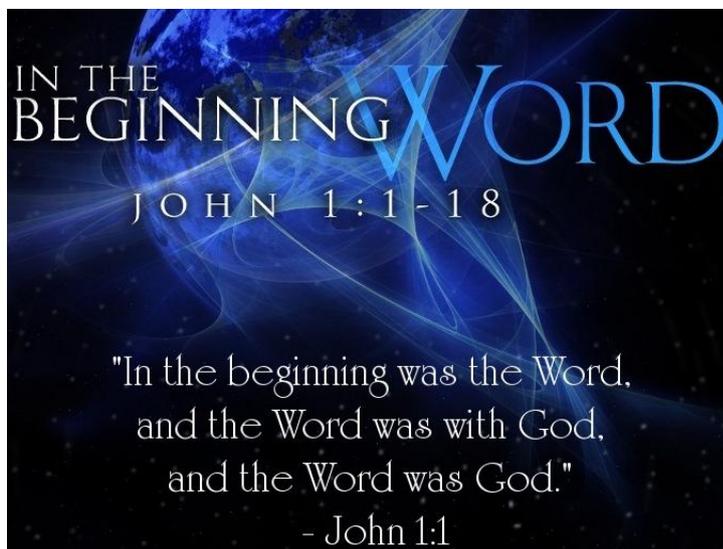


How does the Creator interact with his universe?

Dr Michael Jarvis

Science is progressively discovering more about the ordered processes that lead to changes in our universe and to the intricate complexities that are being revealed in everything around us. Scientific studies are discovering that we live in a universe that is continually changing and yet all that we can observe is underpinned by mechanisms and events that can be described in terms of 'The Laws of Nature'.

A very important question facing Christians and people from other faiths is this. **Can all of God's creation be explained in terms of the mechanisms, processes and laws of our universe, or is there evidence that God does also act by imposing other inputs that guide our universe towards his pre-ordained outcomes?**



For instance, some people will say with conviction that they accept the words of the Apostle John *'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made'* (John 1:1-3 NIV).

However, at the same time some of these people go on to say that scientific research has the potential to explain all outcomes

purely through the operation of the mechanisms, processes and laws of our universe. In other words, they are saying that everything can be explained by God having ordained the mechanisms, processes and laws when he initiated the creation in the beginning. This implies a deistic view of God, namely that he set everything in motion and then let it run, governed purely by the inputs he imposed at the initial creation event.

However, many of us have a theistic view of God. This states that he is still intimately involved in every process and event. We may have experienced this in our own life situations, through answers to prayer or through life situations that were clearly organised 'supernaturally'. My personal experiences of God acting during war experiences in Rhodesia and more recently, convinced me that God is involved in minute details. If you are interested to read about these please go to '**Personal journey of discovery**' download on my webpage.

This view of God, who is intimately involved in his creation, implies that he has used and still uses a variety of inputs to guide processes and events towards outcomes that he has planned.

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Most of us can identify with a concept of God such as this. In other words, nothing exists or has existed in the past, other than what God allowed to exist and that he has guided events towards important goals in his agendas for our planet and for humanity.

However, we have to be careful not to confuse issues here. If we state that God has created all things and that he 'upholds' everything in our universe, then we cannot go on to state that every outcome can be explained purely through the operation of mechanisms, processes and laws of our universe. There are too many situations in nature where events could have unfolded in very different ways. In other words, we have to believe that this universe and everything in it is the result of the **on-going involvement of God.**

Christians with a scientific background may sometimes object to a term such as 'Intelligent Design', largely because the term has become associated with a movement promoting a particular view on how to reconcile God and scientific discovery and partly because they have seen how some people have used the term to place God in everything we cannot explain. This can result in a sort of 'God of the Gaps' theology and can result in our concept of God becoming smaller each time science reveals mechanisms that seem to have led to the results previously ascribed to God.



The key to reconciling scientific discovery with acceptance of God as Creator, is a great enough concept of God. He must be great enough to be constantly sustaining the universe, and that nothing exists outside of his permitted will and purpose.

I believe it is essential to have a concept of God that accepts his intimate awareness of every process and event. Jesus said God notices when one sparrow falls to the ground and *'even the very hairs of your head*

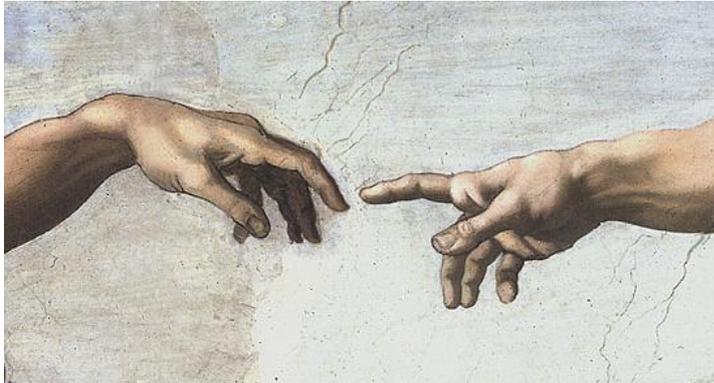
are numbered' (Matthew 10:30 NIV). Or as Paul wrote *'For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together'* (Colossians 1:15-17 NIV)

In other words, when we look at structures that can be described as having intricate complexity, such as the human eye or a host of other extremely complex structures and chemical systems within living organisms, a Christian has to call all of these 'intelligently designed'. This is because everything in the universe was created by God to achieve the functions he decided upon and he has achieved these goals through his on-going 'upholding all things'.

This declaration of Intelligent Design should not be understood to mean that the eye is unexplained by the mechanisms, processes and laws governing life. God has and still does

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use these created mechanisms and processes as part of his means of achieving desired outcomes. However, the danger exists that we then go on to say that the human eye can be totally explained through the mechanisms, processes and laws being discovered through scientific research.



This leads us to the next vital question, suggested in this famous picture of 'the finger of God'. If we can slowly unravel the mechanisms and processes used by God to bring about intricate complexities, **HOW does he guide these processes towards his desired outcomes?**

Some Christians say that we have no answer to such a question. In fact it might seem arrogant to even start to investigate how God operates since he must be far greater, wiser and more complex than any human mind can grasp. However, in spite of this **we can discover important aspects of how he operates, both from a study of scriptures and from a study of creation.**

Evidence from scripture on how God interacts with his creation



It is important to note that scripture tells us we can understand aspects of 'God's glory' through a study of his creation.

The psalmist wrote, '***The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge***' (Psalm 19:1-2 NIV).

Part of God's glory is the way he operates within creation, and science is progressively revealing aspects of this.

We are also told that God can read our thoughts. For instance, '*You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive (read) my thoughts from afar*' (Psalm 139:2). Clearly there are interactions between human minds and the mind of God. This is the essence of prayer. Such a great Mind can surely also determine the outcomes of a 'throw of the dice'!

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Scripture tells us that this universe that '*can be seen*' was made from what '*cannot be seen*'. For instance, we read, '*By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible*' (Hebrews 11:3).

Note that it was not made out of 'nothing'. It was made from whatever existed with God in the Timeless Dimension in which he operates and from which our universe originated.

Since scripture also reveals God as unchanging and consistent, and within our own created universe he has revealed himself as normally controlling nature by consistent mechanisms that we call the Laws of Nature, it is justifiable to believe that the Timeless Dimension from which God made our universe is also controlled by laws.

We also know that God applied his wisdom in his creative acts. **It was applied wisdom, suggesting a process of application.** We read '*The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his work, before his deeds of old. I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began....then I was the craftsman at his side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind*' (Proverbs 8:22-31 NIV).

This passage suggests on-going processes governed by wisdom, starting before creation (from eternity) and continuing through time (day after day) right up to the creation of mankind.

Science tells us that time began at the Big Bang, so whatever laws existed with God in the Timeless Dimension are probably different from those we are familiar with in our time-locked universe. We call any such laws operating before the Big Bang '**Transcendent Laws**'.

The question arises. Does God sometimes use Transcendent Laws to bring about events within our visible universe? Scripture strongly suggests that he does. For instance, when we look at miracles in the Bible we soon realise that they fall into various categories. The plagues of Egypt are good examples of different categories.

The plagues of Egypt as examples

At least eight of the 'plagues' of Egypt clearly involved things that we are familiar with. There are frogs, gnats, sicknesses, locusts, hail, wind and water. We see the miraculous in the intensity and timing of the events and in how God co-ordinated these with his revelations to Moses.

The plague of darkness is interesting. Moses described it as a 'darkness that could be felt'. Samples of soil taken at various depths in the Nile Delta have revealed clear evidence of volcanic ash and this ash has been linked to volcanic eruptions in the northern Mediterranean Sea, blown towards Egypt. This serves as one of the examples of where biblical writers described real events in terms influenced by the limited knowledge of their times.

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When we come to the last plague, this clearly falls into a totally different category. The overnight death of all Egyptian firstborn and their firstborn animals is clearly achieved by God through means that are without explanation scientifically. Even when we say it was caused by an 'angel of death' this does not tell us the method used to kill the first born.



Similarly when we look at the miracles associated with Jesus, some clearly have no explanation within the known laws of our universe. For instance, walking on water, raising the dead, the resurrection of Jesus, his ability to go through closed doors and other similar events.

We cannot tie down God and suggest that he always operates in the same way! This also applies to how he has operated within the history of life on earth.

It is wrong to limit God to only operating in ways we can understand

When we come to discuss how the Creator interacts with his creation, during stages in the history of life on earth, we need to avoid limiting him to only operating within the mechanisms and processes revealed by science.

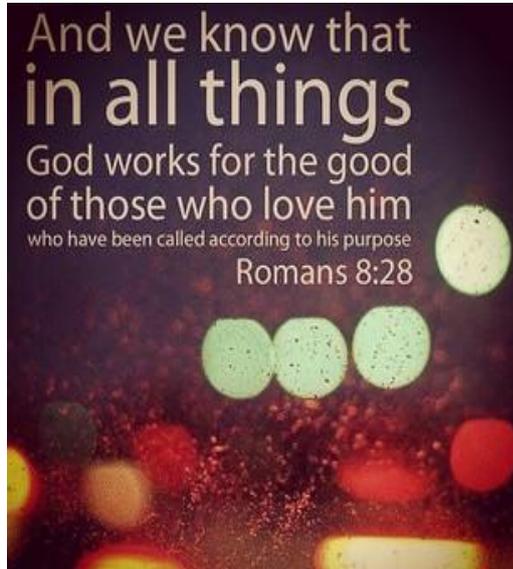
We need to acknowledge that he was aware of every event and detail. **This does not necessarily have to mean that he guided every individual step, but it does mean that he guided each step that was essential, in order to achieve his end goals.**

Some people point to abnormalities, such as babies born with anatomical or physiological problems, or to stages in life's history that led to extinctions, apparently caused by meteor strikes, such as the one causing elimination of the dinosaurs. Was God guiding every minute step in all these situations?

My own understanding is that he certainly knows in advance what each of us will look like but all of us are the result of the biological order that God brought into existence and we face the reality that occasionally, possibly for a variety of reasons, biological processes lead to problematic outcomes. However, we also know that he can bring good out of all situations.

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With regard to meteors and mass extinctions, God has clearly used these to channel life in new directions. If the dinosaurs had not been eliminated the earth would not have been suitable for mammals and mankind. The crucial reality is that he is able to guide history and our individual lives through all of these uncertainties, in order to achieve the end goals he has set.



So what do I say to the child born with a deformity? I will not say that God made you like this. We do know from biological studies that how we look is determined by our genetic code (DNA). Sometimes small changes occur in this code as the inevitable result of the nature of mechanisms underpinning life. Occasionally the DNA undergoes changes, some of which can lead to problems.

It is true that God brought the whole of biology into existence and so in one sense he made us, but it does not have to follow that he directly caused you to look like you do.

I like to emphasise that we do not fully understand these things, but the really good news is that God still has an important plan for your life. We can look at examples such as the man born without arms or legs. What a great inspiration he has become to others with disabilities! Furthermore, the plans for your life include an eternal destiny where he has promised, *'He will wipe every tear from our eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for **the old order of things has passed away.** He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"* (Revelation 21:4-5).

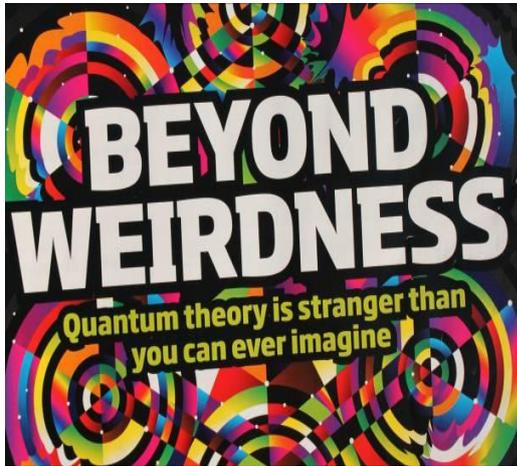
Why did God make a universe containing physical death, earthquakes and other inevitable results of the laws of nature? We proclaim from scripture that he is the Almighty. This surely means that he controls all possible outcomes. However, maybe he knew that this was the only possible universe suited for life and for mankind. We can suggest that humanity and our eternal destiny were so important for God's plans that whatever means he used to achieve these goals were justified.

Might quantum physics throw light on how God interacts with creation?

It is fascinating that physics is today encountering evidence suggesting the continuing reality of a Timeless Dimension.

This does not necessarily mean a dimension that is totally without time. We might visualise it as a dimension of reality where any intelligence in that dimension is free to move instantly

to any point in our time reality, both into the past and the future. It can also be visualised as a dimension where things can exist simultaneously in more than one place.



This probability of a Timeless Dimension is strongly suggested by studies in quantum physics. These are revealing that sub-atomic bundles of energy, often called 'particles', such as electrons, protons etc, have properties that do not seem to be limited by time. Scientists talk of 'entanglement' 'superposition' and instantaneous communication over vast distances. These words on a cover of New Scientist Journal say it all – 'quantum theory is stranger than you can ever imagine'.

These sub-atomic realities appear to be able to be in more than one place at the same time. Furthermore, if we collide them together at speeds close to the speed of light in a Particle Accelerator, this can lead to several particles being formed. However, if we then do something to the one derived particle the others all react as if still connected. The observations suggest that these mysterious interactions and inter-connectedness occur instantaneously between particles even if separated over vast distances.

Physicists do not know how to interpret these mysteries but to my mind it is exciting that, although these sub-atomic realities behave as if they are operating outside of time, we know that they are the building blocks of our universe. Since God is revealed to be outside of time and that he is involved in all events and processes, it follows that he is also involved in these quantum mysteries.

Since quantum physics is suggesting there is a mysterious universe-wide inter-connectedness between these quantum realities, it helps me to visualise how God can be aware of everything in his universe simultaneously and can interact with every part of our universe.

Maybe our studies of quantum physics are drawing us a step closer to uncovering the laws that operate within the Timeless Dimension. Since the Timeless Dimension existed before our Big Bang creation, these mysterious laws operating within the quantum dimension could be the same as the Transcendent Laws that God used to bring our visible universe out of the 'things that cannot be seen'.

Is God helping us to understand how he interacts with his universe?

We live in exciting times when even science is making it easier for a sincere seeker after truth to believe in the Creator. These are times when science is greatly expanding our potential to see from '*The heavens declare*' of Psalm 19, more about the Creator and how he operates in his universe.

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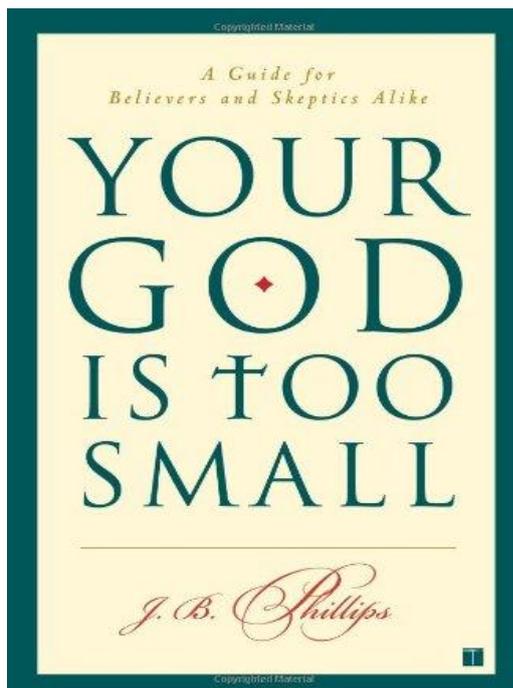


To take just one example, physicists have revealed that the laws initiating the Big Bang creation had to be incredibly fine-tuned. The probability of such fine tuning occurring by chance is astronomically small.

The famous physicist Stephen Hawking calculated that our universe could not have existed if the relationship between the four basic forces in nature was altered very slightly in only the 55th decimal place. **In other words the chance of our physical universe being here is less than 1 in 10⁵⁵.** If we add all the other events, that had to be in place to enable us to be here, then the probability becomes even greater that we are indeed the result of the wisdom and power of the Creator.

With reference to the intricate complexities being revealed through biological research, all of us should accept, on the authority of scriptures, that they are designed by God to fulfil purposes that he pre-planned and which form part of his goals for humanity. However, we must avoid suggesting that these intricate complexities are ONLY the result of mechanisms and processes ordained by God. Yes he did plan and bring into being the mechanisms and processes but he also guides these processes in ways that cannot at present be researched by science, and possibly never will be detected via our time based scientific instruments.

We also need to accept that God can and does interact with our universe in more than one way. This includes interactions during the changes that have taken place in life forms over the history of life on earth. Biologists are only recently discovering that there have been some large changes that took place much more rapidly than can be explained purely on the basis of very small mutations acted upon by environmental selection.



These faster changes in life forms have opened up new fields of study, such as 'Epigenetics' and 'orphan genes'. An article in New Scientist Journal is headed 'Genes from nowhere: Orphans with a surprising history' (New Scientist 24 Jan 1013).

It is also possible that the Creator has acted in different ways when he created the first life and maybe each time there was a major increase in biological complexity. However, whatever process or events he has used they all should lead us to the same conclusion, that he created all things *'and without him nothing was made that has been made'*.

God does not fit into gaps in knowledge. He is intimately involved in all mechanisms, processes and events. He did not just start processes and then sit back.

Is your concept of God too small?

Science may show how a mutation in a certain part of the DNA genetic code led to a significant advance in the complexity of life, but the scientist cannot know whether or not the Mind of God planned this change, nor whether or not that specific change was in fact triggered by the Creator imposing the power of his Mind into the situation.

Science cannot determine whether or not there was a God input but those of us who accept a Creator who is *'in all things and by whom all things consist'* have to believe that **he was involved in every event that he knew was essential for achieving his end goals.**

Conclusions

1. God not only designed mechanisms and processes, he is also intimately involved in directing these processes towards his pre-calculated and pre-ordained end goals.
2. Scripture and science both suggest that he has used different types of inputs at various times, some of which can be investigated through present day science and some that cannot be investigated through our time based instruments. This is because some inputs seem to derive from laws operating in the Timeless Dimension in which God exists. Quantum physics is giving us hints of these realities.
3. Each time we study intricately complex systems within life, such as the human eye, the response of Christians should be to say that God designed it to fulfil the functions he planned for it. Recent studies of the vertebrate eye have shown that it is the best possible design for meeting our needs. I discuss this in one of my web page 'update' articles entitled, **'Human eye poorly designed?'**
4. Did God directly cause human deformities or harmful bacteria? I suggest these are the inevitable result of the characteristics of our universe. God's end goal is to do away with all the harmful things. However, in the meantime he has worked and still works through all things (both pleasant and unpleasant) to guide history towards his really important end goals. These included Calvary and the future destiny he has planned for redeemed humanity.

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