

FREEMASONRY AND THE EVOLUTION OF EVOLUTION

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Perhaps one of the most outspoken and controversial brothers in our honorable fraternity was William Jennings Bryan (1860–1925), a member of Lincoln Lodge No. 19, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Brother Bryan was a very high profile orator and Democratic Party politician who stood three times as the party's candidate for President of the United States.

He was a very religious man and vehemently opposed the “theory of evolution.” He testified at what became known as the “Scopes Trial” in which a school teacher (John Thomas Scopes) was tried and convicted of teaching evolution in a public school. Five days after the conclusion of the Scopes case, Bro. Bryan died in his sleep.

Nevertheless, the controversy over evolution and creationism continued. The matter was effectively settled in 1958 under passing of the National Defense Education Act which stressed the importance of evolution as the unifying principle of biology. In short, evolution was now approved as a subject to be taught in public schools.

I am sure Bro. Bryan would not have been very happy about the final outcome, but over time people became more “scientific” and when it comes to the Old Testament and science, the latter always wins. It appears that Bro. Bryan's concern was that disproving the Bible would lead to a lessening of morals in society (sense of caring, justice, regard for one another and so forth). Those of us who were around in the 1940s and 1950s will likely agree that things have certainly gone “downhill” in some areas.

Whatever the case, science just scored another home run in the great “controversy.” Modern scientific processes have proved beyond a doubt that non-human animals and humans are biologically the same. One prominent scientist has declared that the “theory of evolution” has now been promoted to a “fact” (totally proven).

Nevertheless, a direct link between humans and other primates has not yet been found, so creationists can still hang on to that straw—I think it is just a matter of time.

The bottom line on all of this is that the Bible was never meant to be a “scientific document.” It simply provides “lessons” on the best way for humans to interact with each other. The Masonic Order essentially “boiled it all down” so it could be seen and appreciated without needing a degree in theology.

Ironically, a US political figure in this century wants to again prohibit the teaching of evolution in schools. Even if this individual is of the same mind as Bro. Bryan, it's definitely “too late to close the gate.”

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William Jennings Bryan in c.1902.