

This is a powerful argument *against* knowledge by authority, in other words against religion, and is actually very pro-science. If a prophet does say something wrong, then why should I accept everything else he says as true? That is the very point. Of course we shouldn't simply disregard any statement made by somebody who has erred in the past, but we certainly shouldn't accept every statement either. Instead, we should look at the evidence for and against any given proposition. But wait! This is exactly what the scientists are doing. They aren't automatically accepting or rejecting what prophet, ancient and modern, say on the subject of life because they have been wrong in the past and could be wrong now as well. Instead they are looking for evidence which isn't wrong for the reason that it isn't conscious. Of course such evidence needs interpretation, but then again so do prophetic statements.

Reply

Jared says:

August 22, 2005 at 5:52 am

Thanks! I have subscribed to LDS-GEMS for a long time. That must be where I saw it. I'll have to look back through emails I saved to see if I can find it.

Reply

John W. Redelfs says:

August 21, 2005 at 11:33 pm

From:

On Second Thought: Growing up as a son of Bruce R. McConkie By Joseph Fielding McConkie

Growing up as a son of Bruce R. McConkie and a grandson of Joseph Fielding Smith had its moments. One of the experiences that my brothers and sisters and I shared regularly was to listen to people make disparaging remarks about our father or grandfather in Sunday School or other church classes. You could pretty well depend on the fact that if someone quoted either Elder McConkie or President Smith, that someone else would immediately respond with some kind of an insulting retort. I don't think it bothered any of us to have someone disagree with our father or grandfather, we just couldn't understand why the disagreement seemed so mean-spirited.

One of the classic responses that is made to discredit anything Joseph Fielding Smith said is to remind everyone that he said that men would never get to the moon. The idea being that if he said one thing that was incorrect then how can we possibly be expected to believe anything else he said.

Let me illustrate how silly this kind of thing gets. The other day a student at BYU told me that Joseph Fielding Smith was quoted in their class discussion. Apparently what he said wasn't headed in the direction the professor wanted to go, so she simply discarded it with the standard, "Yes, but you must remember he also said that men would never get to the moon."

The student asked me how I would have responded in that situation. It seems to me that an appropriate response might have been to ask if the professor was to be held to the same standard? That is, if she ever said anything that proved to be incorrect should her students disregard everything else she said? If so, she certainly did say something irresponsible in the manner by which she so lightly dismissed what President Smith said.

As to the men on the moon issue, I was present on at least one occasion when President Smith said it. It was a Sunday dinner at our house. My grandfather, Oscar W. McConkie, had asked President Smith if he thought the Lord would allow us to get to other worlds and communicate with the

people on them. President Smith indicated that he did not. He reasoned that because the atonement that Christ worked out on this earth applies to all the creations of the Father, that our getting to other worlds and discovering that they had the same Savior and the same plan of salvation would dispense with the necessity of our accepting the gospel on the basis of faith. To dramatize the point he said, "I don't even think the Lord will let men get to the moon."

I concurred with President Smith's reasoning then and do so now. What he said, in my judgement, was right. The illustration he used to dramatize his point has since proven to be in error. It, however, has nothing to do with the point he was making. To dismiss everything else he said on the basis of one faulty illustration is, I would suggest, a far greater error and may frankly be grounds to question whether those saying it deserve credence, not whether Joseph Fielding Smith does.

Joseph Fielding McConkie

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I received this on January 13, 1999 from the LDS-GEMS email list. The list was run by Dave Crockett and David Kenison who were among the early contributors of my Zion email discussion list.

Reply

Jared says:

August 21, 2005 at 6:34 pm

It looks like Jeff's quote comes from Quinn's *Extentions of Power*. I don't own the book, so I don't know what the ultimate source is.

Reply

Jared says:

August 21, 2005 at 6:28 pm

"Except for a comment made at the dinner table by Joseph Fielding Smith"

I know that Joseph Fielding McConkie has talked about this, but for the life of me I can't find it.

Do you have a reference?

Regarding Jeff's quote, I'm not sure where he got the quote from, but I found [this](#) (note 79).

Reply

will says:

August 19, 2005 at 3:20 pm

A few points:

1. These researchers are not expecting to find a definitive answer on how life began. They are only trying to demonstrate in detail how it *could* have happened, thus closing one gap for God-of-the-gaps proponents. Given the educational proposals of certain politicians, this study is quite pertinent.
2. The debate over when life began is moot until we define *life*. Are viruses alive? How about computer viruses?
3. Biological life certainly had a beginning in this biosphere, whether it emerged from a primordial cocktail or was planted here in its current form 6000 years ago. Theories about deities possessing mortal bodies in other spheres are irrelevant to this study, and to science as a whole.