

"DO ALL PATHS LEAD TO GOD?"

A king invited six blind men to examine an elephant. The first felt his trunk and said, "An elephant is like a tree branch." The second felt his leg and concluded, "An elephant is like a palm tree." The third felt the elephant's belly and said, "Elephants must be like walls." The fourth felt its tail and said, "Elephants are like ropes;" the fifth concluded elephants were like pipes because he had felt its tusks. The last blind man, feeling only the elephant's ear said, "Elephants are like giant fans!" The king was amused by it all.



Many people use this story to describe religion and spirituality. They say God is like the elephant and all religions, like the blind men, have some truth, so everyone is correct in his own way. What are we to think? Do all paths lead to God?

There are major problems with the assumption, all paths lead to God. First, some people do not carefully check out all the facts. Most people have smoke detectors in their homes and believe they will wake them up in case of a fire. But when was the last time the batteries were tested? That's a dangerous assumption.

Second, we must see the whole picture. The person making that assumption takes the place of the blind man who thinks, "I can describe an elephant by what I feel in my senses." He may not be able to test his assumptions until it's too late! Unfortunately, religious teachers are often like blind men describing an elephant. They share their conclusions and others are expected to blindly believe them.

I love my grand, old sailboat but when I set sail on a long-distance voyage, I do not blindly believe I will arrive at a distant port. I choose to consult a compass as a way of testing my assumptions along the way. The compass will give me the needed course corrections. Is there anything in the world of religion like that?

Christianity is completely different. The other teachers taught and died. Jesus died and taught and therein lies the difference. Jesus gave us the scriptures to be our spiritual compass. He knows exactly the full and complete truth that leads us safely to God, for He is "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6)

“LEAVING THE CHURCH?”



So, you've had it with "the Church" and decided to drop out! It is no longer relevant to you. Truth be told, a great deal has changed in the past 2000 years: personal ideologies, church politics, man-made teachings, and hypocrisy at the highest levels of leadership. "The Church" has changed doctrines once considered important. Your soul is no longer being spiritually fed. You have been embarrassed by the hypocrisy of spiritual leaders. You're not getting anything out of going to church.

One of the fundamental causes of dissatisfaction with organized religion is that it has departed from the pure teachings of Jesus. When people get away from what Jesus taught they no longer have spiritual strength to cope with life. "The Church"

then loses its meaning and life loses its purpose.

From the earliest times Christians struggled with evil influences. "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the One who called you by the grace of Christ, for a *different gospel* — which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion, and are trying to *pervert the gospel of Christ*" (Galatians 1:6,7). These words were written only a few years after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Men began to change the teachings of Jesus!

The struggle continues today. The teachings of Christ are being ignored or twisted to suit what is "politically correct". When the message changes, religion loses its power and the people are left spiritually empty and unfulfilled.

The Bible says: "There is one body and one Spirit—just as also you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:4-6).

Christians need to get back the church Christ established. When this happens, there will be no need for man-made teachings. The words of the Bible will be sufficient. Give yourself a chance to learn more about this important return to pure Christianity.

— Bruce Pierce, Minister Church of Christ
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WHAT'S THE LIFE OF MEANING?

“‘Meaningless! Meaningless!’ says the Teacher. ‘Everything is meaningless!’ ... Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”
(Ecclesiastes 12:8-14)



The wise King Solomon once had all of life’s opulence and luxury to explore what in this world held meaning. After thoroughly testing wisdom, pleasure, work and advancement he was forced to declare that “everything is meaningless!” Wonderful! That saves us great time and money, to conduct our own studies to conclude this same thing.

Logically, we must either throw up our hands and succumb to an acceptance of us being just accidentally formed bundles of cells with no reason to exist ... or find purpose in Solomon’s conclusion to “fear God and keep His commandments.” The first holds no hope, no motivation to live other than a meaningless and selfish pursuit of the present until you poof out of existence. This view leaves no room for the sick, the poor, the struggling, or the elderly. A person can only cling, with ever-weakening fingers, to that which makes him strong until he dies in weakness as a failure.

So how do we explain faith, hope, love, and sacrifice if the first view is true? The stories abound and defy the idea that there’s no purpose to life. A man leaps onto the subway tracks to rescue a woman who fell. A teacher gives her life to save her students hiding in from a shooter. Why? Purposeless bundles of cells don’t do that.

The second view gives us hope and a way to cope for every one of life’s inevitable struggles. May 2017 was difficult. Within two weeks, my wife’s mother died, my wife, an only child who is battling lung cancer, had a brain tumor removed, and our beautiful daughter was bitten on the face by a dog. Only by believing that God has given life purpose and clinging to the faith, hope, love that comes only from Him could I have gotten through that month and upheld others in the process.

Fearing God and keeping His commandments not only gives us the tools to withstand life’s storms but also provides the bedrock for a joyful and purpose-filled existence. The question should not be what is the meaning of life, but, rather, what is a life of meaning?

— Douglas Kashorek is minister
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ARE SCIENCE & SCRIPTURE COMPATIBLE?



As a chemical engineer, I use science to solve complex problems and create novel things using a knowledge of chemistry, physics and math. I am also a devout Christian, who believes in God. For many people, science and a deep belief in God are incompatible. They cannot comprehend how someone can believe in God, yet also purport to be a scientist. This article will seek to answer how science and God are compatible with one another by examining what science is and its limits for understanding God's creation.

Science is shorthand for the scientific method—a tool used by scientists to observe and predict the natural world. It is something created by human beings as a way of understanding how the physical world works. To use the scientific method, a scientist must be able to measure a physical thing and from these measurements predict how the world will behave. Therefore, science, a human tool, is limited to trying to explain God's creation, but in no way can science prove or disprove the existence of God for there is no way to measure God as no one has ever seen God—a Being that exists beyond our physical world, but who is responsible for its creation (Genesis 1:1).

In fact, the more we learn about God's creation through science the more awe inspiring it becomes. The marvels of bio-

chemistry, genetics, and epigenetics reveal the intricate beauty and complexity of the living creatures created not by random selection, but the loving hand of a Creator. The intricate laws of physics that are so finely tuned that the slightest variation in any one would cause our world to cease to exist. Despite all of the knowledge of this world that we have obtained through science, we are still limited by our own human ability to understand and explain what we learn. For we are trying to understand and explain a world created by a Being with unlimited understanding and power (Psalm 147:6).

Our human limits lead to theories and hypotheses that are imperfect and flawed. Even though it is claimed that humans are able to explain everything with science we know that our knowledge and wisdom to explain God's creation is limited.

"I saw all that God has done....Despite all his efforts to search it out, man cannot discover its meaning. Even if a wise man claims he knows, he cannot really comprehend it" (Ecclesiastes 8:16-17).

If we understand the limits of science and human wisdom it is not difficult to hold a devout belief in God and realize that no human theory can contradict God's Word.

— Wyatt Winkenwerder, PhD. is a
chemical scientist, and member of the
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Organic Evolution Is **Faith**-Based

One person believes that everything came into existence through an organic evolutionary process. Another person believes that everything was brought into existence by a Creator. Some claim that organic evolution is based on *science* and the Biblical account of creation is based on *faith*.

Dictionary.com states that science is, “systematic knowledge of the physical or material world gained through observation and experimentation.” *Dictionary.com* definition of faith is, “belief that is not based on proof.” The Bible contains a clear definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1 “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

Evolutionists state that the universe had its beginning about 13.5 billion years ago when all matter in the universe was compressed into the size of a dot and then exploded (the “Big Bang” theory). Evolution has no explanation as to where the matter came from. Does this sound like the definition of science—“knowledge that is gained through observation and experimentation” or the definition of faith—“belief that is not based on proof”? There is no proof for the Big Bang and it can not be observed or replicated in experimentation. Organic evolution is a *faith-based* position. The creationist believes “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). Creationism is *faith-based* as well.

An evolutionist believes the earth was formed about 4.6 billion years ago and life started about 3.8 billion years ago, initially with single cells, such as bacteria from a primordial soup that evolved into all the different life and plant forms we have in the world today. A creationist believes what the Bible states about how the plants got here, “Then God said, ‘Let the land produce veg-

etation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.’”(Genesis 1:11).

As to how the fish and birds got here Genesis 1:21 declares: “God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind.” And as to how land dwelling animals got here Genesis 1:25, 26 affirms: “God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds.”

The Bible teaches plants, birds and sea creatures were to produce “*after their kind*”. It is true there is much variety *within a family of creatures*, but an organic evolutionist would have us believe that one kind of life form evolved into another kind of life form such as the dinosaur into a bird or a fish into a land dwelling creature. Yet, if this were true, one would expect that with all of the evolution that would have occurred to bring us from something swimming in a primordial soup to what exists today there would be thousands of transitional creatures found and yet there are none. The missing links are still missing!

The proof of the existence of the Creator, is evident in the design of everything around us—inanimate objects and living creatures. Who in their right mind would look at his house and think his house got there because a lumber yard exploded? The theory of organic evolution is not a scientific fact. It is a *religion* based on *faith*..

— Gordon Nadeau, a long-time student of Chrisitan Evidences, is a member of the Church of Christ Farmington, Connecticut

IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH?

We live our lives surrounded by only what our five senses allow us to experience, but for thousands of years, humans have been asking the same question “What happens after this?” Usually we don’t start to wonder about this until we get a bad medical diagnosis, or a friend or relative dies. That’s when we start.



Scientists have been studying life after death and near-death experiences for years, but it’s difficult to prove that there is or isn’t life after death. Studies published in medical journals interviewed people who had been resuscitated after having “died” for some period. The people were from different countries, cultural backgrounds, and religions.

Around 20% of the people interviewed said they remembered some sort of experience while they were “dead”: a dark tunnel with a bright light at the end, meeting friends and relatives who had died; seeing or sensing a “warm, loving, welcoming” being, or God.

Of course, none of this is “proof”; it wouldn’t stand up in a court of law. Many medical professionals discount all these experiences as being caused by brain malfunctions due to oxygen deprivation, or residual effects of medication or anesthesia.

Try as we might, we still only have anecdotal evidence of an afterlife. It’s not like going to the moon or the bottom of the ocean; you can’t send someone to explore and come back with a verifiable report.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ provides

absolute assurance of life “on the other side”. Jesus told His disciples that His resurrection would be the ultimate miraculous sign (irrefutable proof) of His deity: “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:38-40). Skeptics have tried to discredit His resurrection but none of their arguments will face up to the evidence that it really happened! The resurrection of Christ stands as testimony that there is life beyond. Jesus promised that on the coming Day of Judgment all who have failed to repent of their sins will give account to God. He said if the men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, how much more important it is for us to repent of our sins because the One greater than Jonah (Jesus) has come (Matthew 12:41)!

The after-life is described in Luke 16:19-31. A beggar named Lazarus died and went to Paradise at Abraham’s side, and a rich man also died and had a much less enjoyable experience than Lazarus did. The rich man begged Abraham to allow a warning to be sent to the rich man’s brothers. Jesus finished the story by saying “But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, “If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead” (Luke 16:29-31).

If the Day of Judgment came in the morning, would you be ready to meet God?

— Phil Stratton is minister of the Church of Christ in Augusta, Maine



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