, such teachings bear a striking resemblance to those of the mechanists-materialists. To the mechanist, life is an expression of a unique combination or organization of matter. To President Young, all matter has life as an inherent property, and organization is the key to its different manifestations. To both, life is an expression of matter. At this most fundamental of levels, the differences between science and Mormonism, as taught by Brigham Young, are reduced to mere semantics. The points of agreement are profound. President Young's entire philosophy, to be sure, ranges far beyond matters that are in the realm of science either then or now, but at the fundamental level, at the point of contact, they are in essential agreement. Should Mormonism then have taken the field against the materialism of science? Scarcely.

5. SPECIAL CREATION OF MAN

Here we venture into the hottest point of discussion. In *The Origin*, Darwin marshaled one powerful argument after another for the evolution of plant and animal species from earlier forms. Only one sentence, on the penultimate page, was directed to man: "Much light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history." Although Darwin himself was not yet ready to tackle this problem of ultimate concern, others were not so retiring. The issue was quickly joined, with Huxley and others insisting that man's body was related to and derived from other life forms, and the theologians of the day insisting with equal vehemence that the body was the result of a special creative act, independently developed from the dust of the ground by the shaping hand of the Creator, and activated by "the breath of life." Mormons accept as part of their canon the same scripture-text on this matter as was utilized by the orthodox theologians, of course, that of the King James rendition, Genesis 2:7. The Book of Abraham, first published in the *Times and Seasons* in 1842 and canonized in 1880, expresses virtually the same thought as Genesis (cf. 5:7). The Book of Moses, proclaimed as a revealed restoration of the Genesis text, dating from 1830 and also canonized on 1880, is the most explicit of the three: "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). A literal reading of the passage lends itself to no other interpretation at all but that of the special creationists; it is clearly stated, and proscriptive of any other interpretation. The fascinating point, however, is that

53. E.g., JD 1:349 (1853); 3:354 (1856); 7:2-3, 285 (1859); 9:242 (1862).

with the possible exception of Apostle Orson Pratt, no major Mormon spokesman seems to have taken the full passage literally.⁵⁴ The intense scriptural literalism with which some current writers try to paint LDS presidents falls apart completely on this and related passages.

No president or member of the First Presidency, so far as we have been able to discover, has ever accepted the idea of special creation of man's body, or of anything else, for that matter. An examination of Joseph Smith's teachings reveals an idea, never expressed in detail, that man came via an act of natural procreation. That sentiment runs generally through the teachings of his successors,⁵⁵ but we shall find that it is not so clearly spelled out as some have assumed. If by a natural act of procreation, then from whom, and by what specific natural process? For "natural processes," as we shall see, encompass a wide variety of possibilities. To assist the focus of our inquiry, we shall refine the question to: Whence came man's body?

Joseph's clearest statement on the matter seems to be: "Where was there ever a son without a father? And where was there ever a father without first being a son? Whenever did a tree or anything spring into existence without a progenitor? And everything comes in this way."⁵⁶

Under Brigham Young's administration, however, more specific teachings were developed. Beginning in 1852, the same year that plural marriage was openly acknowledged to the world, President Young himself served notice of a new doctrine in Mormonism: that Adam and Eve were resurrected beings, exalted to Godhood from a mortality on another and older sphere. They had produced the spirits of all men, and had then come to this earth, degraded their "celestial" bodies so that they could produce the bodies of Abel, Cain, Seth, et al.⁵⁷ In short, Adam in

54. In H. B. Lee, "Find the Answers in the Scriptures," *Ensign* 2, no. 12 (Dec. 1972): 2-3, there does appear a passage which seems to imply an authoritative acceptance of the literal interpretation of Moses 3:7. Correspondence which we are not at liberty to release, however, indicates that this should not be construed as a pronouncement of any particular interpretation or doctrinal position.

55. E.g., from Brigham Young, JD 3:319 (1856); 4:216-18 (1857); 7:285 (1859); 15:137 (1872).

56. HC 6:476, a speech by Joseph Smith dated 16 June 1844, as taken from notes by Thomas Bullock. We have not been able to locate any earlier published sources. Cf. also n. 40.

57. We are well aware of the intense arguments and deeply held opinions revolving around this doctrine and the current propensity to deny that it was ever taught. There can be no justification for denying its historical reality; it is too well documented and was taught by Brigham Young from 1852 until his death in 1877 (cf. R. Turner, "The Position of Adam in Latter-day Saint Scripture and Theology," master's thesis, Division of Religion, Brigham Young University, 1953). A more recent and thorough account is O. Kraut, *Michael/Adam*, n.d., n.p., but published in 1972. Both sources discuss reactions of church members to the doctrine, which include problems with scriptural reconciliation. Those who

President Young's views occupied essentially the same place reserved by modern church members for Elohim; Elohim was regarded as the Grandfather in Heaven, rather than Father. We needn't concern ourselves here with the details of the doctrine, only that Adam was purported to have had a resurrected body, and to have begun the family of man by direct sexual union and procreation.

The response of church members to the doctrine, however, is of importance to us. With most, the concept does not seem to have been well received. Indeed, President Young's public sermons on the matter quickly began to skirt the issue, referring to it continually but obliquely. In private, he and his colleagues taught it affirmatively.⁵⁸ With rare

attempt to prove that Brigham Young taught only doctrine which is currently orthodox are driven to an inexcusable exercise of freedom in interpreting, and even a doctoring of, his sermons; e.g., J. A. Widtsoe, comp., *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 159, 1925 edition. These errors are resolutely compounded and further promulgated by Joseph Fielding Smith, e.g., *Answers to Gospel Questions* (1966), 5:121-28, excerpted in the 1972-73 Melchizedek priesthood manual, 20-22. Compare, for example, the quote from JD 9:148 in its original form and as printed by Widtsoe, by Smith (124), and in the priesthood manual (22).

We do not contend that President Young's concepts concerning Adam are an accurate representation of the concepts of other LDS presidents or that they are to be accepted as basic church doctrine. That to President Young, Adam was a resurrected being is clear:

The mystery in this, as with miracles, or anything else, is only to those who are ignorant. Father Adam came here, and then they brought his wife. "Well," says one, "Why was Adam called Adam?" He was the first man on the earth, and its framer and maker. He, with the help of his brethren, brought it into existence. Then he said, "I want my children who are in the spirit world to come and live here. I once dwelt upon an earth something like this, in a mortal state, I was faithful, I received my crown and exaltation. I have the privilege of extending my work, and to its increase there will be no end. I want my children that were born to me in the spirit world to come here and take tabernacles of flesh, that their spirits may have a house, a tabernacle or a dwelling place as mine has, and where is the mystery?" (*Deseret News*, 22:308, 18 June 1873, reporting a speech of 8 June 1873).

However, later presidents did not share this view. Nels Nelson, *What Truth Is* (Salt Lake City: Stevens and Wallis, Inc., 1947), 60-61, reports that his request to President John Taylor for information on the subject elicited a reply which "told me without qualification that 'Adam and Eve while in the Garden of Eden were translated human beings.'" A similar request for more information on the subject from Bishop Joseph H. Eldredge of Myton, Utah, to President Heber J. Grant was answered, stating: "If what is meant is that Adam has passed on to celestial glory through a resurrection before he came here, and that afterwards he was appointed to this earth to die again, the second time becoming mortal, then it is not scriptural or according to the truth. . . . Adam had not passed through the resurrection." The letter, signed by President Grant and dated 26 February 1931, is published in James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 5 (1971):289-90. Typescript copies, usually dated erroneously 1936, and carrying the signatures of both President Grant and David O. McKay (his counselor) have been widely circulated in church circles for many years. Such differences in viewpoint should not be upsetting to those who have studied their church history, but *should* serve as a caution to all who are tempted to teach any given doctrine about Adam as "the church view." Consider also the message of J. Reuben Clark, Jr., n. 6.

58. Cf. Turner, "The Position of Adam," and/or Kraut, *Michael/Adam* (n. 57), for appropriate references.

exceptions, the writings and sermons of Mormons in general just avoided the entire issue, or couched it in the vague terms characteristic of the scriptures, and offered no commentary. The matter of Adam and Adam's body was left essentially undeveloped.

There was one notable exception: Orson Pratt, the apostle. On this matter, at least, Orson seems to have accepted the scriptures quite literally, and could not reconcile them with the doctrine from President Young. Beginning in 1853, he published a periodical entitled *The Seer*, and in its pages promulgated a doctrine that sounded far too much like special creation. Articles from *The Seer* were republished in England in the pages of the *Millennial Star*, a situation not pleasing to the church presidency. As early as January 1855, Brigham Young requested the editor of the *Star* to refrain from any further publication of material from *The Seer*, citing "erroneous doctrine" as the reason.⁵⁹

Five years later, Orson Pratt himself brought the matter into the open, in a dramatic sermon during the regular Sunday morning worship service in the Salt Lake Tabernacle, January 29, 1860. Confessing the error of his ways, Orson sued for reconciliation to the church and to his brethren of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the First Presidency. A few months later a "carefully revised" version of his speech was published in the *Deseret News*, followed by a formal statement from the First Presidency, listing several explicit errors in Orson's writings.⁶⁰ The first item cited was the matter of Orson's teachings concerning Adam's having been formed "out of the ground." While the teachings were summarily dismissed with the statement that they were not true, President Young refrained from imposing his own doctrine on the church. The refutation simply states that, with regard to Adam,

it is deemed wisest to let that subject remain without further explanation at present, for it is written that we are to receive "line upon line," according to our faith and capacities, and the circumstances attending our progress.

The careful handling of this matter by President Young is significant. What was the church to believe? Orson's teachings had been refuted, but nothing had been specified in their place, and no further pronouncements of any official character to clarify the matter were forthcoming throughout the remainder of the century.

Where, then, in the early days of the debates between science and theology, did Mormonism find its closest affinities? On our first doctrine,

59. *Millennial Star* 17:297-98 (1855).

60. *Deseret News* 10921:162-63, 25 July 1860. The First Presidency's statement was reprinted as part of the 1865 refutation also, cf. n. 50. The "revised" version of Pratt's sermon may also be found in JD 7:371-76.

ex nihilo creation, Mormonism was clearly allied with science. The matter of the earth's age was an open one, that of fixity of species virtually ignored, that of materialism and vital forces in a state of flux but with certain definite fundamental agreement with science. Only on the subject of special creation could Mormonism be tied in any significant way to orthodox Christianity, and even that was tenuous. Darwin's book, as we have noted, was published November 24, 1859. Just sixty-six days later, on January 29, 1860, Orson Pratt began the severing of that one tie. The closeness of the dates is almost certainly coincidental, since (among other reasons) news traveled slowly to Utah in those days; Orson's action is not to be viewed as a response to Darwinism. Yet, in retrospect, his action (and the First Presidency's response) was significant nonetheless. The incident may well have put a damper on further doctrinal development. It is certain that, considering the duration and intensity of the debate in non-Mormon theological circles, nineteenth-century Mormonism produced relatively little in the way of relevant commentary. Let us shift now, in our inquiry, from the study of basic Mormon teachings applicable at the time of Darwin's book, to a documentation of subsequent pertinent commentary and response.

In 1882 President John Taylor published his *Mediation and Atonement*, in which he makes probably the strongest statement by any president favoring the fixity of species,⁶¹ thus inching the church toward the theologians' position. However, during the following year, his first counselor, George Q. Cannon, twice reaffirmed the sentiment of Brigham Young that the creation periods were "periods of time," and that Joseph Smith had anticipated science on the matter of the earth's age. Rejoicing that science was bolstering the prophet, Cannon summarizes: "Geologists have declared it, and religious people are adopting it; and so the world is progressing."⁶² But Cannon was eclectic in his beliefs; acceptance of an old earth was not to be taken as an acceptance of Darwinism, at least so far as it applied to man. In an editorial in 1883, he made it clear that he regarded belief in "Darwin's theories concerning the origin of man" as evidence of spiritual apostasy.⁶³ This sentiment is not surprising, since Cannon had often expressed himself in similar vein before being called

61. J. Taylor, *Mediation and Atonement* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Co., 1882, 163-165; repr. Salt Lake City: Stevens and Wallis, Inc., 1950), 159-60.

62. JD 24:61, cf. also 24:257 (1883).

63. *Juvenile Instructor* 18:191, 15 June 1883. President Cannon appears to have addressed essentially the same theme in his Founder's Day speech at the Brigham Young Academy (University) in 1896. The best account I have been able to locate of this speech quotes Cannon only "in substance," however, so it is impossible to determine his exact statements. The basic stance, however, is anti-evolutionary, at least with respect to human origins; cf. *Daily Enquirer* [Provo, Utah] 14 (116):1, 16 Oct. 1896.

to the First Presidency,⁶⁴ and was a firm believer in the Adamic doctrines taught by President Young.⁶⁵

The general feeling of the church in the latter 1800s, however, was that science would continue to demonstrate the validity of the Mormon positions. Indeed, a rather heady flirtation with science affixed itself on the church. The church hierarchy seems to have rejoiced at the goodwill generated by James E. Talmage's reception in scientific circles, his participation and membership in esteemed societies, and his trips to England and Russia. In 1896 Talmage became the holder of Mormonism's first real doctorate degree. In 1899 he was joined in this doctorate distinction by John A. Widtsoe and Joseph F. Merrill. All three of these physical scientists later became prominent apostles and articulate spokesmen in the church.

So closed the 1800s, and Mormonism, past the major hurdles in her long political feud over plural marriage, and newly sequestered under the government of statehood, plunged with high anticipations into the twentieth century.

Davis Bitton⁶⁶ has rightly pinpointed these years, the turn of the century, as a period critical in Mormonism, during which the prevailing optimism toward science and reason began to erode. Yet this cooling of ardor must not be over-rated; the antagonism which has seemed to pervade recent times is seen more correctly for science, at least, as a product of only the last couple of decades.

The *Improvement Era*, in the early years of the century, regularly ran articles by Talmage, Widtsoe, Frederick Pack, and others extolling areas of agreement between science and Mormon theology. These articles show a degree of caution and sensitivity toward evolution that is quite commendable. The distinction between evolution *per se* and Darwinism was periodically noted, a point which many later writers seem to have missed. The then recent re-discovery of Mendel's paper and the principles of genetics, and the question of their compatibility with Darwinism, were sensed, and watched with interest, but the concept that science and Mormonism were a basic unity is evident throughout; it forms the dominant theme.

The year 1909 marks a particularly significant occasion, the centennial of Darwin's birth as well as the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *The Origin of Species*. The scientific literature had been building

64. See, for example, *Millennial Star* 23:651-54, 12 Oct. 1861.

65. Cf. Turner, "The Position of Adam," and/or Kraut, *Michael/Adam* (n. 57), and "Journal of Abraham H. Cannon," entries of 10 March 1888 and 23 June 1889; originals in BYU Library.

66. D. Bitton, "Anti-Intellectualism in Mormon History," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 1, no. 3 (1966): 111-34.

toward the event for several years. Debates on the "current status of Darwinism," its validity in areas of concern other than biology, its relation to religion, philosophy, etc., abounded in the lay literature as well. Centennial celebrations were held in both Europe and America; the Pontifical Biblical Commission, appointed in 1902 by Pope Leo XIII, finally issued its long-awaited report on the interpretation of Genesis. In Mormonism the atmosphere was quieter, but the discussion was not ignored. The YMMIA manual for the year (*Joseph Smith as Scientist*, by Widtsoe)⁶⁷ reaffirmed the ideas concerning the age of the earth that were taught earlier by Brigham Young and others, that the earth was very old, and that the creative days were indefinite periods. The manual evoked a series of questions on the matter to church headquarters, which were discussed in a special column of the *Improvement Era*. The managing editor, Edward H. Anderson, defended the manual, contending that the verses of D&C 77:12, cited by questioners in support of a young-Earth theory, did not apply to the subject in any meaningful way at all, and turned the column over to Widtsoe for further discussion. Widtsoe proceeded to dismiss the twenty-four-hour-day view, the 1,000-year-day concept, the D&C 77:6, 7, 12, argument, as well as the theory attributed to Joseph Smith that the earth had been formed of fragments of other worlds.⁶⁸ The following month's issue published as its lead article an essay by Apostle Charles W. Penrose entitled, "The Age and Destiny of the Earth," which also argued for an old earth of indefinite age.⁶⁹ Then in November 1909, the first formal statement on evolution from the First Presidency was published, signed by Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund.⁷⁰ Entitled "The Origin of Man," it is widely cited by some individuals in the church as "the official pronouncement against evolution." A more honest appraisal of the text, its background, and its meaning to later presidents, indicates that such a judgment is inaccurate. The document is carefully and sensitively worded. Its message is an affirmation that man is the spirit child of divine parentage, is in the image of God both in body and spirit, and that all men are descendants of a common ancestor, Adam. Lengthy scriptural passages are cited in affir-

67. J. A. Widtsoe, *Joseph Smith As Scientist, A Contribution to Mormon Philosophy* (Salt Lake City: The General Board [of the] Young Men's Mutual Improvement Associations, 1908).

68. "Editor's Table," *Era* 12:489-94, Apr. 1909.

69. *Era* 12:505-509, May 1909, a reprint from the 11 Feb. 1909 *Millennial Star*.

70. *Era* 13:75-81, Nov. 1909; also in J. R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 4 (1970):199-206. Actually, this statement is the work of a special committee appointed for its production. James E. Talmage, not yet one of the general authorities, was a member, and records meeting with the committee on the dates of 27 and 30 Sept. 1909 to consider the document (cf. "Personal Journal of James Edward Talmage," 12:91-92, under the above dates, originals in BYU library).

mation of man's divine spiritual pedigree. And the origin of man's physical body? Three paragraphs are relevant, and form the crux of the matter; we shall denote them paragraphs 12 to 14:⁷¹

Adam, our great progenitor, "the first man," was, like Christ, a pre-existent spirit, and like Christ he took upon him an appropriate body, the body of a man, and so became a "living soul." The doctrine of the pre-existence—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.⁷²

The anti-evolutionary sentiment is evident, though guarded. Did the article really constitute an authoritative pronouncement against evolution as a possibility for the origin of man's body? The likelihood that it did was strengthened by a statement in the 1910 manual for the priests of the Aaronic priesthood, which indicated that man's "descent has not been from a lower form of life, but from the Highest Form of Life; in

71. This numbering counts only the paragraphs of the actual text; scriptural quotations are not counted. J. R. Clark, who does count them separately, would refer to these paragraphs as 30- 32 (cf. *Messages of the First Presidency*, 5 (1971):243).

72. When this statement was reprinted in Joseph Fielding Smith, *Man His Origin and Destiny* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1954), the phrase "primal parent of our race" was changed to read "primal parent of the race," cf. 354; and it continues to be quoted thus incorrectly in other Mormon works. To some students, this represents an alteration in meaning. Whether it would have been so interpreted by the 1909 First Presidency, however, is moot.

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. There never was a time, probably, in all the eternities of the past, when there was not men or children of God. This world is only one of many worlds which have been created by the Father through His Only Begotten."⁷³

However, the statement continues in a markedly less definitive vein: "Adam, then, was probably not the first mortal man in the universe, but he was likely the first for this earth." Two pages later, the tone of indefiniteness is further continued as a matter of reasoning:

One of the important points about this topic is to learn, if possible, how Adam obtained his body of flesh and bones. There would seem to be but one natural and reasonable explanation, and that is, that Adam obtained his body in the same way Christ obtained his—and just as all men obtain theirs—namely, by being born of woman.

"The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also." (Doc. & Cov. 130:22). Then what is more natural than to conclude that the offspring of such Beings would have bodies of flesh and bones? Like begets like.⁷⁴

Such sentiments were certain to evoke questions from church members, and it was equally certain that they had to be handled at the highest level of the church, the president's office. Once again, the *Improvement Era* was the platform of response, in an editorial that has, so far as we can find, not been further commented on to this day. Joseph F. Smith, as president of the church, and Edward H. Anderson, were the editors. We quote it *in toto*, from the columns relegated to instructions to the priesthood:

Origin of Man—"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

73. *Divine Mission of the Savior, Course of Study for the . . . Priests (2nd year)*, prepared and issued under the direction of the general authorities of the church (1910), 35. The statement to this point was reprinted in the *Church News*, 19 Sept. 1936, p. 8, and is often quoted as though complete in itself.

74. *Ibid.*, 17. The manual at this point cites three statements, one each from Brigham Young (JD 1:50); Parley P. Pratt (*Key to Theology*); and Orson Pratt (JD 21:201). No attempt is made in the manual to capture the complete thought of these statements; particularly the sermons of President Young and Orson Pratt reveal some fundamental differences in total content and concept. In fairness, it must also be admitted that major sentiments in both these sermons were severely compromised by statements of subsequent presidencies.

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, 1909.⁷⁵

For clarification, the August 1908 article referred to was a response to a question raised about an even earlier article. The author of the two pieces, William Halls, had contended that Adam could not have been created full-grown, but must have gone through a natural childhood and adolescence. When pushed for documentation by *Era* readers who felt that such a view was incompatible with scriptural literalism, he answered, in the article cited by the editorial, that he could not document it, but that "When a passage of scripture taken literally contradicts a fundamental, natural law, I take it as allegorical; and in the absence of divine authority, put a construction on it that seems to harmonize with my experience and reason."

So ended the matter, apparently, so far as Joseph F. Smith was concerned: The editorial listed three options, and it is evident that not one of them agrees with a literal interpretation of Moses 3:7 or other such creation passages.

The *Improvement Era* continued to publish articles on science and the gospel (mostly articles by Frederick Pack, a University of Utah geology professor) until April 1911. A few months before, the very touchy matter of academic freedom in the church school system had reared its head, regarding the propriety of teaching ". . .the theories of evolution as at present set forth in the text books, and also theories relating to the Bible known as 'higher criticism'. . ." President Smith, in a special editorial,⁷⁶ reported to the church on the matter. He indicated that "it is well known

75. *Era* 13:570, Apr. 1910.

76. *Era* 14:548-51, Apr. 1911. Further details of the case are found in R. V. Chamberlin, *Life and Philosophy of W. H. Chamberlin* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1925), 140f. In this rather trying incident, three BYU faculty members, Henry Peterson, Joseph Peterson, and Ralph V. Chamberlin, resigned under pressure.

that evolution and the 'higher criticism'—though perhaps containing many truths—are in conflict on some matters with the scriptures, including some modern revelation," and finally concluded:

. . . [I]t appears a waste of time and means, and detrimental to faith and religion to enter too extensively into the undemonstrated theories of men on philosophies relating to the origin of life, or the methods adopted by an All-wise Creator in peopling the earth with the bodies of men, birds and beasts. Let us rather turn our abilities to the practical analysis of the soil. . . .

A companion editorial from President Smith was aimed more directly at the youth of the church and appeared in *The Juvenile Instructor*. Although more general in its approach, it makes a finer distinction between the president's personal feelings and the church position. His private views seem to be embodied in the following passage:

They [students] are not old enough or 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 cannot see wherein such discussions are likely to promote the faith of our young people.

However, he clearly spelled out the church position on the matter:

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.⁷⁷

With these deliverances, President Smith let the matter rest. No further clarification of his sentiments regarding the mechanism of creation was given, though certainly this was a golden opportunity if ever one existed.

Two years later, in a conference address in Arizona, President Smith delivered himself of one further comment:

Man was born of woman; Christ, the Savior, was born of woman and God, the Father, was born of woman. Adam, our earthly parent, was also born of woman into this world, the same as Jesus and you and I.⁷⁸

77. *Juvenile Instructor* 46 (4):208-209, Apr. 1911.

78. *Deseret News*, 27 Dec. 1913, sec. III, p. 7; reprinted in the *Church News*, 19 Sept. 1936, 2, 8.

When? How? And of whom? The statement is consistent with all three of the 1910 options, and these and further questions about Joseph F. Smith's beliefs on the matter can be answered only by extensive and tenuous proof-texting, a well-known and notoriously unreliable method. Certain it is that he, one of the most scripturally committed of all LDS presidents, remained consistent with his predecessors and officially left the matter open and unresolved. Articles in the *Improvement Era* ranged widely over the issue, from condemnations of the whole idea of evolution to accounts of dinosaur digging, but no further authoritative statements were made until 1925, during the administration of President Heber J. Grant.

That was the year of the famous Scopes trial in Dayton, Tennessee. Young John Scopes, a high school science teacher, was charged with the teaching of evolution, forbidden by state law. At least, Scopes was the formal defendant; the trial really developed into a classic confrontation between fundamentalist theology and contemporary science. The event was a news highlight of the year, with correspondents from around the world converging on the tiny town for the great showdown. Religious spokesmen of many persuasions felt disposed to deliver themselves of commentary on the matter.⁷⁹ During the post-trial period came the document: "'Mormon' View of Evolution," published over the signatures of Heber J. Grant, Anthony W. Ivins, and Charles W. Nibley, the LDS First Presidency.⁸⁰ In essence, it consists of paragraphs 3, 6, 7, 12, 16, and 17 of the 1909 statement by Joseph F. Smith et al., with only a very few changes in text: deletion of a word or two, addition of several words for clarification, etc. Paragraphs 13 and 14, the "anti-evolution" ones (quoted above), are conspicuously absent. The entire message of the statement is to affirm the spiritual pedigree of man and the common descent of all men from an ancestor named Adam, who had taken upon himself "an appropriate body."

As in its 1909 predecessor, the word "evolution" or its derivatives occurs only once, to the effect that man, formed in the image of God, "is

79. The best single account is L. S. deCamp, *The Great Monkey Trial* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1968).

80. *Era* 28:1090-1091, Sept. 1925. The understandable sympathy of the LDS people for the general religious position in the 1925 Scopes episode is reflected in the remarks of various speakers, both general authorities and otherwise, during the October general conference (cf. *LDS General Conference Reports*, Oct. 1925). Of the First Presidency, however, counselor Charles W. Nibley made no reference to the matter; President Heber J. Grant went no further than to recall favorable impressions of William Jennings Bryan, the chief religious spokesman (and prosecutor) at the Scopes trial, who died shortly after the trial. Anthony W. Ivins, first counselor, addressed the topic of evolution directly and at some length, essentially articulating a middle-of-the-road position. The speech (*ibid.*, 19-28) is too loaded with hypothetical statements and qualifiers to be easily categorized.

capable, by experience through ages and aeons, of evolving into a God." Seen against the background of the theological ferment of the day, this is an amazingly temperate document; none of the sloganeering and overdrawn rhetoric characteristic of the day, just a calm focusing on the critical matter of man's spiritual affinity with God. The church was concerned for the well-being of religion in general, and thus sympathized with the plight of the religionists, but it could ill afford any extreme statements in the matter.

The subsequent years of calm were broken in 1930, although the resulting perturbation was kept quietly within the closed circle of the general authorities. The relatively young apostle, Joseph Fielding Smith, delivered a lecture to the Genealogical Conference on April 5. In his characteristic style, he enthusiastically delivered himself of his thoughts on the creation of man, acknowledging that "The Lord has not seen fit to tell us definitely just how Adam came for we are not ready to receive that truth." Yet he also spelled out very clearly a disbelief in "pre-Adamites," peoples of any sort upon the earth before Adam, declaring that ". . .the doctrine of 'pre-Adamites' is not a doctrine of the Church, and is not advocated nor countenanced in the Church." Furthermore,

There was no death in the earth before the fall of Adam. . . .All life in the sea, the air, on the earth, was without death. Animals were not dying. Things were not changing as we find them changing in this mortal existence, for mortality had not come.⁸¹

Shortly after the publication of the speech, these concepts became a bone of contention: Brigham H. Roberts, the long-standing apologist of the church, directly challenged the legitimacy of the remarks, in a letter to the First Presidency. Both Roberts and Smith were given opportunity to present their positions, both orally and in writing, to the Twelve and the presidency. Roberts developed his ideas primarily from scripture, from science, and from Apostle Orson Hyde and President Brigham Young. Smith also used scripture, but leaned heavily on the Adam teachings of Orson Pratt, and on paragraph 13 of the 1909 statement of the First Presidency. This last item comprised his major piece of evidence. At last, convinced that continuation of the discussion would be fruitless, the First Presidency issued a seven-page directive to the other general authorities, reviewing in detail the entire discussion as described and then stating:

The statement made by Elder Smith that the existence of pre-Adamites is not a doctrine of the Church is true. It is just as true that the statement: "There

81. Joseph Fielding Smith, "Faith Leads to a Fulness of Truth and Righteousness," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 21:145-58, Oct. 1930.

were not pre-Adamites upon the earth," is not a doctrine of the Church. Neither side of the controversy has been accepted as a doctrine at all.

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

... Upon the fundamental doctrines of the Church we are all agreed. Our mission is to bear the message of the restored gospel to the people of the world. Leave Geology, Biology, Archaeology and Anthropology, no one of which has to do with the salvation of the souls of mankind, to scientific research, while we magnify our calling in the realm of the Church.⁸²

In addition to this written directive, the First Presidency called a special meeting of all the general authorities, the day after general conference closed, to discuss the matter and deliver oral counsel. Apostle James E. Talmage records the following account of the meeting:

Involved in this question [Roberts's original query] is that of the beginning of life upon the earth, and as to whether there was death either of animal or plant before the fall of Adam, on which proposition Elder Smith was very pronounced in denial and Elder Roberts equally forceful in the affirmative. As to whether Preadamite races existed upon the earth there has been much discussion among some of our people of late. The decision reached by the First Presidency, and announced to this morning's assembly, was in answer to a specific question that obviously the doctrine of the existence of races of human beings upon the earth prior to the fall of Adam was not a doctrine of the Church; and, further, that the conception embodied in the belief of many to the effect that there were no such Preadamite races, and that there was no death upon the earth prior to Adam's fall is likewise declared to be no doctrine of the Church. I think the decision of the First Presidency is a wise one in the premises. This is one of the many things upon which we cannot preach with assurance and dogmatic assertions on either side are likely to do harm rather than good.⁸³

The two contestants, Roberts and Smith, were thus directed to drop the matter, and publication of a major manuscript previously written by Elder Roberts dealing with the subject (among others) was proscribed.

However, this proscription left the public record with only one side of the story, the speech of Elder Smith, which in many ways is an avowal of the position of the nineteenth-century theologians. Not everyone in

82. Typescript copy in author's possession, 7 pp. Cf. also n. 54, which relates to a 1972 commentary on the question of pre-Adamites.

83. "Personal Journal of James Edward Talmage," 29:42, under date of 7 Apr. 1930; cf. also relevant entries under dates of 2, 7, 14, and 21 Jan. 1931, all in vol. 29.

the governing quorums of the church was content with such a situation. Nor was the record long in being balanced. On Sunday, August 9, 1931, Apostle Talmage took the stand in the Salt Lake Tabernacle worship service, and there delivered an address: "The Earth and Man."⁸⁴ Talmage's position, in light of the above restriction from the First Presidency, was admittedly a bit presumptive, which likely accounts for some of the characteristics of the text. The speech as we now have it in printed form is a rather neat bit of nimble footwork, a careful avoidance of any explicit stance that would come into direct conflict with particular sensitivities on the issue. Affirming his deep belief in the ultimate synthesis of God's word in both the rocks and the scriptures, Talmage promulgated a clear message of sensitivity to, and reception of, science and the scientific method—a point which is amply recognized in the vigorous, even scathing, denunciations of his speech by certain later commentators. Careful though he was, at least the public record was now more balanced, and Talmage (as was customary) sent a copy of the manuscript to the printers for publication.

From certain quarters within the Twelve, however, opposition developed to the speech's publication. The subject was a matter of consideration in at least four subsequent meetings of the Twelve and/or the First Presidency, but eventually the First Presidency, after going over the manuscript very carefully with Elder Talmage, directed him to send it back to the publisher for inclusion in the next *Church News*. Furthermore, they instructed him to have it published also as a separate pamphlet, to be available upon request from the church offices. Both publications were released to the public November 21, 1931, and the speech has since enjoyed a long and favorable treatment from the Mormon publishing fraternity.⁸⁵

84. J. E. Talmage, "The Earth and Man," *Church News*, 21 Nov. 1931, 7-8. In pamphlet form, it was "Published by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," 16 pp. The speech has been republished various times, including by BYU Extension Publications, and was most recently published in the *Instructor* 100 (12): 474-77, Dec. 1965, and 101 (1):9-11, 15, Jan. 1966.

85. Cf. n. 84. Elder Talmage discusses the matter thusly in his journal, after reviewing the Roberts-Smith episode:

Many of our students have inferred from Elder Smith's address that the Church refuses to recognize the findings of science if there be a word in scriptural record in our interpretation of which we find even a seeming conflict with scientific discoveries or deductions, and that therefore the "policy" of the Church is in effect opposed to scientific research.

In speaking at the Tabernacle on August 9 last I had not forgotten that in the pronouncement of the First Presidency mentioned under date of April 7 last it was advised and really required that the General Authorities of the Church refrain from discussing in public, that is preaching, the debatable subject of the existence of human kind upon the earth prior to the beginning of Adamic history as recorded in scripture; but, I had been present at a consultation in the course of which the First Presidency had commented somewhat favorably upon the suggestion that sometime,

The resulting stalemate continued for over two decades. Cognizant of the fact that writings and expressions of general authorities, no matter how intended, tend to become canonized by various elements of the church community, the First Presidency continued the proscription against publication of the Roberts manuscript. In 1933 both Roberts and Talmage died. The essence of their philosophical legacy was continued by Apostles Widtsoe and Merrill. Apostle Smith, in the immediately ensuing years, also completed a manuscript of book-length, which outlined his objections to evolutionary concepts, and once again drove home his commitment to many of the basic concepts of nineteenth-century theologians—not drawing such concepts from them, of course, but arriving at essentially the same position by a similar, strongly literalistic interpretation of the scriptures. The record indicates that his manuscript was subjected to the same publication injunction as that of Roberts.⁸⁶ Widtsoe and Merrill, not sharing the views of Elder Smith in these matters, also acted as damping forces on overly literalistic interpretation. Their deaths in 1952 marked the end of an era.

Apostle Smith began an open exposition of his views on April 22, 1953, in a speech at Brigham Young University entitled "The Origin of

somewhere, something should be said by one or more of us to make plain that the Church does not refuse to recognize the discoveries and demonstrations of science, especially in relation to the subject at issue. President Anthony W. Ivins, of the First Presidency, presided at the Tabernacle meeting, and three members of the Council of the Twelve were present—Elders George F. Richards, Joseph Fielding Smith and Richard R. Lyman. Of course, Elder Smith, and in fact all of us, recognize that my address was in some important respects opposed to his published remarks, but the other brethren named, including President Ivins, expressed their tentative approval of what I had said.

I am very grateful that my address has come under a very thorough consideration, and I may say investigation, by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve. The discussions throughout as relating to the matter have been forceful but in every respect friendly, and the majority of the Twelve have been in favor of the publication of the address from the time they first took it under consideration. I have hoped and fervently prayed that the brethren would be rightly guided in reaching a decision, and, as the Lord knows my heart, I have had no personal desire for triumph or victory in the matter, but have hoped that the address would be published or suppressed as would be for the best. The issue is now closed, the address is in print. ("Personal Journal of James Edward Talmage," 29:68-69, under date of 21 Nov. 1931. Cf. also the comments under dates of 9 Aug., 5, 16, and 17 Nov. 1931, all in vol. 29.

86. While considerable evidence verifying this account is already available in the public record, the primary documentation lies in confidential interviews conducted by the author with persons closely associated with this matter.

The title of the Roberts manuscript, still unpublished, is "The Truth, The Way, The Life: An Elementary Treatise on Theology." Consisting of nearly 600 manuscript pages, it was considered by Roberts to be "the most important work that I have yet contributed to the Church, the six-volumed Comprehensive History of the Church not omitted" (letter of 9 Feb. 1931 to the First Presidency). Though it is in many critical ways contrapositive to the theology championed by Elder Smith, the reader should not infer that it is an acceptance or affirmation of evolution *per se*.

Man."⁸⁷ His speech to the June 1953 MIA Conference⁸⁸ continued the same theme: scriptural literalism on scientific matters, coupled with a virtually complete disregard for scientific data. A rapid though minor updating of his book manuscript followed, and it was apparently again submitted for publication. Although it was not approved, he pushed ahead with its publication, and by mid-1954 it was made available to the public under the title, *Man His Origin and Destiny*.⁸⁹

The work marks a milestone. For the first time in Mormon history, and capping a full half-century of publication of Mormon books on science and religion, Mormonism had a book that was openly antagonistic to much of science.⁹⁰ The long-standing concern of past church presidents was quickly realized: The book was hailed by many as an authoritative church statement which immediately locked Mormonism into direct confrontation with science and sparked a wave of religious fundamentalism that shows little sign of abatement. Others, mindful of the embarrassment which other Christian churches had suffered on issues of science, and fearful of the consequences for their own church if the new stance was widely adopted, openly expressed their consternation. The president of the church, David O. McKay, was a giant of tolerance; the differences in philosophy (within the church framework) between the book's author and himself could hardly have been more disparate. Yet a president's actions are essentially authoritative; one tends to act cautiously in such a position, and a public settling of issues was apparently not acceptable to him. While there is no formal record available of the deliberations involved, the ensuing reactions indicate a low-key, indirect, and peace-making response, at least as far as public utterances are concerned.

Apostle Smith vigorously presented his basic thesis to the seminary and institute teachers of the church, assembled in their periodic summer

87. Joseph Fielding Smith, "The Origin of Man," 22 Apr. 1953, published by Brigham Young University Extension Division, 6 pp.

88. Joseph Fielding Smith, "Entangle Not Yourselves in Sin," speech of 12 June 1953, *Era* 56:646f, Sept. 1953.

89. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Man, His Origin and Destiny* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1954).

90. So far as I am aware, the first book in Mormonism that can really be said to be directed to a discussion of science and religion is *Scientific Aspects of Mormonism*, by Nels L. Nelson (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904). Others followed sporadically over the years, by Widtsoe, Nelson, Pack, and Merrill. All of these, while not preaching a scientific humanism or anything of the sort, exhibit a deep recognition of the validity of scientific knowledge. *Man, His Origin and Destiny* is a clean break with that long tradition, opting as it does for schism rather than synthesis.

training session at Brigham Young University, on June 28, 1954.⁹¹ Exactly nine days later, President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., second counselor in the First Presidency and a veteran of over twenty years' service in the presidency, delivered (by invitation) his speech "When are the Writings or Sermons of Church Leaders Entitled to the Claim of Scripture?" His message was clear and hard-hitting, and has no peer in Mormon literature. Emphasizing that only the president of the church may declare doctrine, give interpretation of scripture, "or change in any way the existing doctrines of the Church," he proceeded to an examination of the scriptural affirmation that whatever the holders of the priesthood speak "when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture."⁹² He readily acknowledged that the scripture applied with special force upon the general authorities, but that:

They must act and teach subject to the over-all power and authority of the President of the Church. . . . Sometimes in the past they have spoken "out of turn," so to speak. . . .

There have been rare occasions when even the President of the Church in his preaching and teaching has not been "moved upon by the Holy Ghost." You will recall the Prophet Joseph declared that a prophet is not always a prophet. . . .

. . . even the President of the Church, himself, may not always be "moved upon by the Holy Ghost," when he addresses the people. This has happened about matters of doctrine (usually of a highly speculative character) where subsequent Presidents of the Church and the peoples themselves have felt that in declaring the doctrine, the announcer was not "moved upon by the Holy Ghost."

How shall the Church know. . . ? The Church will know by the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the body of the members; . . . and in due time that knowledge will be made manifest. . . .⁹³

President Clark continued to hammer this concept home, referring to accounts in the New Testament of doctrinal differences among the apostles, relating the concept to our own day, reiterating continually that

. . . even the President of the Church has not always spoken under the direction of the Holy Ghost, for a prophet is not always a prophet. . . in our own Church, leaders have differed in view from the first.

. . . not always may the words of a prophet be taken as a prophecy or revelation. . . .

91. Joseph Fielding Smith, speech of 28 June 1954, published in the *Church News*, 24 July 1954, under the caption "Discusses Organic Evolution Opposed to Divine Revelation."

92. Cf. ref. 5.

93. Cf. ref. 6. Words in parentheses, grammatical errors, etc. are in the original.

In his final paragraphs, he moved from the position of trying to define what is scripture to identifying what is *not* scripture, emphasizing that when any one other than the president of the church attempts to proclaim any new doctrine, etc., unless acting specifically under the president's direction, the church may know that the utterances are *not* scripture. His final expository paragraph reads:

When any man, except the President of the Church, undertakes to proclaim one unsettled doctrine, as among two or more doctrines in dispute, as the settled doctrine of the Church, we may know that he is not "moved upon by the Holy Ghost," unless he is acting under the authority of the President.

Such teachings, to say the least, were not characteristic of what was usually taught over the pulpit. There was no mention in the sermon of any specific contemporary teachings to which these principles were to be applied, but there also was left no doubt that they were to *be* applied.

President McKay himself avoided any direct public statement on the matter. His closest approach to public commentary came from his beginning-of-the-school-year speech to the BYU faculty, September 17, 1954.⁹⁴ He handled therein various categories of knowledge, and touched briefly upon the matter of science and religion. He averred that it is a "stern fact of life" that all living things obey fixed laws of nature and divine commands. He referred to the creation of man thusly: "When the Creator 'breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,' (and never mind when it was), 'and man became a living soul' God gave him the power of choice." In his closing sentence, he felt moved to

. . . bless you [the faculty] with wisdom to know the truth as it is given by revealed word in the authorized books of the Church, bless you with the power to discern between truth and error as given by individuals.

However, this public response by the First Presidency obviously would not satisfy the questions in the minds of many members. Over the years, there seems to have been an almost constant stream of inquiries, both written and oral, concerning the doctrinal soundness of Apostle Smith's book and similar teachings. The response from the First Presidency has been a consistent: an avowal that the church has taken no official position on the matter of evolution and related subjects, that it has made no official statement on the subject, that the book in question is neither "authorized" by the church nor "published by" the church, that it "is not approved by the Church," and that it contains only the author's

94. David O. McKay, "Some Fundamental Objectives of a Church University," *Church News*, 25 Sept. 1954, 2f.

personal views. On occasion the inquirer was sent two documents: the 1909 statement by the First Presidency, and the 1931 speech by Talmage, with the admonition that the entire matter should be dealt with by "suspending judgment as long as may be necessary" until the complete truth should be perceived.⁹⁵ Throughout all such communications ran the sentiment of tolerance, open-mindedness, and a dedication to final truth. Even those who sought the First Presidency's evaluation of materials to be used in their teachings got no further response.

So here, it seems, the matter rests, as far as authoritative statements are concerned. There has been no further official response, and it would appear that none is forthcoming. Rather lengthy explanations by past First Presidencies (among the materials mentioned, ref. 95) indicate that since such authoritative statements must be applicable to future developments as well as to the current state of knowledge, it is deemed wisest to let the matter rest without further development.

Authoritative statements concerning scientific matters seem neither necessary nor desirable, even if the knowledge to make them did exist, and it seems clear that it does not. Effective arguments can be marshaled to support the point that such pronouncements, necessarily restrictive in their nature, would stifle the very experience that life is supposed to provide; they would be inimical to the very roots of the process of "evolving into a God." The 1931 First Presidency's observation that these matters do not directly relate to "salvation" is astute as well as practical. Those who argue against evolution, for instance, do so usually from the proclaimed motivation that the concept is inimical to religion, that it leads necessarily to atheism and associated evils. This position is tenuous at best. Cases where such a process is alleged to have occurred appear to be far more often the result of the intense conflict and polarization between popular expressions of theology and biology, rather than the result of the concept of evolution *per se*. Darwin perceived that his views bore no necessary antagonism to religion,⁹⁶ and a non-LDS commentator recognized that fact in the following expression:

Evolution, if rightly understood, has no theological or antitheological influ-

95. I have photostatic copies in my files of several of these inquiries and responses, and know of additional oral discussions of the matter. Before his death, Pres. McKay gave formal permission for the publication of at least one of the written responses. It is not deemed appropriate here to anticipate that publication in excessive detail.

96. As expressed in the Conclusion to *The Origin*: "I see no good reason why the views given in this volume should shock the religious feelings of any one." Although Darwin, once a candidate for the ministry, came to feel that the entire question of rational evidence for design and/or the existence of God was "insoluble," he was clear that religious commitment was a matter separate and distinct from belief or disbelief in either evolution or natural selection.

ence whatever. What is evolution? It is not an entity. It is a mode of creation. It leaves the whole field of Christian faith where and as it found it. Its believers and advocates may be theists, pantheists, or atheists. The causes of these radically different religious views cannot be sought in the one theory. They are to be found elsewhere.⁹⁷

There are too many devout religious evolutionists to argue defensibly that a belief in evolution *per se*, stripped of the "either God or evolution" polemics, leads to religious deterioration. Indeed, there are many both within the church and without who will argue from personal experience that the concept of evolution can have precisely the opposite effect: a deepening of religious sentiment and spirituality due to the recognition that God is a God of law, of order, of rational behavior, rather than a deity of mystery, of transcendent and capricious whims. At the same time, there can be no denying the fact that the intense polemics of the theology-biology debate has polarized people into opposite camps detrimental to the cause of both. In our day and time, we do not need further schism; what the world is crying for is synthesis. People have been driven to opposite extremes in this matter because of respective truths that they found in whatever position they finally choose. Is it not time to recognize that each camp has truth, and try to take the best from both?

Mormonism is committed to the concept of a lawful, loving, orderly deity to whom capriciousness and deceit are anathema. The concept that God works through universal law, that he is God because of his obedience to and operation within the framework of such law, is fundamental. This gives Mormonism a basis for synthesis that exists in few if any other Western religions; it cannot be ignored with impunity. Mormonism's view that truth can be obtained empirically or pragmatically⁹⁸ must also be kept constantly in mind; God speaks in more ways than just scripture or open revelation.

It would appear that teachers in the church cannot be honest in their teachings if they present only one point of view as the position of the church. Whoso among them picks just one position from among the many articulated on these matters by church leaders becomes guilty of teaching a part-truth, and witnesses immediately that he "is not moved upon by the Holy Ghost." And will not students who permit such teaching without clarifying the matter be equally guilty of perpetuating part-truths? It would seem high time that we insist on a greater honesty and

97. W. R. Thompson, *Catholic World* 34 (1882): 692.

98. Cf. Wendell O. Rich, *Distinctive Teachings of the Restoration*, ch. 7, "The Nature of Truth" (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1962). The First Presidency's straightforward statement: "That which is demonstrated, we accept with joy" (*Deseret News*, 17 Dec. 1910, part 1, p. 3), can be coupled with dozens of further references.

scholarship in our gospel discussions; we owe future generations far better teaching than the current ones have been getting. In these respects, it is encouraging to note that the current Gospel Doctrine manual,⁹⁹ which deals directly with the creation scriptures from both the Bible and modern scripture, steers deliberately clear of any interpretational hang-ups. It propounds with Brigham Young that the critical message is not what method was used in Creation, but that God was responsible for Creation.

Above all, it would appear that teachers should grow beyond pushing their own views or those of their favorite general authority, to embark on a quest for truth rather than an indoctrination of one-sided dogma. Perhaps the sentiments of Apostle John Taylor are relevant:

I do not want to be frightened about hell-fire, pitchforks, and serpents, nor to be scared to death with hobgoblins and ghosts, nor anything of the kind that is got up to scare the ignorant; but I want truth, intelligence, and something that will bear investigation. I want to probe things to the bottom and to find out the truth if there is any way to find it out.¹⁰⁰

Furthermore:

...[O]ur religion...embraces every principle of truth and intelligence pertaining to us as moral, intellectual, mortal and immortal beings, pertaining to this world and the world that is to come. We are open to truth of every kind, no matter whence it comes, where it originates, or who believes in it. . . .

A man in search of truth has no peculiar system to sustain, no peculiar dogma to defend or theory to uphold; he embraces all truth, and that truth, like the sun in the firmament, shines forth and spreads its effulgent rays over all creation, and if men will divest themselves of bias and prejudice, and prayerfully and conscientiously search after truth, they will find it wherever they turn their attention.¹⁰¹

99. *In the Beginning, Gospel Doctrine Course Teacher's Supplement* (1972, Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Deseret News Press).

100. JD 11:317 (1867).

101. JD 16:369-70 (1874).