

Why have Hope?

“Thy will be done, on earth as it is in
heaven”

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Los Alamos Faith and Science Forum

Wednesday, June 3, 2020

Outline

- Hope for the Human Race
 - Quo Vadis?
 - Evolution
 - Scientist: Teilhard de Chardin – the “Noosphere” is coming
 - Columnist: Thomas Friedman - the “Flat Earth/Noosphere” is here
 - Theologian: John Haught – the God of evolution
 - The Data – TED talk by Steven Pinker
- Hope for the Individual
 - Is that all there is?
 - The Christian Response

Faith, Hope and Trust?

Faith and hope are defined in the dictionary as follows; **Faith** is confidence or trust in a person or thing or a belief **not based on proof** and Hope is an **optimistic attitude of mind** based on an expectation or desire. **Faith** says it is so now, and **hope** says in the future it could happen.

Faith + Hope = Trust

Henri Nouwen - "Hope sets us free from the need to predict the future and allows us to live in the present, with the deep trust that God will never leave us alone but will fulfill the deepest desires of our heart."

Hope for the Human Race

- Quo Vadis?
 - Evolution
 - Scientist: Teilhard de Chardin – the “Noosphere” is coming
 - Columnist: Thomas Friedman - the “Noosphere/Flat Earth” is here
 - 2017 speaker theologian: John Haught – the God of evolution
- The Data – Steven Pinker’s TED talk

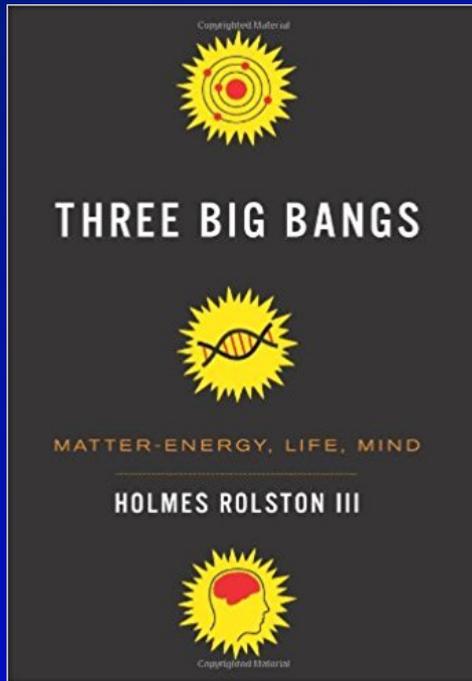
Hope for the future of the human race - Evolution

- Wikipedia definition: *“Evolution is change in the heritable characteristics of biological populations over successive generations.”*
- My understanding is different - the gamut from “nothing” to “quarks” to “baryons/leptons” to “atoms” to “molecules” to “matter” to “plants” to “animals” to “humans”.
- Ingredients needed for evolution: law, contingency and time
 - Law – inflexible dictates of chemistry and physics
 - Contingency – genetic mutations, asteroids, etc.
 - Time – big changes take longer than small changes
- Haught: *“...there can be not serious doubt that the natural world has journeyed directionally from simplicity to complexity, from triviality to more intense harmonies of content...toward increasing beauty.”*

Was God behind evolution? How? God stacked the deck?

- Anthropic principle/fine-tuned universe
- As Stephen Hawking has noted, *"The laws of science,..., contain many fundamental numbers, like the size of the electric charge of the electron and the ratio of the masses of the proton and the electron. ... The remarkable fact is that the values of these numbers seem to have been very finely adjusted to make possible the development of life."*

Was God behind evolution? How? Direct intervention?



- Big Bangs: matter, life and mind
- Psalm 104:30 – “Send forth your spirit, they are created and you renew the face of the earth.”
- Jesus Christ
- Marian Apparitions
- “Theodicy” – does God’s plan include all the suffering and evil? Why no intervention here?

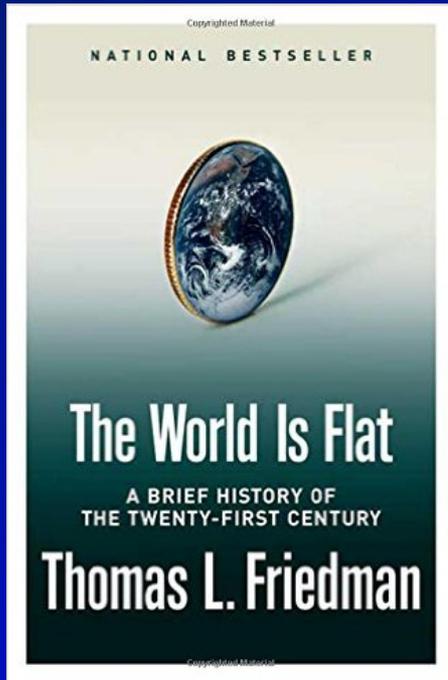
Was God behind evolution? How? Gentle Nudges?

- He had a lot of time!
- “Dead ends”
- Prayers
- Miracles
- Guardian Angels?

Scientist: Teilhard de Chardin – the “Noosphere” is coming

- Chardin’s posthumously published book, *The Phenomenon of Man*, set forth a sweeping account of the unfolding of the cosmos and the evolution of matter to humanity, to ultimately a reunion with Christ.
- The unfolding of the material cosmos, is described from primordial particles (geosphere) to the development of life (biosphere), to human beings (consciousness) and then the **noosphere**, and finally to his vision of the Omega Point in the future, which is "pulling" all creation towards it.
- **Noosphere** (/ˈnōəˌsfɪr/) - a postulated sphere or stage of evolutionary development dominated by consciousness, the mind, and interpersonal relationships

The Noosphere is here!

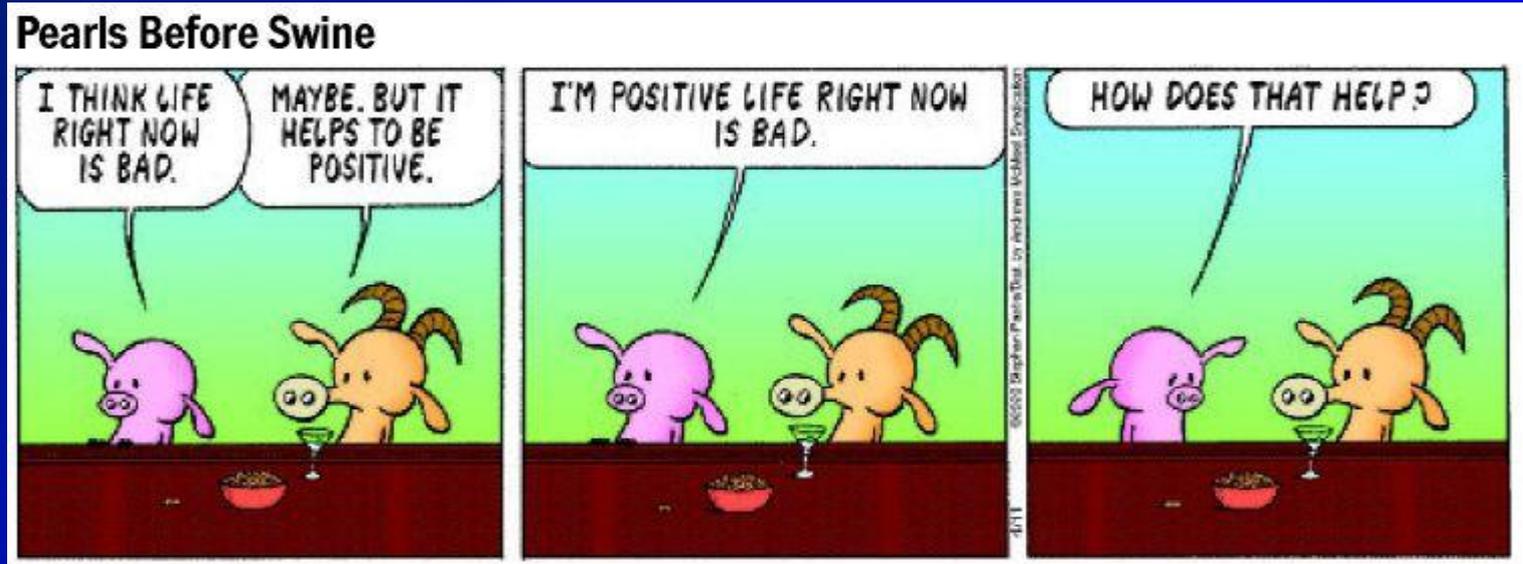


- **The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century** is an international best-selling book by Thomas L. Friedman that analyzes globalization, primarily in the early 21st century.
- The Internet and Social Media are tools that accelerated the blossoming of the Noosphere.
- He points out that because of them a student in India has the same opportunity as a student in Iowa.
- COVID-19 - global challenge and response

How are we doing our job?

- Are we approaching Chardin's Omega point?
- Is "homo sapiens" evolving or using better tools or both?
- "Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"???
- A look at the data –
 - Steven Arthur Pinker is a Canadian-American cognitive psychologist, linguist, and popular science author. He is Johnstone Family Professor in the Department of Psychology at Harvard University, and is known for his advocacy of evolutionary psychology and the computational theory of mind

Albeit a positive look



Steven Pinker

https://www.ted.com/talks/steven_pinker_is_the_world_getting_better_or_worse_a_look_at_the_numbers?utm_source=tedcomshare&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=tedsread

Hope for the Individual: Christian Scripture

- **Romans 5:3-5**

“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, **hope**. And **hope** does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”

- **1 Corinthians 2:9**

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

Hope for the Individual: Secular

- In 1734 Alexander Pope wrote in his Epistle III: “*Hope springs eternal in the human breast*”
- In 1969 Peggy Lee asked in song – “*Is that all there is?*”
- In 2020 Jeremy asked:



The Christian Response: the Kingdom of God

Walter Rauschenbusch (1861–1918) – Baptist minister – “Prophet of Hell’s Kitchen”

- *Kingdom of God* – not exclusively as a destination in the afterlife, but that which “stand for the sum of all divine and righteous forces on earth”
- The *Kingdom of God* is not a matter of getting individuals to heaven, but of **transforming the life on earth** into the harmony of heaven.

The Christian Response: the Kingdom of God

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ (1881-1955) was a French idealist philosopher and Jesuit priest who trained as a paleontologist and geologist and took part in the discovery of the Peking Man. He conceived the vitalist idea of the Omega Point, and he developed Vladimir Vernadsky's concept of noosphere.

“The Kingdom of God” For Teilhard de Chardin it is Omega; “Omega, He towards whom all converges, is concurrently He from whom all radiates. Impossible to place Him as a focus at the summit of the universe, without at the same time diffusing His presence in the intimate heart of the smallest movement of evolution.” (Chardin). When that complete convergence occurs, the Kingdom of God will have reached its full perfection on earth.”

The Christian Response: the Kingdom of God

- Martin Luther King (1929-1968)

“I’ve been to the mountaintop...”

- Pope Francis (1936 -): *"To Christians, the future does have a name, and its name is **Hope**. Feeling hopeful does not mean to be optimistically naïve and ignore the tragedy humanity is facing. **Hope** is the virtue of a heart that doesn't lock itself into darkness, that doesn't dwell on the past, does not simply get by in the present, but is able to see a tomorrow."*

Why do Christians believe?

1 Corinthians - Chapter 15

Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised;

and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.

Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we witnessed against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised.

For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised;

and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.

Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

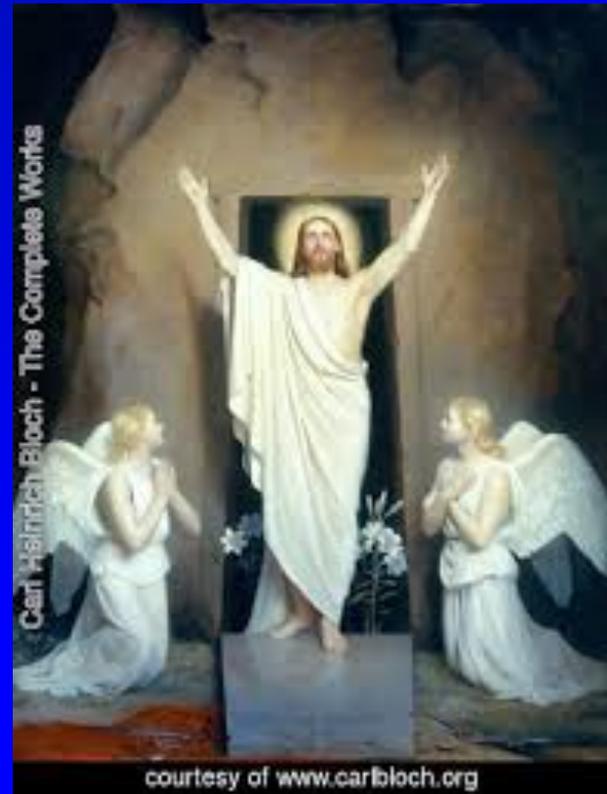
Why do Christians believe?

The resurrection of Jesus

Matthew 28:1-10

*Then the angel said to the women in reply, “Do not be afraid! I know that you are seeking Jesus the crucified. He is not here, for **he has been raised** just as he said.*

Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid.



Questions?

- Do we have an obligation to work to improve the lot of humanity?
- Are we making “progress”? Why?
- What might be holding us back?
- Do you have “hope” for an afterlife?

Thanks for indulging me!

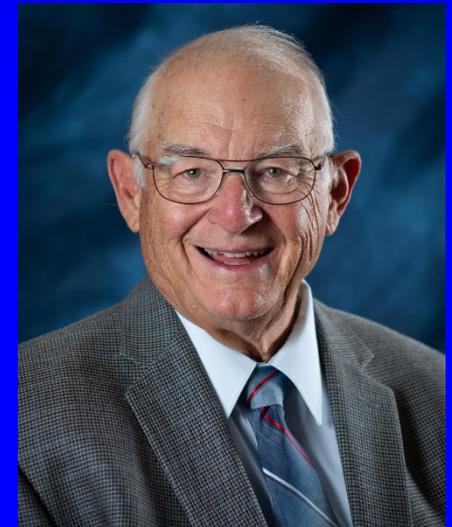
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Why Hope?

Wikipedia defines **hope** as "an optimistic attitude of mind that is based on an expectation of positive outcomes related to events and circumstances in one's life or the world at large."



In this presentation we will explore the basis for hope for the **individual**, specifically a Christian. We will then consider how the ideas of the scientist/theologian Teilhard de Chardin, Georgetown University's Distinguished Research Professor, John Haught, and Harvard University's cognitive psychologist, linguist, and popular science author, Steven Pinker, give us reason for hope for the **world at large**.



Morrie Pongratz