

Evolution and Religion

What Do the Churches Say?

Religious Fundamentalist Anti-evolution Sentiment

"We were created by God; we didn't just evolve by accident. It was not a process of moving from one animal form to another, but rather as Genesis teaches, that each was made in its own order. In fact, [humans and animals] were made on different days." (Jim Harding, Utah/Idaho Southern Baptist Convention, qtd. in Stack, Peggy F. "Creationism," SLTribune, 23 Oct. 1999)

Darwin's Response to Religious Attacks

"I see no good reason why the views given in this volume should shock the religious feelings of any one. . . . the greatest discovery ever made by man, namely, the law of the attraction of gravity, was also attacked by Leibnitz, 'as subversive of natural, and inferentially of revealed, religion.'" (Appelman. The Origin 116)

Darwin's Response to Religious Attacks

"A celebrated author and divine has written to me that 'he has gradually learnt to see that it is just as noble a conception of the Deity to believe that He created a few original forms capable of self-development into other and needful forms, as to believe that He required a fresh act of creation to supply the voids caused by the action of His laws.'" (Appelman. The Origin 116)

"'Everyone ought to realize that evolution is happening and it's a common thing,' said Tolman. Besides fossil records, there are numerous examples in our own time that change is occurring—viruses that become resistant to antibiotics, populations of squirrels and moths that have change [sic] color over time for survival. . . . 'The evidence supporting evolution is massive.'" (Tolman, Richard. BYU Chairman of Zoology, qtd. in Stack, "Creationism Sparks Debate . . .," SLTribune 23 Oct. 1999: C1-C3.)

"As religious leaders we share a deep faith in the God who created heaven and earth and all that is in them, and take with utmost seriousness the Biblical witness to this God who is our Creator. However we find no incompatibility between the God of creation and a theory of evolution which uses universally verifiable data to explain the probable process by which life developed into its present form."

(Signed by 78 Kentucky ministers, in Voices for Evolution)

"The assumption that the Bible contains scientific data about origins misreads a literature which emerged in a pre-scientific age. We acknowledge modern evolutionary theory as the present-day scientific explanation of the existence of life on earth; such a conviction is in no way at odds with our belief in a Creator God, or in the revelation and presence of that God in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit."

(United Church of Christ, Voices for Evolution)

"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 . . . or whether they were born here in mortality, as other mortals have been, are questions not fully answered in the revealed word of God."

(Joseph H. Smith, LDS President, ERA, 1910)

Pope Pius published the encyclical "Humani Generis," acknowledging that evolution might be the correct hypothesis. In the fall of 1996, Pope John Paul II wrote to the Papal scientists, saying: "Humani Generis" considered the doctrine of 'evolution' as a serious hypothesis, worthy of a more deeply studied investigation. . . . **Today, . . . New knowledge leads us to recognize that the theory of evolution is more than a hypothesis.** Man's soul, however, comes from God, even if "the human body is sought in living material which existed before it."

(Pope John Paul II)

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

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." (LDS First Presidency, 1930)

" On the subject of organic evolution the Church has officially taken no position. The book, "Man, His Origin and Destiny" was not published by the Church, and is not approved by the Church. The book contains expressions of the author's views for which he alone is responsible."

(President David O. McKay, President of the LDS Church, 1957)

" If the evolutionary hypothesis of the creation of life and matter in the universe is ultimately found to be correct, and I shall neither be disappointed nor displeased if it shall turn out so to be, in my humble opinion the Biblical account is sufficiently comprehensive to include the whole of the process."

(Stephen L. Richards, Mormon Apostle, "An Open Letter to College Students")

"The scriptures tell why man was created, but they do not tell how, though the Lord has promised that he will tell that when he comes again."

(Encyclopedia of Mormonism, 1992)

"We don't feel that it's critical to know the number of years of creation. The important thing is that man is evolving and becoming like Christ. The reason some faiths are concerned more strongly than others is they accept the Bible literally. We accept the Bible, too. But the relevance of how the creation takes place doesn't detract from the Bible; it just reinforces the fact that there is a God." (Ray Hendershot,

Southern Colorado director of public affairs for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. "Creation-Evolution Debate . . ." SLTribune, 11 Sept. 1999, C2)