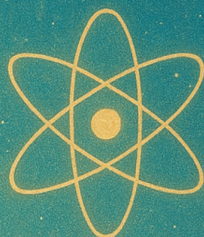


THE CONSCIOUS UNIVERSE

SCIENCE, FAITH, AND THE
SEARCH FOR GOD



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The Conscious Universe:

Science, Faith, and the Search for God

**The Science of Life and Consciousness
Volume 3**

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Introduction

For most people, what we believe about God is initially determined by the family or culture in which we grow up. If you have parents who are Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jewish, or parents of any other religion, or if you grow up in a culture which predominantly believes in one of those religions, then your initial belief about God is likely to be similar to your parents or to that culture.

The reverse is also true, and increasingly in this secular world, if you grow up with atheist or agnostic parents, or within an atheistic or agnostic culture, you are likely to grow up to be an atheist or agnostic.

This book is not about any individual religion, but it is concerned with the Jewish, Christian and Islamic religions that are often grouped together under the term of 'monotheistic' or belief in a single God.

It is not a book which concerns itself with the teaching of any one of those individual belief system, but rather a book that transcends religious and denominational differences to concentrate upon the attributes of the God in which all three of those religions believe.

It is a book about the scientific evidence for God, and for the scientific evidence for the attributes of God, rather than a book about any specific religion.

Nothing in this book proves there is a God, or

that there is not a God, but its main premise is that God and science are not incompatible. On the contrary, cutting-edge science has reached the stage where it now provides an understanding about God which could only be guessed at previously. God and science are now complementary rather than contradictory.

Each chapter of the book outlines the science that supports one of God's attributes, and this is followed by a chapter about the philosophical consequences of those attributes and conclusions.

Not everyone will agree with the science, because much of it is new and not yet commonly accepted. I expect even fewer will agree with my philosophical conclusions, which are sometimes at odds with the world's major religions, and which may require a paradigm shift or change of perspective.

An Ever Present God

The Jewish, Christian and Islamic scriptures all proclaim that God is everywhere. Judaism declares God fills heaven and earth, Christianity declares that in him we live and move, and Islam declares he is with you wherever you may be.

Before we progress to the science, it is worth examining exactly what we mean by an ever-present God, and where we need to look in order to find the scientific proof of his existence.

The scripture says that God fills heaven and earth, that we live in him, and that he is always present. These are staggering statements with staggering implications.

If we could enter the dark matter, which scientists say fills about 85% of the universe, we should find God there; and if we could enter the unknown depths of a black hole, we should find God there too. Flying to the furthest part of the universe, we should find God there; and if we could go back to the first moment of time or forward to the end of time, we should find God there too. If we could enter the space between the molecules of every atom, we should find God there; and if we could enter the very centre of each molecule, we should also find God there. If we could enter the heart of the holiest person who has ever lived, we should find God there;

and if we could enter the heart of the most evil person who has ever lived, we should find God there too.

To say that God is everywhere means exactly that. He is 'everywhere'. No exclusions. No exceptions. An ever-present God is 'ever present'.

There is a tension within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam when considering the omnipresent God. Each of those religions stands firmly against pantheism, the belief that God and the universe are identical. Orthodoxy firmly declares that the physical world is a creation of God, not God himself.

The difference is subtle, and it is important not to throw the baby out with the bathwater.

God is not the universe. He is far more than that. But God who is everywhere is within every atom and every fundamental particle from which the universe is formed. He is not somehow separate from his creation. If that were the case, God would surround the universe but not be within it. There is always difficulty when we try to describe an indescribable God, but God is separate from the universe he created, yet present in every part of it.

To say he is present in every part of the universe means exactly what it says. He is 'everywhere'. No exclusions. No exceptions. An ever-present God is 'ever present'.

Let's now examine the science.

A Living God

All the major religions of the world believe in a living God. They don't believe in man-made idols of brick, or stone, or steel, or wood. They don't put their faith in wealth, or fate, or luck, or the stars, or political parties or celebrities. Brick, stone, steel, or wood may all have their uses, but they are not God, and they are not worthy of our devotion and worship.

The God worshipped by the world's major religions is a **living God**, described as such in the scriptures of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

If we are religious, we may have proclaimed that God is alive so often that the phrase slips off our tongue with little conscious thought, but the more we actually think about God as a living God, the more we realise how remarkable our God really is.

If we can say with confidence that God is alive, then we ought to be able to say with confidence what 'life' is, but finding an acceptable definition of life has proven to be difficult from a scientific perspective.

You are alive. You know it. But defining life is difficult. In most cases, we intuitively know whether something is alive, but there are many things on the margin of life which defy such easy categorisation.

There were lots of news items during the recent pandemic about how to kill the Covid virus by washing our hands or using antiviral hand gel. That

advice was excellent from a public health point of view, but it implied viruses are alive, and that is not a given.

Scientists who have spent a lifetime studying viruses have argued for years about whether viruses are alive or not, and they are split about fifty-fifty. It's not a new argument, and has been going on for over a hundred years among virologists, with no sign of either side backing down anytime soon.

To understand the problem, you first have to understand that what we call a virus has two distinct stages.

In its first stage, when it enters our bodies on a droplet of moisture in the air, it is a piece of inert nucleic acid surrounded and protected by a hard protein shell. It is not capable of self-reproduction, and it can remain dormant within the body for a considerable time, apparently doing us no harm whatsoever.

It is only when it eventually comes into contact with a cell that it takes on its second stage.

One of two things will happen. Either the shell of the virus and the membrane of the cell join together, allowing the viral nucleic acid to enter the cell; or the whole shell will be surrounded by the cell membrane, causing the shell of the virus to split, and allowing the viral nucleic acid to escape into the cell.

Either way, once the viral nucleic acid is within the cell, the viral nucleic acid takes over the cell's duplication machinery, causing the cell to reproduce thousands of copies of that viral genetic material. This floods the cell with foreign nucleic acid it would not otherwise contain, eventually killing the cell or at the very least preventing the cell from undertaking its primary function.

It is these two different stages that cause the ambiguity over whether a virus is alive or dead.

One of the most widely used definitions of life is the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) working definition, often attributed to Professor Gerald Joyce, that '*Life is a self-sustained chemical system capable of undergoing Darwinian evolution*'.

Taking the above definition at face value presents a challenge to virologists who intuitively believe viruses are alive. Viruses certainly evolve from one stage to another, but can they be described as self-sustaining if they have no reproductive capacity of their own? A virus on its own is completely incapable of reproduction. It has no reproductive mechanism of its own, and it depends upon being able to take over the reproductive mechanism of a third-party.

It is surprising the NASA definition has become so widely used, as it was never intended to be used outside of NASA, and the definition was never actually written in any of the NASA documents. Joyce himself has told me the definition was never meant to be definitive, only a starting point for further discussions.

The NASA definition may be the one which has captured the imagination of the public, but there are literally hundreds of different definitions of '*life*' within scientific papers, each with its own consequences for what is included or excluded in a list of living things.

Having examined the subject in some depth, my own preferred definition is that '*life is a self-sustained chemical system capable of undergoing evolution*'.

I first proposed this definition in my book '*A Brief History of Life*', where I used it to examine many things on the periphery of life, both at the smallest

and largest of scales.

At the smallest scale, whilst it may be easy for us to define our own cells as living, things get more complicated when deciding if the content of our cells are alive, and at an even smaller level, we have difficulty assessing whether the fundamental particles from which all our cells are created, are themselves living or non-living.

The problem also reasserts itself at the largest possible scale, with some definitions of life implying our own planet is a living thing, or even that the entire universe is alive.

At the largest and smallest scales, almost all the different definitions of life fail to include something which we intuitively know to be alive, or conversely include something which our intuition tells us is not alive. I have concluded my definition that '*life is a self-sustained chemical system capable of undergoing evolution*' is the only one, of the many hundreds of definitions of life, which is up to the task of correctly categorising all living and non-living things. I tested that definition against many things in my previous book.

If something is capable of evolving, and if it is self-sustaining, then I believe it is unquestionably alive. If something is not capable of evolving, or is not capable of self-sustaining itself, then I believe it is unquestionably not living.

The computer I am typing these words on has many of the attributes I have. It has a keyboard that can respond to touch; it has a camera that can respond to light; it has a speaker and screen that can convey information, and it has a memory to remember things. It is not living because it is not self-sustaining and it is not capable of evolution. That it is not self-sustaining is self-evident. It is incapable of

collecting all the components required to create a copy of itself.

The definition stands up when we examine everything we intuitively know to be living or not living, and because it works at that level I have no hesitation in trusting the definition to work at non-intuitive levels including the largest level of all, the level of the whole universe.

Physicists theorised about black holes for years before the Event Horizon telescope finally photographed one for the first time in 2019, but theoretical physicists are already thinking about the reverse of a black hole; something they call a white hole.

Professor Carlo Rovelli, one of the founders of loop quantum gravity theory, believes all the content entering a black hole is increasingly compressed until a threshold is reached where it cannot be compressed any further. As things can only travel one way within a black hole, once that threshold has been reached, he believes everything bounces past the central point and bursts out as a white hole at the end of the black hole's life. He speculates that what we think of as the Big Bang at the creation of our universe was actually the previous content of a black hole in a different universe, bursting out of a white hole.

He is not alone in theorising that our universe may have had a previous existence.

Nobel Prize-winning professor of mathematics, Sir Roger Penrose, has used mathematical conformal rescaling techniques to show how the end of one universe may lead to a new Big Bang in which a new universe is created. In what he calls Conformal Cyclic Cosmology, he calculated new universes emerge from the black holes of old universes.

Professor Lee Smolin goes even further in his theory of Cosmological Natural Selection. He suggests universes have evolved over many generations to create a greater number of black holes, which in turn have a greater chance of bouncing out as new universes on the far side of their event horizon.

Physics dictates that information can never be lost, but our previous understanding of black holes resulted in an information paradox in which a singularity within black holes resulted in space-time, and information, ceasing to exist. A more recent understanding of white holes solves that paradox by allowing us to assume space-time, and information, does not cease to exist within a black hole, but continues to exist as it passes through the event horizon and bounces out of a white hole to create a new universe.

Recent theories not only solve the information paradox, but also have implications when we consider the universe in the light of our definition that *'life is a self-sustained chemical system capable of undergoing evolution'*.

If the new theories are correct, the universe is not something that simply arrived out of nowhere. It is a self-sustained chemical system that evolved through a black hole and white hole to become a brand-new universe. Using the best and most tested definition of life that we have, such a universe would be alive.

It is important for me to clarify what I am saying here. I am not saying the universe is God, and I am not saying we should worship the sun, the moon, or any part, or even the whole of the universe.

What I am saying is, if we believe in a living God, and if we believe in a God who is everywhere, then

there should be nowhere where our living God cannot be found.

We should be able to find evidence of life, and evidence of a living God, within every single inch of our enormous universe, and within every minute fundamental particle within that universe. That's what believing in a God who is everywhere really means, and that is exactly what the latest scientific theories allow us to believe. Modern scientific theory declares that the whole universe is alive. To put it another way, science declares that there is life throughout the whole universe.

Our God is a living God, and this fundamental tenet of faith, supported by science, is the foundation stone upon which all the other attributes of God are built. A living God, whose life is infused into the very fabric of the universe, is a God who is always present throughout the whole of space-time; conscious of everything that has, and is, and will, ever occur; and a more powerful God than we could ever imagine.

He is the '*living God*' of the Jews (Jeremiah 10:10), the '*living God*' of the Christians (Hebrews 3:12), and the '*Ever Living*' God of Muslims (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:255).

An Eternal God

The God worshipped by all the mainstream religions is described as a living God, but living is usually thought of as time-limited. Every living thing we come into contact with has a limited lifespan.

The major religions believe in a living God, but don't think of God as being time-limited. They think of God as eternal, as always having existed, and as having no beginning and no end.

In Judaism, in Christianity, and in Islam, God is described as **eternal** and **everlasting**.

The major religions believe in an eternal God, a God who existed before time began, a God who has lived through all time, and a God who will live beyond time.

In his book *'The Biggest Ideas in the Universe: Space, Time and Motion'*, theoretical physicist Professor Sean Carroll states, *'Everything interesting about the universe owes its existence to the passage of time'*. But what is time?

Einstein's theory of relativity combines time into a four-dimensional framework he called spacetime, so as we move through the three dimensions of space, we also move through the fourth dimension of time. It would be difficult to live if this were not so. In this physical world in which we live, given money and resources, we could all go to the North Pole and stand at the same location and take up the same

space, but we could not all do so at the same time. Nobody has ever been at the location where I now find myself in time and space. That's what makes us unique. We all have a unique view of the world, which differs from everyone else's view because nobody has, or will ever have, occupied the same points in spacetime that we have occupied.

There is an anomaly though. Whilst we can move through the three dimensions of space in any direction, we can only move through the dimension of time in a forward direction.

This is surprising. All the mathematical equations covering the fundamental laws of physics work both forwards and backwards, and in mathematical terms it looks as though it should be possible for time to move forwards or backwards too, even though real-life experience shows us we can't. Why is this? Why does time only move in one direction?

More to the point. When we consider God, we consider a God who is eternally the same. A God who is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Why do we humans change through time, whilst God remains changeless, and what is time, that it affects us in one way but does not affect God in the same way?

The usual scientific explanation for why time appears to only move forwards is that the movement of time is aligned with entropy, which increases in accordance with the Second Law of Thermodynamics that the entropy of a closed system (such as the universe) will always increase.

It is assumed that the closed system of our universe began in a highly ordered (low entropy) state at the Big Bang, and has moved continually ever since towards a disordered (high entropy) state. There

appears to be a correlation between the universe's one directional movement from low entropy to high entropy and the one directional movement of time.

Although this is a widely accepted explanation of why time only moves in a single direction, the correlation between a constantly changing time and a constantly changing entropy is not proof of causation.

I leave my house and walk to a bus stop at 09:30 every morning, and a bus arrives soon after my arrival. There is a strong correlation between my arrival at the bus stop and the arrival of the bus, but the bus does not cause my arrival at the bus stop, and my arrival at the bus stop does not cause the arrival of the bus.

There is another problem with the link between time and entropy too.

The Second Law of Thermodynamics states that entropy always increases in a closed system, but it can be argued that the universe is not a closed system, and it can be argued entropy is not always increasing.

If the more recent ideas about the universe are correct, high entropy matter is compressed as it enters a black hole, before bouncing out of a white hole in a low entropy state to create a new universe in which the matter expands from that low entropy state and into a high entropy state, before the high entropy matter is again drawn into a black hole and the whole process is repeated. If that scenario is correct, there is no closed system, and there is a constantly fluctuating entropy.

So far, we have looked at the classical physics theory for why time only moves in one direction, but there is a quantum physics theory too, and this solves the entropy paradox in a similar way in which the

white hole theory solved the information paradox.

Quantum physics moves us from the realm of certainties and into a realm of probabilities in which fundamental particles no longer have a fixed position, but are described as a wavefunction with a cloud of possibilities. A fundamental particle may be anywhere, or everywhere, within that cloud of possible locations, and it is only when something happens, such as when we observe or measure it, that this cloud of possibilities collapses into a single reality.

In his General Theory of Relativity, Einstein theorised that objects with mass would create a curvature in spacetime experienced as gravity. The greater the mass, the greater the gravity, and the greater the curvature. When we consider his theory, we usually think about spacetime being curved by planets, moons, or even whole solar systems, all of which have a large mass.

Sir Roger Penrose realised that what was true on a large scale was also true on a small scale, and that even the smallest of particles with mass will have an effect upon spacetime. In keeping with their size, the effect a particle has on spacetime will be minute, but that does not mean the resulting minute bending of spacetime is insignificant.

What makes a wavefunction collapse has been one of the enduring mysteries of physics, but Penrose suggested the minute bending of spacetime may provide the answer.

When a fundamental particle with mass is in a superposition of different states, each state creates a minute curvature in spacetime requiring energy to sustain it. Penrose calculated the energy would gradually decrease over time until it eventually led to

the spontaneous collapse of the wavefunction and a reduction of the particle from a superposition of states to a single state.

What does this have to do with time?

In his Objective Reduction Theory, Penrose calculated that each objective reduction would create an irreversible moment in time, with repeated superpositions and reductions creating a series of oscillating irreversible moments in which time continuously moved forwards.

What does this have to do with God?

If our living God is everywhere, then God is in every fundamental particle within the universe. To believe otherwise would be like saying God is in all the space between particles, but not within the fundamental particles themselves, or like saying God is everywhere that doesn't matter, but nowhere that does matter.

And if God is in every fundamental particle, this includes being in every fundamental particle with mass which repeatedly changes from a superposition of states to a fixed state and back again to create the series of oscillating moments we perceive as time.

Building upon our belief that our living God fills the space within our universe, we can also say that God exists prior to, during, and after every moment of time. Our God is everywhere in space, everywhere in time, and everywhere in spacetime. God is always present, through time and eternity.

To the Jews, God is '**from everlasting to everlasting**' (Psalm 90:2) to Christians, God is '**eternal**' (1 Timothy 1:17) and to Muslims, God is the '**First and the Last**' (Qur'an 57:3).

All these beliefs are fully consistent with the current scientific understanding about our universe,

about the fundamental particles that fill it, and about time.

A Conscious God

The world's major religions not only believe in a living and eternal God who fills time and space, but they also believe in a **conscious** God – one who is described as being consciously loving and compassionate in Judaism, Christianity, and in Islam.

If '*life*' has proved difficult for scientists to define, '*consciousness*' has proved even more difficult, but in my book '*A Brief History of Consciousness*' I suggested the following consciousness definition:

Consciousness is what makes 'me' unique from all the other living things in the world. It is the sum of everything I can remember and can call to mind, everything I am currently experiencing and thinking about, and all the things that make me feel what it feels like to be me.

We all know we are conscious, but I want you to take time out for a moment to consider where in your body your consciousness is located.

In 1998, neuroscientist Christof Koch bet the philosopher David Chalmers that there would be a clear explanation of how the brain creates consciousness within twenty-five years.

Koch seemed to be on a sure thing. It seemed obvious to him, and to most other researchers, that he would easily win the bet. There were already several ways of scanning the brain, and new methods were being invented all the time. The only thing

required would be to scan the brain of someone unconscious or asleep, scan the brain again when they regained consciousness or woke up, and the difference between the two scans would indicate the part of the brain responsible for consciousness.

Sounds simple in theory, but the reality proved to be extremely difficult and in 2023 Kock conceded defeat. Despite the many thousands of brain scans taken during the twenty-five years between 1998 and 2023, no indisputable proof has ever been found that consciousness is created within the brain.

Sir Roger Penrose had already proposed his Objective Reduction (OR) Theory to solve the problem of time as outlined in the previous chapter. This led him to propose consciousness may also be created by the same process. He suggested the objective reduction of the wavefunction not only created an irreversible moment in time but also created a moment of proto-consciousness. He wondered if there were not some similar processes occurring within the brain at a quantum level which were responsible for our consciousness.

Penrose's suggestions were read by Professor Stuart Hameroff, who had been researching the connection between anaesthesia and microtubules in the brain.

Until then, all the mainstream searches for consciousness had been done at a cellular, or neural, level, with electrical and chemical messages passing from one neuron in the brain to another in binary fashion, either on or off. Hameroff suggested microtubules had the type of structure required to allow the passage of non-binary quantum information.

Microtubules are tiny hollow tubes made of

protein, running through every cell. They are like scaffolding poles and railway lines rolled into one, and in most cells they are temporary structures. However, in brain cells they are a permanent structure, and in a neuron they keep the long, thin structure of the cell from collapsing, and also provide tracks along which molecules of the cell can be shuttled.

Their design is unusual, with each microtubule being built from thousands of protein units called tubulins, arranged in mosaic-like repeating patterns, and with each unit of tubulin able to subtly change into several possible shapes resulting in millions of different permutations much like what you would see in a kaleidoscope but far more complicated.

It's worth examining these numbers more thoroughly. Instead of thinking in terms of a brain cell being like a standard binary computer chip (even an AI chip) which produces the two different states of 'on' or 'off', Hameroff was thinking in terms of a brain cell having 10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 (10^{22}) different states, making it more powerful than the most powerful quantum computer.

Hameroff believed that the millions of different permutations of tubulins within microtubules, and the interconnectivity and interaction between them, may produce the type of quantum processes in the brain described by Penrose's Objective Reduction Theory.

Working together, Penrose and Hameroff proposed their Orch OR theory, in which different tubulin arrangements within the brain orchestrate (Orch) the conditions for objective reduction (OR) to occur, thus giving rise not only to a moment of time but also to a moment of consciousness.

Despite some initial scepticism that quantum processes could occur within the brain, subsequent research has not only shown a link between the vibration of microtubules and EEG rhythms, but also shown that anaesthetics work by inhibiting those same microtubule oscillations.

If this theory is correct, the same processes occurring within our brain responsible for our own consciousness are the same processes that are occurring throughout the universe wherever time is being created.

Indeed, there are scientists who believe our own consciousness is part of a single consciousness that pervades the entire universe, and that whilst we remain confined to our physical bodies we are conscious only of our own consciousness, but when death releases us from that confinement we become aware of the whole universal consciousness we have always been an unknowing part of.

Returning to our definition of consciousness, that *consciousness is what makes 'me' unique from all the other living things in the world. It is the sum of everything I can remember and can call to mind, everything I am currently experiencing and thinking about, and all the things that make me feel what it feels like to be me.*

We can now say that God's consciousness is what makes God unique from all the other living things in the world. It is the sum of everything God can remember and call to mind, and the sum of everything God is currently experiencing and thinking about, and all the things that make God feel what it feels like to be God.

Our living God, who is everywhere in space, everywhere in time, and everywhere in spacetime, displays all the attributes of a conscious, all-knowing

God.

To the Jews, God is a conscious God who is capable of love and kindness (Jeremiah 31:3) and has a memory (Deuteronomy 4:31) to Christians, God is a loving God (1 John 4:8) and compassionate (Matthew 9:36), and to Muslims, God is a merciful God (Qur'an 7:156) and compassionate (Qur'an 1:1).

All these beliefs are fully consistent with the current scientific understanding about our universe, about the fundamental particles that fill it, about time, and about consciousness.

A Powerful God

The Universe is a universe of power, bound by mathematical and physical rules, some of which we know, and some of which we may never know.

God's power is also limited, but only by the nature of God himself. God, for example, cannot sin, and cannot lie. But within the nature of God, **there is no limit to God's power.**

Jews believe nothing is too hard for God, Christians believe all things are possible for God, and Muslims believe God is capable of everything.

If God fills all of space, all of time, and all of spacetime, then God is in touch with every single fundamental particle in existence, and God's power is the awesome power of nature.

In 2002, the Indian Ocean earthquake had a magnitude of over 9 on the Richter scale. The resulting tsunami was one of the deadliest natural disasters in recorded history and caused the deaths of over 230,000 people.

In 2013, one of the strongest cyclones ever recorded had wind speeds of over 190 mph, resulting in entire towns being flattened and thousands of people dying in the Philippines, in Vietnam, and in China.

In 2019-20, Australian bushfires resulted in the death of over 3 billion animals.

If we accept that God fills all of spacetime, then God was in touch with every fundamental particle which caused all the above displays of natural power, a power which can be just as creative as it is destructive.

It was the gases from ancient volcanoes that first changed the toxic atmosphere of Earth into an atmosphere capable of supporting life, and it was the lava from those volcanoes that provided the rich earth necessary for today's farmers.

Such powerful events on Earth pale into insignificance compared to the power displayed within the universe as a whole, but if we believe in a God who is everywhere, we believe in a God who is present in each display of the universe's power.

A single supernova releases more energy in seconds than our Sun will produce in its 10 billion or so years of life. Magnetars, a special type of neutron star, can release more energy in a split second than our Sun gives out in 10,000 years. Supermassive black holes at the centre of galaxies can release jets of energy which span millions of light years.

If God is everywhere in spacetime, then God is within each of those powerful events. Make no mistake. Our God is a God of power, and the power of the universe is God's power.

To the Jews, God's works are perfect (Deuteronomy 32:4) and nothing is too hard for him (Jeremiah 32:17), to Christians, all things are possible for God (Matthew 19:26) and nothing will be impossible (Luke 1:37), to Muslims, God is Capable of everything (Qur'an 2:106) and can do whatever he wills (Qur'an 85:16).

A God Worthy of Worship

I believe science supports the belief in a living and conscious God.

I believe in a God who fills the whole universe.

I believe in a God who exists prior to, during, and after every moment of time.

I believe in a God who is everywhere in space, everywhere in time, and everywhere in spacetime.

I believe in a loving and compassionate God who is conscious of everything that has, and is, and will ever occur.

I believe in a God who is more powerful than we could ever imagine.

In short, I believe in a God who is completely worthy of our worship, adoration, and devotion

If God fills the whole of spacetime, then there can be no space or time for any other god. My beliefs are conventional in that I am a follower of the one eternal God of Judaism, the one eternal God of Christianity, and the one eternal God of Islam. They are all the same, spacetime-filling, eternal God.

However, my beliefs are unconventional inasmuch as I do not believe any of those individual religions are superior to any other.

Different people and prophets have become aware

of God, and have been in touch with his consciousness, at different times throughout history, and all of them have had differing insights into the nature and will of a God who is far beyond our human comprehension.

Jews emphasise they are a chosen race and a chosen people, Christians emphasise the love and compassion of God, and Muslims emphasise our need to completely submit and be obedient to God's will.

In their own ways, they are all correct. All people are God's chosen people. God is a God of compassion and love, and God is worthy of our complete submission and obedience.

The difficulty for us all, is that our brains are just too small to understand the enormous depth and breadth of God's will. A lifetime of study, or the deepest of religious experiences, or the deepest devotion, are all virtuous aims which can only benefit us. However, at the end of the day, whatever the depth of our studies, and whatever the depth of our religious experiences, and however submissive our devotion, all we can do is to humbly worship the awesome God in which we believe, and hope that in some small way our lives are worthy of him, and have been pleasing to him.

A Philosophy of God

In previous chapters of this book I have limited myself to the science of God, and the comparison between current scientific knowledge and the ancient scripture of the three monotheistic Abrahamic religions. So far, most of what I have written has been uncontroversial, or at least relatively uncontroversial.

This current chapter moves from science to philosophy. It is a more personal part of the book and not everyone will agree with the philosophical conclusions I have arrived at.

My philosophy is sometimes at odds with the major religions, or sometimes requires a paradigm shift or a different perspective to that usually accepted by them, but I believe the science leads us inexorably to these philosophical conclusions.

There are vast philosophical consequences of believing in a living God who completely fills our universe. A God who not only fills the space between every fundamental particle but who is also present within every individual fundamental particle. We worship a God who is not only in the space between things but who is also within the substance of everything we can touch, or feel, or see.

If God is everywhere, then God is within every part of this world and we need to look after it,

cherish it, and ensure it is nourished rather than destroyed.

If God is everywhere, then God is within every living person and we need to respect them, cherish them, and do everything within our power to ensure everyone reaches their full potential.

God has the power to control every fundamental particle from which we are made, and he could easily force us to become obedient to his will, but one of the greatest gift he has ever given to us is the gift of free will. He has given us the ability to chose whether or not to live fulfilling, caring, loving, and compassionate lives, and he has trusted us to make the right choices.

That, to me, implies prayers of intercession are pointless because God does not intervene. He does not force his will on my life, and he does not force his will on anyone else's life. Free will is exactly that. The freedom to choose. God's intervention would entail taking back the gift, and over-riding the gift of free will that he has given to each one of us.

I believe no amount of devotion to God, and no amount of fervent pleading, will cause him to override the free will gift he has given to us.

If God answered prayer, do you not think he would have answered the prayers of the devout Jews massacred by members of the Nazi Party in the ovens of the second world war concentration camps?

If God answered prayer, do you not think he would have answered the prayers of the devout Armenian, Assyrian, and Greek Christians who were massacred by members of the Ottoman Empire in the early years of the Twentieth Century?

If God answers prayer, do you not think he would have answered the prayers of the devout Muslims

who were massacred in Srebrenica during the Bosnia War in the late 1900s, or the Rohingya Muslims massacred in Myanmar, or the Uyghur Muslims massacred in China in the early 2000s?

The unpalatable truth, is that answering intercessory prayers involves over-riding the free will of those responsible for those massacres, and that is something God did not do, and does not do.

One of the reasons why God does not over-ride the free will of evil people is that God, who is everywhere, is within each one of us.

One of the most often misquoted verses of the Christian New Testament is that *'the sun shines on the righteous'*. The actual verse of scripture states that God *'causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and makes the rain fall on the righteous and the unrighteous'*.

God does not cause the sun to shine only on good people, and the rain to fall only on evil people. The sun shines on everyone, good and bad. The rain falls on everyone, good and bad. God does not over-ride nature, and he does not force evil people to do good. The God who is everywhere, is within every person, and he has given every person the ability to know him. God has given every person the free will to do good, but he does not enforce compliance. Free will is free will, and God has given us all complete unfettered freedom to do his will, or not to do his will.

If God is everywhere, then God is within each one of us, and that includes being within the very worst of us. God was within Hitler, wanting him to be kind, loving and compassionate, but allowing him the free will to pursue his own path. God did not intervene despite the prayers of others begging him to do so, and it was left to the free will of others to

eventually overpower the free will of Hitler.

God's free will allows us to see the good and evil in other people. That same free will gives us the ability to nurture the good and discourage the evil, both within ourselves, and within everyone else we come into contact with.

Free will is more powerful than prayer. It gives us endless opportunities to nurture goodness, love, and compassion within ourselves and within those we come into contact with day by day and are responsible for. It gives us the opportunity to stop evil in its tracks by nipping it in the bud before it has a chance to grow. Free will is one of the greatest gifts God has ever given to us. We have the free will to change ourselves for the better, to persuade others to change for the better, and to change the world in which we live.

Having stated my belief that God does not intervene, it's worth mentioning an exception. God has given us free will and will not forcibly change our own behaviour or forcibly change the behaviour of others, but God is far from passive.

Throughout the ages, during prayers to God and moments of enlightenment, there have been occasions when both Jews, Muslims, and Christians, have become acutely aware of his presence.

God may not answer specific requests that involve him changing others, but God does answer specific requests if they involve changing ourselves.

God can, and in the past he frequently has, provided us with an assurance of his presence. Moments of worship in which we become acutely aware of his majesty, power, knowledge, and unity. Moments of prayer and adoration in which we feel 'at one with' or 'in tune with' the universal

consciousness of God.

Becoming aware of just how close God is to us helps put our lives into their true perspectives. It impels us to care for God's world, encourages us to care for God's creation, and urges us to love one another.

Each one of us, irrespective of colour, creed, sexual orientation, race, or wealth, or education, are related to God and able to experience God.

In Judaism, this is often described as an ascent to God's presence, sometimes associated with an experience of overwhelming joy or a burning love for God. In Christianity, it is often described as a baptism of the Holy Spirit, in which someone feels both surrounded and filled by the love of God. In Islam, it may be described as an awareness of God's nearness, and a sense of being enveloped by divine love.

However it is described, there is little doubt that religious experiences change lives. God may not directly intervene and force us to live one way or another, but he can, and does, provide fleeting glimpses of how close his consciousness is to our own consciousness. There are times in which we feel able to reach out and touch God, and such a personal overwhelming experience of God's closeness is often accompanied by a deep sense of love, joy, and peace.

That type of religious experience is life affirming and life changing. An awareness of just how close we are to God, makes us aware of just how close every other person is to God also. It changes our perspective of God,. It changes our perspective of everyone else. It provides a life changing impetus for how God wants us to live our lives.

Recognition of the closeness of a God who is

everywhere is recognition that all men are my brothers, all women are my sisters, and every one of us is an equally valued child of God.

Believing in a God who is everywhere, and who fills the whole of space, the whole of time, and the whole of spacetime, is belief in a God from whom nothing can separate us. Nothing in life, and nothing in death, can separate us from a God who is everywhere.

Our fundamental particles are indestructible, and God not only has a consciousness of his own, but he is in every one of those fundamental particles which make up our own consciousness.

Death undoubtedly results in the decay of our physical bodies, but the fundamental particles from which our bodies and consciousness are made are indestructible.

We may lay our bodies down, but at the end of our mortal life I believe our own consciousness becomes aware that it is, and always has been, part of God's continuous universal consciousness.

At that moment of death, I believe we become fully aware of God, fully aware of God's consciousness, and fully united with God.

This joining of our consciousness to God's consciousness has philosophical consequences regarding heaven or hell.

If God is everywhere, and if there is no physical place where God is absent, then there can be no physical Hell. The concept of Heaven or Hell become spiritual concepts rather than physical ones. However devout we are in our physical lives, we can only ever know a minute fraction of the knowledge God has. God has seen everything, knows everything, and is aware of everything.

When our physical bodies have died, and when our consciousness becomes aware of the single universal consciousness of God, only then do we become fully aware of the context in which we have lived our physical lives. Judgement is mine, says God. What a terrible eternal judgement that will be if, linked to God's consciousness and fully aware of all the knowledge God has about us, we find our thoughts and actions to have predominantly been outside of his intended will. But what a blessing, to spend eternity with the knowledge that our thoughts and behaviour have predominantly been in line with the intentions God always had for us.

That, to me, is heaven and hell. Not a physical place, but a sharing in the consciousness of God, and a sharing of the knowledge of God, to the extent that we become aware whether or not we have predominantly lived up to his expectations.

There is a further philosophical consequence in relation to the death of children. I have met many parents of dead children who imagine their child playing in heaven, but the reality is different.

When they are alive, the real joy of children is their potential, and the anticipation of the mature adult they will develop into. None of us want our children to remain children. We all want then to grow into their adult potential.

When we die, at whatever age, and however young or old, the knowledge we possess is only a minute portion of the knowledge God is aware of, but at the moment of death, we all reach our full potential as we are united in his presence. Death does not leave us perpetually at whatever age we die. The infant does not remain an infant, the blind do not remain blind, the crippled do not remain crippled. Whatever

our physical state, death brings instant relief and full maturity within the presence of God.

I started this short book by saying that it was not Jewish book, or Christian book, or Islamic book; but worshipping God who is everywhere has philosophical implications for each of the world's major religions. Each of those religions has its strengths. There is the Jewish strength which comes from the belief that they are a chosen people, the Christian strength which comes from the knowledge that God is within them, the Muslim strength which comes from the knowledge they are completely submissive to God's will.

All these strengths display something of the nature of God. But there is a danger there too, a danger that has been all too evident in the wars fought among ourselves.

For the Jews, there is the danger of assuming that God's chosen people are superior to all other people whom God has also chosen. For the Christians, there is the danger of assuming only followers of Christ have that spark of God within them. For the Muslims, there is the danger of assuming only they are capable of full submission to God's will.

If this book has done anything, my hope is that, whatever your religion, you will have acquired a greater sense of God's presence. He is so close that you don't even have to seek him out or reach out to touch him. He is already there, all around you and within you.

He is within every cell of your body, every thought in your mind, every emotion in your heart. God is everywhere. Within you. Within others. Within the world in which we live. Everywhere means just that. Everywhere.

Conclusion.

History has taught us that many of the most important scientific theories remained unproven for many years before finding universal acceptance. Einstein's 1905 theory that $E=MC^2$ was not proven until the early 1930s. Black holes were theorised about in the late 1700s, but the first confirmed image of a black hole was not taken until 2019. The 'Big Bang' theory was first spoken about in the late 1920s, but the cosmic microwave background proof was not discovered until the 1960s.

The science in the earlier part of this book is cutting edge, not universally accepted, and unproven, much like belief in God himself. If you don't believe in God, then the unproven scientific theories will not have changed your mind. However, if you do believe in God, or if you are undecided and sitting on the fence, the various theories provide a scientific rational and a scientific foundation for your faith.

God is there in every heartbeat, and there when heartbeats end. God is there in every breath I take, and will be there when I breath no more.

When I am gone think only this of me, My body died to set me free. Unshackled from the ties of earth, just as I was from mother's birth. Just as the stars fill all the sky, I won't be far but nearby. (c)

Richard Underwood

Epilogue

If you have found this book interesting and informative, please provide a link on your social media to wherever you obtained it so that others may be similarly blessed.

If you are a social media influencer, reporter, broadcaster, minister of any religion or politician, please use your influence and power to spread this scientific message of good news.

I would welcome any feedback, and this can be made directly to me via email, details of which can be found on my own website at

<https://richard-underwood.com>

Post Script

I write this postscript because, like everyone else, my parentage and culture also determined my own beliefs about God and religion. I therefore feel it important to provide some details as to how I came to write this book, my own culture and background, and my own preconceived ideas about God, and how these have changed in the light of my experience and knowledge.

I grew up within a nominally Christian household, within a nominally Christian culture, and within a nominally Christian country.

The word ‘nominally’ is important in the above paragraph. My parents described themselves as Christians, but were not regular church goers. My school always insisted on starting the day with an assembly of songs and prayers, and with ‘religious instruction’ as a compulsory lesson, but the teacher in my religious instruction class always claimed there was no such thing as a miracle. The real emphasis in school was upon science, the inference being that Christian worship was merely cultural. A throwback to earlier times when people knew no better. United acts of worship were used as a type of cultural glue to unite people under a Christian umbrella where everyone gave lip service to a God nobody really believed in.

Science provided truth whilst religion provided cultural identity. The bible teaching that God created the world in six days was widely accepted alongside the scientific teaching about evolution, without any sense of incongruity. They were two completely different and unrelated paradigms, and there was never any need to confuse matters by comparing one with the other.

The cultural nature of British Christianity at that time can best be illustrated by the almost universal use of the King James, or Authorised, version of the bible. First published in 1611, and with a standard text published in 1769, it was written in a style of English which was common three or four-hundred years ago, but which nobody contemporaneously used other than when they read the bible.

Despite this unlikely background, the reading of a 'New English Bible' New Testament soon after it was first published in the 1960s completely changed my understanding of Christianity. Reading the bible in contemporary English for the first time, it spoke to me in a way in which the old King James Bible never could. Jesus, was no longer speaking in ancient English. He was speaking to me as clearly as my next door neighbour, and in the same language.

A few years after reading this modern translation, I became an ordained Christian minister, a calling which I was to follow for the next twenty years, both as an ordained minister within the Salvation Army, and as an industrial chaplain and superintendent in the Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen.

One of my prime functions as a minister of religion involved prayer. Every dedication of an infant, every wedding, and every funeral involved me praying for those involved. Every time I visited

someone in their home, I prayed for that person and their family. Every Sunday service, I prayed for members of my congregation. Every hospital visit, prison visit, residential home visit, pensioner's meetings, Sunday school meeting, and every other type of meeting involved praying for people.

Eventually, though, after almost twenty-years, a crisis of faith led me to doubt that God answers prayers.

I know many people reading this will disagree with me. Prayer, they will say, is effective. Miracles happen, and God intervenes. That may be true, but once the doubts occurred, and once I stopped believing in prayer, then my ministry became a sham. I went through the motions for a while. I said all the right words. I offered the comfort people expected me to offer, but my heart wasn't in it.

I still believe prayer has a beneficial effect. That's indisputable. If people have a belief in a God who intervenes, they feel blessed when someone prays for them. Prayer makes people feel better, and that is no bad thing in itself. Prayer in those circumstances can be positive and beneficial. I still say 'God bless you' to people in need, and I know they feel comfort from the words. In that sense, prayer certainly helps.

Prayer is also beneficial from a psychotherapy point of view. It always helps if you can speak to someone about your problems, and converting your jumbled-up thoughts into words is often enough to enable you to see a way forward that may not have been obvious previously. In that sense, speaking to God can often be as helpful as speaking to a non-judgemental psychotherapist.

However, the fact recipients of prayers feel better is not the same as saying miracles happen or that

God intervenes. I have read all the evidence to support miracles in Christian books and magazines, but statistically they don't stack up. Not for me at any rate. Towards the end of my ministry I'd been taking a lot of funerals, sometimes two a day, sometimes three, and sometimes of children. Prior to their deaths, I had prayed for almost all the people whose funerals I was conducting.

I became particularly concerned about prayers for children. I know there are instances where children are prayed for and seem to miraculously survive some calamity or other, but I also know these are within the statistical norms of those who are expected to survive. Christians rarely write books about the millions of children who die every year after being prayed for. They only write about those who survive.

If God answers prayers, then surely he would answer the prayers of Christian parents. Surely he would answer prayers for children. If not innocent children, then who? If not children, then maybe no one.

Once I had crossed the Rubicon of prayer, it changed my approach to God, and to my ministry. I still believed in the possibility of a God who is eternal, almighty, all-knowing, and worthy of adoration and worship, but I no longer believed in a God who answers personal prayers. In short, it left me feeling hypocritical and struggling with my faith whenever I publicly prayed for others.

Those doubts and uncertainties coincided with a period of intense personal family bereavement and trauma leading to me leaving my ministry.

I no longer believe there is any statistical scientific evidence to prove personal prayers are answered, but

that is not the same as saying I no longer believe in God. Just the opposite in fact. My doubts about prayer led me into a scientific search which in turn led me to conclude God and science are completely compatible with one another.

My understanding about God changed. I may no longer believe in a God who answers personal prayer, but I am convinced more than ever that there is an ever present living God who is almighty, all knowledgeable, and eternal. It is the scientific basis for that belief in an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God which this book aims to explain.

Religious References

An Ever Present God

God is described as being everywhere in Judaism (Jeremiah 23:23-24), Christianity (Acts 17:27-28) and Islam (Qur'an 57:4).

A Living God

God is described as a living God in Judaism (Deuteronomy 5:26 and Jeremiah 10:10), Christianity (Hebrews 3:12 and Acts 14:15), and Islam (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:255 and Surah Taha 20:111).

An Eternal God

God is described as eternal and everlasting in Judaism (Psalm 90:2 and Isaiah 40:28), as eternal and always the same in Christianity (1 Timothy 1:17 and Hebrews 13:8), and as eternal and ever-living in Islam (Surah Al-Ikhlās 112:1-4 and Surah Al-Baqarah 2:255).

A Conscious God

God is described as loving and compassionate in Judaism (Jeremiah 31:3 and Deuteronomy 4:31), Christianity (1 John 4:8 and Matthew 9:36), and in Islam (Qur'an 7:156 and Qur'an 1:1).

A Powerful God

Jews believe nothing is too hard for God (Jeremiah 32:17), Christians believe all things are possible for God (Matthew 19:26), and Muslims believe God is capable of everything (Qur'an 2:106).

A Philosophy of God

God 'causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and makes the rain fall on the righteous and the unrighteous'. Matthew 5:45

Scientific References

All scientific references can be found in my previous popular science books, [A Brief History of Life](#) and [A Brief History of Consciousness](#), both of which contain full references and a comprehensive bibliography.

About the Author

Richard Underwood has a wide range of experience and interests.

He joined the medical branch of the Royal Air Force straight from school, and served in hospital and medical centres at home and abroad. After leaving the air force he worked firstly as a mental health nurse and then a police officer in Greater Manchester.

He subsequently became a minister of religion for twenty-years, being ordained and commissioned as a Salvation Army Officer and later becoming an Industrial Chaplain to the Fishing Industry as a Superintendent with the Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen. During this period he also obtained a BSc(Hons) in Social Science and a diploma in counselling.

On leaving the ministry he became a civil servant at a Government Office in Leeds where he specialised in Technology and Innovation, and became the Company Secretary of a Regional Technology Network before becoming a staff counsellor for the West Yorkshire Ambulance Service, and Chief Executive of a national counselling charity.

He spent two periods as a welfare rights officer, one with Bolton Social Services and one with Salford

Social Services, both in Greater Manchester, providing training and advice to social workers, and representing clients at Social Security appeal tribunals.

In his late fifties he moved to Suffolk where he became a sheltered housing manager until his retirement.

After retirement he returned to nursing, working on general wards and acute mental health wards at Bury and Ipswich hospitals in Suffolk for several years until his seventieth birthday when he moved back to Droylsden, Manchester where he lives with his wife and from where he is engaged in writing and research.

Read more at [Richard Underwood's website](#).