

The Heavens Declare Thy Glory, Lord

Isaac Watts (1674–1748)

The heavens declare Thy glory, Lord,
in ev'ry star Thy wisdom shines;
but when our eyes behold Thy Word,
we read Thy Name in fairer lines.

The rolling sun, the changing light,
and nights and days Thy pow'r confess;
but the blest volume Thou hast writ
reveals Thy justice and Thy grace.

Sun, moon, and stars convey Thy praise
round the whole earth, and never stand:
so when Thy truth began its race,
it touched and glanced on ev'ry land.

Nor shall Thy spreading gospel rest
till through the world Thy truth has run,
till Christ has all the nations blest
that see the light, or feel the sun.

Great Sun of Righteousness, arise,
bless the dark world with heav'nly light;
Thy gospel makes the simple wise;
Thy laws are pure, Thy judgments right.

Thy noblest wonders here we view
in souls renewed and sins forgiv'n;
Lord, cleanse my sins, my soul renew,
and make Thy Word my guide to heav'n.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

Scientism

Brett Williams

Science has become a proper noun. Its hegemony and authority are all but unrivaled. Sitting atop the pantheon of disciplines, it enjoys both prominence and preeminence. All other disciplines look up at it in awe and to it for guidance. If one needs proof of this dominance, one only has to look at the incredible achievements of the 20th century. The progress in that century was perhaps unparalleled in history. Take, for example, my great grandmother who died in the mid-1980's at the age of 101. In her lifetime, man went from crashing into the sands of Kitty Hawk beach to taking that giant leap onto the Sea of Tranquility. Advancements in technology, medicine, and communication are so common place they have almost become mundane.

Science has even figured out a way to surpass philosophy and theology with those pesky conundrums like “from where did we come?” or “how did something come from nothing?” Biologist E.O. Wilson said, “We can be proud as a species because, having discovered that we are alone, we owe the gods very little.” So confident are we that we've answered life's most pressing questions that the only thing lacking is the Grand Unified Theory. In fact, the late physicist Stephen Hawking, in searching for the GUT in order to explain a universe that can create itself, ended his landmark book *A Brief History of Time* by saying “it [GUT] would be the ultimate triumph of human reason— for then we would know the mind of God” (191). The proof of science's dominance, it would seem, is in the pudding, or at least in the primordial goo out of which we are told all life sprang.

In 1876 Thomas Huxley, an agnostic biologist and aptly named “Darwin's Bulldog,” boldly declared that the theory of evolution was as scientifically verifiable as Copernicus's heliocentricity. Over a century later, physicist H.S. Lipson epitomized just how far evolution, and indeed modernity, had come. Referring to the broad acceptance of Darwin, Lipson stated that “... evolution became in a sense a scientific religion; almost all scientists have accepted it and many are prepared to 'bend' their observations to fit in with it” (“A Physicist Looks at Evolution,” *Physics Bulletin* 31 no. 4 [1980]).



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While science used to be a discipline of observation and testing, it has now become something altogether different. It has become Scientism. Philosopher J.P. Moreland defines Scientism as the erroneous belief that the hard sciences can not only provide a genuine knowledge of reality but are the highest intellectual authority. "Scientism," he states, "is the very paradigm of truth and rationality" (*Scientism and Secularism* [Wheaton: Crossway, 2018], 29). Science has become the religion of modernity and scientists, its priests, interceding on behalf of the *hoi polloi* to bring knowledge and light. The so-called soft sciences must bow and quietly speculate with subjectivity while so-called hard sciences loudly pontificate on the properties of reality.

Sadly, the wholehearted acquiescence to this new belief is most evident in western Christianity, particularly evangelicalism. Moreland states, "...when scientists make claims that seem to conflict with biblical teaching and solid theology, theologians and biblical scholars start ducking into foxholes, hoist the white flag of surrender, and trip over each other in the race to see who can be the first to come up with a revision of biblical teaching that placates the scientists." If Scientism says that genomic mutation rates prove that men must have evolved from no less than 10,000 hominids, then Adam and Eve must have been nothing more than allegories or mythical archetypes. If Scientism says that homosexuality is inherent, then a glut of Christians rises up to apologize for misreading the Bible for two millennia. If gender is declared nothing more than a psychological construct, then the cisgendered must alter pronouns in the Bible to include *Ze* and *Hir*. When commanded to awake from their sociological slumber, privileged Christians must become woke. They must get in line lest they receive the shameful label of ignorant, or worse, skeptic.

But we all may discover Scientism to be a fickle religion as science proves more and more to be a mutable deity. What is proven today can be disproven tomorrow. As telescopes look farther and microscopes look smaller, the mysteries of the cosmos always remain just out of reach. What seemed sure in nature often becomes obscure, like trying to find the once-planet Pluto in the night sky. If the cosmos is all there is or ever was or ever will be, then why does everything have a beginning and end?

While debates on climate have been heating up recently, only a few decades ago in 1975, *Newsweek* magazine ran an article delineating the scientific consensus that much of the world was on the precipice of entering a new ice age. The author of the article, Peter Gwynne, said in a 2014 *mea culpa*, "while the hypotheses described in that original story seemed right at the time, climate scientists now know that they were seriously incomplete" (*Inside Science*, May 21 [2014]). What we thought we knew yesterday was wrong, but what we now know today is definitely right. What was incomplete yesterday is now, they say, most assuredly complete. I wonder what knowledge tomorrow will bring? After all, "who can know the mind of God?"

Contemporary science must therefore recognize its limitations and be willing to once again play the supporting role to philosophy and theology. This will be the subject of next week's article.



This essay is by Brett Williams, Provost and Executive Vice President at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
