

NOTE WELL: This first page is NOT part of the official BYU Evolution Packet. It was prepared under the auspices of the BYU administration, however, to explain the packet's origin and purpose. The actual packet itself begins with the next page: Evolution and the Origin of Man.

Evolution packet defined

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

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

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

Purpose of packet

Because of my experience in preparing the evolution article for the "Encyclopedia of Mormonism," I was asked by Provost Bruce Hafen to consider a packet

that could be made available to students as the official and fundamental Church position on this subject. It was immediately clear that the selection of material for such a packet could not depend on the content of the statements. The goal is not to achieve some kind of "balance" among the views that have been expressed, but to give students the full range of official views so that they can judge the different positions they encounter. The full range of official views should provide the basis for the evaluation of other views that have been expressed but that do not have the status of official Church positions.

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

The draft packet's contents were discussed amicably with Dean Robert Millet of Religious, Education and Provost Hafen. After considerable discussion, we agreed that the official university packet should contain only those items that represent the

official position of the Church, i.e. statements from the First Presidency. The encyclopedia article was kept because of the First Presidency Minutes item included in it, which is not otherwise available to the public. The final packet was then reviewed by BYU's Board of Trustees-consisting of The First Presidency, many members of the Quorum of the Twelve and other general authorities and officers. They approved the packet.

Balance not the issue

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

None of us involved in preparing this packet for Board review anticipate that professors will be limited from distributing other materials to their students. It is only requested that BYU faculty members refer students to the materials in this specific packet along with the other items they may choose to distribute. When other items are distributed, they should be clearly separated and given as a supplement to this material and include a fair sampling of the diverse

viewpoints among LDS leaders. For example, if one included statements by LDS apostles in a handout on evolution, the range of views would include some statements against evolution, some sympathetic to evolution and several shades of opinion in between. We want to avoid the implication that a greater sense of unanimity or resolution of this topic exists than is actually the case, and we are eager to avoid contention. The university has also suggested that faculty members limit supplemental LDS material on the subject of evolution and the origin of man to published documents, avoiding private letters or other private material.

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

by **William E. Evenson**

Dean, College of Physical and

Mathematical Sciences

professor of Physics