

**UNDERSTANDING REALITY: EXPLORING THE INTERACTION
BETWEEN THEOLOGY AND SCIENCE, WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO A THEISTIC PRESUPPOSITION TO CERTAIN
WORLDVIEWS.**

By

MARK PRETORIUS

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the faculty of

THEOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

PROMOTOR: PROF. J BUITENDAG

MARCH 2007

PERSONAL STATEMENT

To begin this introductory section, the author would like to make a personal statement about his beliefs, and why he chose to take a specific stance in the writing of this thesis. He is an African influenced adult Caucasian male, whose specific theological tradition is charismatic, yet who is spiritually conservative in the Biblical tradition. Besides this, the author considers himself to be a Christian contemporary thinker, who affirms the power of human beings, including the authority of scripture, enlightening by the Spirit, and scientific knowledge and technology, to make, improve, deconstruct, and reshape ones built environment. In the author's view, the essence of the Christian contemporary thinker is both progressive and optimistic, and is therefore used throughout this thesis to further understand reality.

Further to this, the author is convinced that theism is a very Biblically viable world-view from which reality should be studied, and throughout this thesis, this is the viewpoint proposed. The author would also like to state that coming from a traditional charismatic background, all character references to God as He, Him, or any similar references have been placed in capital letters as a sign of respect to God, and all that He stands for in the author's life. Furthermore, all masculine references to God are only to be considered as a grammatical expression, and not sexist in any way.

SUMMARY

The question of reality has traditionally been answered from two broad and separate perspectives, namely natural science and theology. However, in recent times, there has been a growing realism and humility about the limits of the two disciplines, specifically in their pursuit of understanding what makes up reality. Indeed, many are openly speaking about “a new convergence” in the disciplines, opening the way to new insights and understandings about reality.

Because of this, many now see both disciplines as complementary ways of seeking to understand reality. As such, this research shows that there is justification to combine science and theology to further the general understanding of what makes up reality. However, the problem expressed, is that even though both disciplines accept their limits, both disciplines have conflicting world-views on what makes up reality. Nevertheless, the research shows that there is commonality, i.e. both study reality from a creation or natural viewpoint, although each differs on the method to use. Natural science basis its findings on empirically verifiable data, whereas theology, basis its findings on revelation and the “Wirkungsgeschichte” thereof.

Unfortunately, this research shows that the problem does not end there. Within the two disciplines there is what one could call *supplementary-worldviews*, meaning, each discipline has multiple world-views within its structures. Taking this into account, the research examines these various world-views, and then suggests a suitable solution to the difficulty of finding pluralism among these views.

The research begins with a clear understanding of what the different views consist of. It achieves success by setting up a common frame of reference between each view presented, and then researches each one individually, and where fitting, complementarity sought and explored. The research puts forth that

one can only come to a reasonably clear understanding of what makes up reality, if one understands the beliefs and views of each on this.

The research further examines world-views such as the open-theism argument for determinism, Darwin's evolutionary theory, and the different views about the end result of humanity and creation. It also examines God's providence and how one would connect it to miracles, prayer, personhood and sin. The objective being to show that other than a theistic world-view, none of the alternative views give satisfactory answers to these questions, and neither do they give answers to the purpose for creation and humanity? The research also shows and argues that evil in this present world must not be thought of as something God willingly planned as an instrument of human punishment and education, but rather as something He allows because of human freedom.

The research also asks questions such as "What is the Final End of Everything", a question that science and theology have been trying to answer ever since humanity became aware of its own existence. The research further expresses that as technology has increased, many of the issues surrounding eschatology have become obscure, and difficult to deal with. The research points out that at times, eschatology has become a topic of debate, resulting in accusations and acrimony among scholars. Yet the research shows that the Bible is clear about what the end entails, whether that is towards the believer or non-believer.

The research also makes a determination that any view that contradicts itself or destroys itself in the process or act of affirming itself, is self-defeating and false and only theism is actually undeniable. Thus, it is established throughout this work, that theism offers an argument with the undeniable premise that leads one to recognise the existence of an infinitely perfect and powerful Being, who has a purpose for humanity and creation. Indeed, the research shows that any

world-view that cannot prove to be true simply based on the premise that it is non-contradictory, must be false.

Finally, the research proposes and confidently states, that by implication, this would mean that *theism*, the only remaining non-contradictory world-view, would be true by the process of falsification of other alternate views, even in today's scientific and technocratic age.

Key Terms: Science, Theology, World-views, Metaphysics, Creation, Evolution, Open Theism, Providence, Miracles, Eschatology.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to recognise and thank the one who made it all possible, my Lord Jesus Christ. Secondly I would like to thank the two most wonderful people that I know, my parents, may God richly bless you for all you have done for me throughout my life.

Special thanks go to my promoter, Prof J Buitendag, whose knowledge and wisdom in the subject of science and theology guided and shaped my thinking. I would furthermore like to thank him for the many hours he spent reading my work, and the kindness he showed me in his comments; he is truly an excellent scholar and mentor.

To all those who encouraged me to keep going on, and to the many who had a hand - no matter how small - in helping me prepare this work, thank you!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 Introduction

1.1	Statement of the Problem: Different World-Views on Reality within Science and Theology	5
1.2	Background to the Research Problem	5
1.3	Statement of the Research Question and how this Research Aims to Investigate it	9
1.4	Background to the Research Question	13
1.5	Research Methodology	17
1.6	The Objective of the Research Methodology	19
1.7	The Context of the Research Problem	25
1.8	The Goals of this Research	26
1.9	The Effect of the Research Question on Science and Theology	31
1.10	Can one argue for the Existence of God from Nature and Science alone?	32
1.10.1	The Epistemological Argument	32
1.10.2	Metaphysical Arguments	34
1.10.2.1	Teleological Arguments	34
1.10.2.2	The Cosmological Arguments	36
1.10.2.3	The Ontological Arguments	37
1.10.3	Religious Experience Argument	39
1.10.4	Miracles Argument	39
1.11	Can Theology and Science Learn from Each Other?	41

2 Different World-Views Regarding Reality

2.1	Introduction	46
2.2	Categorising World-Views on Reality	49
2.3	The Basic Structure of World-Views	50
2.4	The Context of the Problem	51

2.5	The Value of Science to Theology?	51
2.6	Religious Gaps	53
2.7	The God Who Intervenes	55
2.8	The Dialogue Partners	61
2.9	Critical Realism	61
2.10	An Alternative Model from Theology	67
2.11	Introducing Metaphysics	69
2.12	An Approach to Problems of Knowledge	71
2.13	The Question of God	72
2.14	Differing Metaphysical Systems	74
	2.14.1 Pantheism and Panentheism	76
	2.14.2 Agnosticism	79
	2.14.3 Rationalism	81
	2.14.4 Experientialism	82
	2.14.5 Evidentialism	84
	2.14.6 Pragmatism	85
2.15	A Theistic World-View, the only likely alternative?	86
2.16	Theism Gainsays Deism and Atheism	87
	2.16.1 Deism	87
	2.16.2 Atheism	90
2.17	Conclusion	92

3 Historical and Biological Deism

3.1	Introduction	95
3.2	Creation and Evolution, the Great Divide	96
3.3	Theology and Science, the Great Divide	98
3.4	The Creation Evolution Dilemma	99
3.5	The Heart of Darwin's Theory	101
3.6	Does Theology need Evolutionary Theory?	105
3.7	Scientific and Metaphysical Theories regarding the Creation of the Universe	108

3.8	The Biblical Idea of Creation	113
	3.8.1 Genesis Chapters 1-11: Truth or Myth?	113
	3.8.2 The Creation	116
	3.8.3 Continuous Creation “ <i>creatio continua</i> ”	118
	3.8.4 Creation Contingency and Process Theism	120
3.9	The First and Second Laws of Thermodynamics and their Relation to Creation	124
3.10	Conclusion	127

4 Open Theism, Determinism, and the Sovereignty and Omniscience of God

4.1	Introduction	131
4.2	Background to the Problem	133
4.3	Introducing Open-Theism	135
4.4	Process Theology and its influence on Open Theism	136
4.5	The Major Elements of a World View	140
	4.5.1 God	140
	4.5.2 Ultimate Reality	141
	4.5.3 Knowledge	142
	4.5.4 Ethics	143
	4.5.5 Humankind	143
4.6	Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Self	145
	4.6.1 Christian Modernism	146
	4.6.2 Postmodernism and Christianity	147
4.7	Relating Christianity to the Changing Times	147
4.8	God, the Reality-Constructor	149
4.9	Deconstructing Open Theism	150
4.10	God’s Infinity and His Omnipotence	162
4.11	God and Determinism	166
4.12	Open Theism’s Diminished God	171
4.13	The Test of Open Theism	173

4.14 Conclusion	176
5 God's Providence and its relation to Prayer, Healing, Personhood and Sin	
5.1 Introduction	179
5.2 Providence in Prayer and Healing	181
5.3 Historical Aspects of Prayer and Medicine	185
5.4 Does Prayer Work?	187
5.5 Psychology and Prayer	188
5.6 God's Actions	195
5.7 Bottom-up Causality	197
5.8 Is Prayer only a Means of Inward Change?	205
5.9 God Nature and the Miraculous	207
5.10 Personhood, and Human Freedom	217
5.11 Freedom and Sin	221
5.12 God's Providence and the Sinful Acts of Humanity	224
5.13 Conclusion	229
6 Shaping Eschatology within Science and Theology	
6.1 Introduction	231
6.2 A Scientific Model of Eschatology	233
6.3 A Theistic View of Eschatology	239
6.4 Time and Eternity: It's Relationship to Eschatology	241
6.4.1 The Complexities of Time	241
6.4.2 Time, Death and Eternity	242
6.5 Reconciling the Two Views	245
6.6 Summary of Argumentation	255
Bibliography	264