

Of Science

The prestige of science rested on shocking oversimplifications and elaborate tautologies.

“Before Adam,” *CWHN* 1:58

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Science represents a high court from whose judgment there is no appeal, the idea (Freud expresses it in his *The Future of Illusion*) . . . that all other judgments are outmoded traditions; [that] the judges are free from prejudice and bias, and above petty personal interests, if they let the facts speak for themselves; that they suspend all judgment until all the facts have been gathered; that they proceed cautiously and carefully, step by step, making no mistakes, no guesses, never accepting a proposition until it is proven; that to question such a judge is an affront to his dignity and to his high office; that the judges never guess but always know; that they make no pronouncements until they have proven and verified everything; that they begin their investigations by accumulating facts with completely open minds, neither selecting or eliminating as they go; that their procedures and conclusions are in no way colored by any previous experience. That they never trust anything to luck and rarely make mistakes; that their accumulated decisions of the past compose a solid and reliable body of tested and proven knowledge called science; that by following the instructions and example of the judges, our civilization can emancipate itself from the darkness of ignorance; that to accept the decision of the judges as definitive is the mark of an intellectual person; that the knowledge of the judges is so deep and specialized that it cannot be put into ordinary language or understood by the layman but [that] science is a necessary domain of highly specialized experts and so forth. . . .

Well, every one of these propositions is completely false.

“Fact and Fancy in the Interpretation of Ancient Records,” 6-7

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We have all grown up in a world nurtured on the comfortable Victorian doctrine of uniformitarianism, the idea that what happens in this world is all more of the same: what lies ahead is pretty much what lies behind, for the same forces that are at work on the earth today were at work in the same manner, with the same intensity and the same effects at all times past and will go on operating inexorably and irresistibly in just the same way forever hereafter. There is no real cause for alarm in a world where everything is under control beneath the watchful eye of science as evolution takes its undeviating forward course, steady, reliable, imperceptibly slow and gentle, and gratifyingly predictable.

“Genesis of the Written Word,” *CWHN* 12:451

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What kind of science is it that bases its theories on evidence not yet discovered? . . . Our great and thrilling detective drama begins by telling us who did it, right at the beginning, and then expects us to wait around with bated breath while the detective brings the evidence.

“Before Adam,” *CWHN* 1:57

Science without religion, like philosophy without religion, has nothing to feed on. . . . It is my contention that any branch of human thought without religion soon withers and dies of anemia.

“Science Fiction and the Gospel,” *CWHN* 12:519

The greatest scientist [Newton] and the greatest scholar [Scaliger] were not humanists at all but always looking for something beyond, always going back again and again to Genesis and Revelation.

“Humanism and the Gospel,” 3

It’s sad to think how many of those telling points [of evolution] that turned some of our best students away from the gospel have turned out to be dead wrong!

“Before Adam,” *CWHN* 1:57

When the scientist leaves his closed system and starts talking in eschatological terms, he is exceeding his authority, going beyond the bounds which science proudly sets for all who would play the game according to her rules. Only faith enjoys the luxury of being open-ended.

“Sophic and Mantic,” *CWHN* 10:339

In . . . a perspective of eternity, the stock questions of controversy between science and religion become meaningless. When did it all begin? Can you set a date? Were there ever human-like creatures who did not belong to the human race? (There still are!) How old is the earth? the universe? How long are they going to last? What will we do in heaven forever? etc.

Nothing is settled yet, not only because the last precincts are never heard from in science—and their report always comes as a shocker—but because we are far from getting the last word in religion either. For us the story remains open-ended—at both ends—in a progression of beginnings and endings without beginning or end, each episode proceeding from what goes before and leading to the next. The absolutes of the University of Alexandria to which the Doctors of the Christians and the Jews were completely in the thrall from the fourth century on simply do not exist for Latter-day Saints. Instead of that, they have a much bigger book to study; it is time they were getting with it.

“The Expanding Gospel,” in *Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless*, 22

Having renounced all traffic with Religion, the Scientist proceeds to devote hundreds of hours to giving public lectures on "Science and Religion." This is an interesting paradox:

a) The secret of the Scientist's superiority and success is that he pays strict attention to the problem at hand; limiting himself to the laboratory situation, he rejects all else as extraneous and irrelevant.

b) This means that the problem at hand is everything that counts.

c) If that is so, nothing else counts—Science is all in all.

d) Therefore Science alone can give the answers to the ultimate problems of life.

e) But the ultimate problems of life are exactly what Science must renounce in order to be Science!

For a scientist to talk of, for example, "The Relationship between Science and Religion" is as meaningless as for him to lecture on "The Place of the Supernatural in the Laboratory,"—and for the same reason. His function *as a scientist* rules out any consideration of either. The greatest chemist alive knows no more about Man's Origin and Destiny than anybody else does.

The scientist readily admits that he was *wrong yesterday*, but dogmatically insists that he is *right today*. We can believe him when he says he was wrong, but can we believe him when he says he is right today? He said that yesterday, too: *Science cannot be self-correcting* until it knows the *correct answers*. But as long as it is progressing, the answers will be changing—Science is not self-correcting but self-rebuking.

"G-2 Report, No. 2," 4-5

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Until the final returns are in, no one is in a position to make final pronouncements; and as long as science continues to progress, the final returns will remain at the other end of a future of wonders and surprises. In the world of things, we must forever keep an open mind, because we simply don't know the answers.

But we are not claiming that because science does not have the ultimate answers, religion does have them. What we do claim is that the words of the prophets cannot be held to the tentative and defective tests that men have devised for them. Science, philosophy, and common sense all have a right to their day in court. But the last word does not lie with them. Every time men in their wisdom have come forth with the last word, other words have promptly followed.

The last word is a testimony of the gospel that comes only by direct revelation. Our Father in Heaven speaks it; and if it were in perfect agreement with the science of today, it would surely be out of line with the science of tomorrow. Let us not, therefore, seek to hold God to the learned opinions of the moment when he speaks the language of eternity.

"The Prophets and the Open Mind," *CWHN* 3:134