

# A SCIENTIFIC EXPLANATION FOR ETERNAL LIFE

By Rev. Dr. Timothy W. Ehrlich

The boldest claim in the Bible, one which potentially affects every one of us, is the promise that anyone can have and will be given eternal life with God in heaven as a result of our faith God and in His son Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul put it succinctly: “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). It is not an exaggeration to say that the promise of eternal life is the key doctrine on which the entire Christian religion depends. If you are a Christian you are likely to have accepted the promise of eternal life as part of your faith and trust in God. If you are not a Christian or a believer in God you are likely to reject even the premise of this article, that there can be a scientific explanation for eternal life, as being equal to a scientific explanation for the tooth fairy or the Easter Bunny.<sup>1</sup> The objective reality is that quantum physics and clinical research into near death experiences do provide a plausible scientific explanation for how eternal life is possible.

**1. Research into near death experiences.** A number of books and articles have been written in recent years of reports of many people who have had near death experiences, including many who reported that they were able to visit heaven temporarily before being revived. The most consequential book on near death experiences *EVIDENCE OF THE AFTERLIFE* was written by a medical doctor, Jeffrey Long, who became so fascinated with the near death phenomenon that he has collected reports of the experiences of over 5,000 people.<sup>2</sup> The evidence produced by the work of Dr. Long in analyzing these near death experiences (including over 250 from countries around the world) is absolutely objective and conclusive that conscious existence after physical life ends is a genuine phenomenon. We can call this post-death conscious existence a spiritual existence (for lack of a better term). This strong anecdotal evidence from people around the world no doubt helps explain why every major religion around the world believes in an afterlife in some form.

What Dr. Long discovered that is so important to our understanding of eternal life is not just that there is a conscious existence that persists after physical death, but also that the persons who experience leaving their bodies do not leave behind their identity or their memories of their life. The belief that we retain our identity and memories in a spiritual existence after death is an essential Christian belief, something that Jesus spoke of often and promised his believers (Luke 23:43, John 3:16). Recent discoveries in quantum physics provide a scientific basis to explain the apparent reality that a conscious self-aware spiritual existence continues on after the physical life has come to an end.

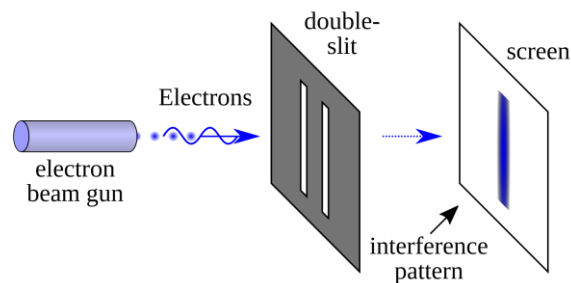
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<sup>1</sup> I want to speak briefly to those who don't believe in the reality of the existence God or eternal life. I promise you this: if you can be intellectually honest and open minded, and if you will do a little research, you will not have to scratch very deep to find an abundance of convincing, scientifically based evidence for the existence of God. I recommend that you read these three books Gerald L. Schroeder's book *Genesis and the Big Bang*; Francis Collins' book, *The Language of God*; and Michael Guillien's book *Believing is Seeing*. I urge you to particularly look into the calculations of the odds that the universe as we know it could have randomly come into existence. Einstein and other physicists have concluded that the odds are so high against a random creation (approximately 1 in ten times a billion times a billion; that is 10 followed by 20 zeros) that they indicate the intervention of a higher intelligent creative power. The odds were determined based on the relative proportions of the strength of four forces that govern every atom in the universe: gravity, discovered in 1687; electromagnetic force, discovered in 1814; weak nuclear force, discovered in 1933; and strong nuclear force, described for the first time in 1935.

<sup>2</sup>Long, Jeffrey with Paul Perry. *EVIDENCE OF THE AFTERLIFE*, Harper Collins e-books.  
[www.harpercollinsebooks.com](http://www.harpercollinsebooks.com) Kindle Edition pg. 1.

## 2. Discoveries from quantum physics show human consciousness functions on a quantum level

**a. The double slit experiment.** There are two sets of physics discoveries that are keys to understanding the physiology of eternal life: the double slit experiment and quantum entanglement. The double slit experiment predates the discovery of physics; it was first performed in 1808 as a demonstration of the wave behavior of light. In 1927 scientists demonstrated that electrons show the same behavior, which was later extended to atoms and molecules.<sup>3</sup> For the uninitiated in the modern version of the double slit experiment photons or electrons are fired from a beam gun towards a flat opaque surface into which two equal sized parallel slits have been carved allowing either photons or electrons to pass through one or the other. As shown below a screen behind the slits measures which slit the photons or electrons passed through.



This experiment showed that light can be both a wave and a particle (photons) at the same time and so can electrons or atoms. This type of dual existence at the quantum (atomic and subatomic) level as both a wave and a particle is called superposition. There are two things that are important to us concerning eternal life from the double slit experiment: first is that a quantum can exist simultaneously both as physical matter and as wave.<sup>4</sup> Second the experiment also unintentionally showed or proved measurably and scientifically indisputably that there is something called “the observer effect.” The observer effect was discovered by the realization that evidence showed that when a person observes or measures the flow of photons or electrons from the beam gun through the slot onto the screen their observation or measurement during the experiment changes the flow of the particles or photons in measurable ways.<sup>5</sup> According to Wikipedia, “While the effects of observation are often negligible, the object still experiences a change. This effect can be found in many domains of physics...”<sup>6</sup>

What is it about the observation of a flow of electrons, atoms or photons by a human being that alters the state of the particle or wave (photons being observed are forced to behave like particles instead of waves)? Physicists don’t like the mystery, they prefer to think of the observer effect as something we don’t yet understand; but as they don’t have an explanation for it they refer to the observer effect as a “the subatomic particle paradox.” Obviously since human consciousness can alter the flow of photons, electrons, atoms, and even molecules on a quantum level then human consciousness must also function on a quantum level. Nobel Prize laureate physicist Roger Penrose rejects the

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<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Double-slit\\_experiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Double-slit_experiment). Sourced 9/15/22.

<sup>4</sup> A quantum or quanta is the minimum amount of any physical entity (physical property) involved in an interaction.

<sup>5</sup> Vaidyanathan, Venkatesh. What Is The Observer Effect In Quantum Mechanics? Updated On: 8 Jul 2022 <https://www.scienceabc.com/pure-sciences/observer-effect-quantum-mechanics.html>

<sup>6</sup> Wikipedia. Double Slit Experiment. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Double-slit\\_experiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Double-slit_experiment). Sourced 9/14/22.

classical explanation that our consciousness is purely the result of the couplings of neuronal clusters and their incessant firings. He and a number of other physicists believe that human consciousness functions as a sort of superposition both as a physical function of neurons and synapses, and at the same time as a quantum process occurring within the microtubules that provide structure to the neurons.<sup>7</sup>

**b. Quantum entanglement.** Another aspect of physics that contributes to our understanding of the mechanics of eternal life is quantum entanglement. The 2022 Nobel prize for physics went to Alain Aspect, John F. Clauser and Anton Zeilinger for quantumly entangled photons, which paved the way for new technology using quantumly entangled particles. Quantum entanglement is another scientific “paradox:” scientists understand that it works and now how to use it but they don’t understand what causes it. According to Einstein’s theory of special relativity nothing in the universe can travel faster than the speed of light; but experiments have proven (and modern manufacturing is already using the experimental technology) that two atomic or subatomic particles, such as photons or electrons can become linked or entangled in such a way that what happens to one happens to the other instantly even though they are separated by great distances. The most recent experiments have pushed the speed of quantum entangled interaction to at least 10,000 times faster than the speed of light!<sup>8</sup>

Einstein was aware that there was a paradox he could not explain that his theory of relativity which proved mathematically that nothing (no matter or waves) can travel faster than the speed of light, could not explain how entangled particles can communicate instantly regardless of the distance they are separated. He referred to quantum entanglement as ‘spooky action at a distance’ and he reluctantly admitted that its existence showed that his physics theories were incomplete. Quantum entanglement has been demonstrated experimentally with photons, neutrinos, electrons, molecules and even small diamonds.<sup>9</sup> Today, even though scientists are experimenting with entangling particles to see if they can create an instant communication device using entangled photons they have no scientific explanation for quantum entanglement.

The fact that atomic particles can be entangled and communicate instantly across the universe provides a possible scientific explanation for a spiritual phenomenon that millions of Christians over the last 20 centuries have experienced through their prayers: that God who is over all things to the end of the nearly infinite universe never-the-less hears our prayers instantly and responds immediately.<sup>10</sup>

**c. The unity between the scientific and anecdotal evidence.** So, what ties these discoveries of physics together with Dr. Long’s research? We know that human consciousness functions in a superposition (simultaneous) way both as the functioning of our physical brain and as a quantum or spiritual function. A typical experience of those who have a near death event is that they can see their physical body below them and observe the work of medical staffs to attempt to revive them; many also report that at a

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<sup>7</sup> Glesler, Marcelo. Can quantum mechanics explain consciousness? <https://bigthink.com/13-8/quantum-consciousness-2/>. November 24, 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Wikipedia. Quantum Entanglement. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quantum\\_entanglement#cite\\_note-4](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quantum_entanglement#cite_note-4). Sourced August 23, 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. cite\_note-17.

<sup>10</sup> In the Christian understanding God created all things, is in and through all things, holds all things together.

point in the experience they enter a tunnel of light and proceed up into heaven where they remain until they are revived, often against their wishes. What seems apparent then, and what I am proposing is that the consciousness which survives our physical life that Dr. Long's work clearly demonstrates is indeed what Christians refer to as the human soul.

The human brain is stunningly complex: we have 86 billion neurons in our brains with 100 trillion connecting synapses!<sup>11</sup> The combination of evidence of the reality of consciousness surviving clinical death together with the apparent quantum functioning of the brain demonstrated by the observer effect show that consciousness can exist simultaneously, in two ways at once, both as electronic impulses moving through neurons and synapses in physical locations in the brain and as a spiritual or quantum consciousness independent of the physical brain but linked to it. It would seem then that the soul or the quantum functioning of the brain is entangled with our memories and identity of the physical brain until that brain dies at which time the quantum consciousness or soul becomes independent from the physical brain.

To summarize the scientific evidence: There is an undeniable link between the soul or spiritual aspect of our consciousness and the physical mind, demonstrated by Dr. Long. The observer effect demonstrates that human consciousness is able to function on a quantum level. The anecdotal but still valid evidence of the experience of countless millions of living and past Christians is that in faith the soul of a man or woman can become entangled with the mind of God; such that through prayer we realize that we have been heard by God, and, through observation of a perceivable effect, we realize that our communication towards God (prayer) has been responded to. This experiential evidence though anecdotal is none-the-less compelling because the experience of being heard by God and responded to by God in a tangible way is and has been described in the same terms by millions of people from all nations, races, ages, and social conditions, past and present. This demonstrates that the human mind (albeit on a quantum level) can become entangled with the mind of God. Jesus said: "God is spirit" (John 4:24). It is the entanglement between the quantum or spiritual mind of human (the soul) and the mind of God that provides a scientific explanation for the "how" of eternal life.

### **3. How Three key Biblically based theological understandings about eternal life coincide with quantum theory**

**A. Where the eternal soul comes from.** In the Bible both soul and spirit are given by God (Genesis 2:7; Ecclesiastes 12:7). Somewhat confusingly both Old and New Testaments use the words soul and spirit somewhat interchangeably. The ancient Jewish understanding of soul was that it is the life force found in every person and all living creatures.<sup>12</sup> In the Old Testament the Hebrew word for soul, *nephesh*, is from the word *naphash* - to breathe, was used primarily as a term both for creatures (Genesis 1:21, 2:19, 9:15; Leviticus 11:46) and for man (Genesis 2:7); a soul is everything that "has breath." The Old Testament uses the word 'spirit' (*ruach*) in ways that are closer to the modern understanding of the soul. The same is true in the New Testament, in Greek (the language in which the New Testament was written) the word for soul, *psyche*, in general terms is used to represent every living being (Acts 20:10 Rev. 8:9), and spirit (*pneuma*) is primarily used as the spiritual essence of a person which survives physical death (Matthew 10:28; Mark 8:36). So in both testaments human beings are seen as having the

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<sup>11</sup> Allen Institute. 5 Unsolved Mysteries About The Brain. <https://alleninstitute.org/what-we-do/brain-science/> March 14, 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Strong. James. The New Strong's Expanded Exhausted Concordance of the Bible. Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville. 2001. Hebrew Dictionary pg. 189.

same animating life force or soul that all creatures have, and a spiritual essence seen as the potentially eternal substance of a person which lives on after death (Ecclesiastes 3:18-21).

**b. How we receive eternal life - what happens within us.** In scripture it is the decision to commit to the path of goodness (righteousness), through faith that activates the soul for eternal life. Paul writes:

**Romans 8:1-2, 6, 10 (NLT)** So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death...<sup>6</sup>So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace...<sup>10</sup>And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God.

To belong to Christ means that a person has made a commitment not just to believe but to obey Jesus' teachings. This passage describes the theological concept behind the term 'saved;' that there is a moment in which a person makes a decision with their conscious physical mind which then instantaneously results in a miracle equipping the soul to live eternally with God.

Paul writes: "If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved" (Romans 10:9-10). These two passages relate the importance of the mind / soul connection. It is through faith that we come to have the Spirit of God living in us; so quantum entanglement between the spirit / mind of God and the human mind happens through faith.

The apostle Paul wrote: "The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). But Jesus said it is not easy to receive eternal life: "But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it" (Matthew 7:14). This may sound a little confusing: Paul described eternal life as a free gift, but Jesus said the road is difficult; how do we reconcile these two seemingly opposing concepts? Michelangelo was asked how he was able to carve the beautiful statue of David; he replied: "The sculpture is already complete within the marble block, before I start my work. It is already there, I just have to chisel away the superfluous material." Michelangelo made it sound easy but obviously the practice of sculpting is extremely difficult. For those born and raised in the faith accepting faith in God and Jesus is not a difficult process, but for those raised without any faith the road to faith may be long and difficult, and the primary obstacles and difficulties will be the doubts and questions in their own minds.

Modern psychological studies have shown that the brains of believers and non-believers actually work differently.<sup>13</sup> So coming to faith requires an almost rewiring of the brain to take the mind from closed to God using one part of the brain to open using another. The apostle Paul, who was an apt observer of human psychology, wrote (Romans 12:2 TEV):

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<sup>13</sup> Wenk, Gary. The Brains of Believers and Non-Believers Work Differently. Psychology Today. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/your-brain-food/202205/the-brains-believers-and-non-believers-work-differently>. Posted May 11 2022.

Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God—what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect.

For those of us who are left brain dominant, as I am, changing our mind from non-belief to belief can be a years-long and difficult passage. Scientific minded people emphasize logic and reason, we believe only in what we can observe and scientifically measure. I struggled for years even after becoming a pastor with times when logical thoughts or questions of skeptics would lead to doubts and questions that took me away from faith.

The good news for those who are complete skeptics and living in a spiritual desert of questions and doubts, as I was, all you need to have is an open mind and an intense desire to know the truth whatever it may be. The promise given in the Bible (Jeremiah 29:13, Matthew 7:7), and born out by generations of believers is that if you seek the truth about God you will find the truth. The difficult part of finding proof of the reality of God for yourself (though thankfully not as impossible as learning to sculpt like Michelangelo) is that the open mind also requires those who seek God to *seek with all their heart*, and all of our heart is much deeper and more comprehensive than people imagine. A truly open mind includes a complete willingness follow the truth wherever it leads including therefore a willingness to respond to ones discovery of the reality of God with action, i.e. obey God.

**c. The Catalyzing Agent is Love.** Jesus said, “The most important commandment is this: ‘Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. And you must love the Lord your God with *all your heart*, all your soul, *all your mind*, and all your strength’” (Mark 12:29-30). The catalyzing agent in the quantum transformation of the mind / soul is love. Think of the transformation of the soul from mortal to eternal as a chemical reaction: the mind is the beaker, the setting for the transformation of the soul; the decision made with the mind to accept faith in God and all that goes with belonging to God is the key ingredient; and the catalyzing agent, the force behind the transformation, is love. The quantum nature of God is love.

The apostle John gave some of the clearest statements about the activating power of love:

1 John 4:8 Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God.

1 John 4:16-17 We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

As we live in love we live in God; our love is what enables our mind / soul to become quantumly entangled with the divine mind of God. Interestingly Dr. Long identified feelings of intense love as being one of the most commonly experienced features of a near death experiences. Jesus repeatedly emphasized the importance of love: in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:43-46; 10:37; 22:37; Mark 12:30-31). The person who has not got a truly loving heart is “dead” according to John, i.e. will not have eternal life (1 John 3:14).

Neither Dr. Long's near death research nor quantum physics can prove the reality of heaven or eternal life; but Dr. Long's research has proven that a spiritual existence in which we retain our identity and memories can survive our physical death, and quantum physics demonstrates how that is scientifically possible.

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