

CHAPTER 4

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

4.1 Introduction

An argument was presented in chapter one, stating that there continues to be strong suggestions put forth by alternative world-views for the absence or even the non-existence of God. Consequently, an exploration of these world-views was undertaken, and a case made for a theistic world-view as a most viable choice in comparison to these alternate views, irrespective of the latest scientific findings. In defence of the theistic world-view, an argument was put forth that what really distinguishes each view, is their acknowledgement or denial of an intelligence and purpose beyond all manifestations of perceived reality.

Furthermore, it was stated that there are basically three world-view beliefs within these categories:

- The first world-view is one that acknowledges both an ordinary and an ultimate reality, with God being the architect of both. This is a Biblical world-view in which God interacts with both the physical and spiritual realms, i.e. a transcendent God.

- The second world-view holds that there is a reality which lies beyond the physical space-time universe; this is a Quantum Physics world-view and in some cases, God is viewed as Immanent
- The third world-view holds that there is nothing beyond this reality, and that everything merely interacts in such a way as to form a whole. This is an evolutionary world-view, and depicts a purposeless monism, i.e. an absent God.

What follows, is a review of what makes up a world-view with one exception, the assumed elements for a theistic world-view will be added. Once these dimensions are established, it will then be evaluated in the light of a world-view that argues against the Divine sovereignty of God, as well as against His Omniscience. Although the purpose of this thesis is consonance with the sciences, the world-view in question, called *Open Theism* is a post-modern one which on the surface seems theistic, yet when it is researched a little deeper, one sees that theism is not what this view holds. Thus, the purpose of this post-modern case study is to show that there are world-views that have a form of theism, but reject or twist certain elements found within the traditional understanding of the Scriptures. The question is: can they still be classified as a viable theistic world-view? Therefore, before embarking on this exploration, a brief summary of what belief system open theism holds will be explained.

4.2 Background to the Problem

To begin, whether one knows it or not, whether one likes it or not, each person, consciously or unconsciously holds to a world-view. These views function as interpretive conceptual schemes to explain why people “see” the world as they do, and why they often think and act the way they do. As a result of this, competing world-views often come into conflict with each other. These clashes may be as innocuous as a simple argument between people or as serious as a war between nations. Therefore, it is important to understand, that competing world-views are the fundamental cause of disagreements, and even the splitting of organisations, including the beliefs of people.

As such, world-views can be likened to double-edged swords. An inadequate conceptual scheme can, like improper eyeglasses, hinder ones efforts to understand God, the world, and ones-self. On the other hand, the right conceptual scheme can suddenly bring everything into focus. However, the choices among competing world-views involve several difficult questions. For one thing, one must always contend with the ever-present possibility of non-theoretical reasons adversely affecting ones thinking. For another, it is difficult to be sure which criteria or tests one should use in choosing among world-views.

Understandably, Lee (1998:93) rightly warns against the idea that the Bible “presents a comprehensive and unified world-view”. Instead, what Scripture provides is witness to God’s creation and providence as related to humankind. Besides, he argues, it is certainly insufficient to quote “the Bible says” and assume that one has, by that method, arrived at a plausible theistic world-view. Of course, Lee takes care to highlight not only the inspiration of Scripture - it being *Theopneustos* - but also that it is a human book.

Considering this, when one thinks of the topics that create friction among Christians, the subject of Divine sovereignty is in all likelihood high on the list. Many have experienced heated discussions over the nature of Divine sovereignty, especially concerning issues of Divine election and salvation. According to Wellum (2002:257), many Christians, even those who have a good theological education, have expressed time and again that they wish the subject would somehow disappear. Unfortunately, that is hardly likely, since the subject of Divine sovereignty is so foundational to one’s entire theology and praxis.

Therefore, this subject, so vital to a correct understanding of what makes up reality, will be studied within the light of a theistic world-view. This, one of the more controversial views about the sovereignty of God, is also directly related to God’s omniscience. One can therefore comfortably term this a post-modern view of God’s sovereignty and omniscience, usually referred to as Open Theism.

4.3 Introducing Open-Theism

Simply put, open theism, sometimes called *openness* or the *open view*, and occasionally referred to as *Neotheism* (see Geisler & House 2001), is a theological position dealing with human free will. It controversially deals with issues of humanity's relationship to God, the nature of the future, and God's sovereignty and omniscience. It is the teaching that God has granted to humanity a free will and for the will to be truly free, the future free-will choices of individuals are unknown ahead of time by God. Broadly speaking, they hold that if God knows what a person is going to choose beforehand, can one consider the choice to be truly free? This is especially so when it is time to make those choices, since one cannot make a counter choice because the choice is already "known". In other words, one could not actually make a contrary choice to what God "knows" a person will choose, thus implying that the choice in question would not really be free. Open theism is also of the view that God is in a process of learning, especially as people make choices that He was not fully aware that they would make. This philosophical idea of God is similar to the view of God as expressed by *process theology*. In the following section, process theology and its influence on open theism will be briefly explored.

4.4 Process Theology and its Influence on Open Theism

One of the main influences on open theism has traditionally been the views of God expressed by the Process Theology of Whitehead 1929, Hartshorne 1953, Cobb 1965, and others. Although process theology is seemingly being sidelined in favour of the more refined teachings of open theism, there is little doubt that open theism is indebted to these scholars and their philosophical views of God. According to Lindsay (1977:21), process theology advances the following. (1) a reformulation of the ontological argument for the existence of God, (2) a reconstruction of the transcendence and immanence of God, or His relationship to the universe, (3) a redefinition of divine attributes and (4) a restatement of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Keeping in mind these points, process theology also argues that an eternal, immutable God cannot have a real relationship with a changing world, unless God relates to the universe according to its nature (see Sanders 1998:24). The implication is that all real relationships involve change. According to Geisler & House (2001:202), the essential argument goes like this.

1. All real relationships involve change
2. But an unchanging God cannot change

3. Hence, an unchanging God cannot have a real relationship with a changing world.

One of the major tenets of process theology, as with open theism, is the idea of a God who is limited in power. For the process theist, this understanding, according to Keller (1995:105), enables them to solve the problem of evil more satisfactory than classical theists can, given their understanding of God's limited power. They claim, as do open theists, that according to classical theists, God has the power to intervene decisively at any time and at any place to bring about any logically possible outcome that God wants; thus, classical theists, in their view, must admit that God at least permits the evil that occur. The author will extensively deal with this in the coming sections. The position of process theists on the other hand, leaves them with the task of explaining God's power in such a way, as do open theists, to make it clear that (1) God does indeed lack the power to intervene to prevent evils, yet (2) God has a sort of power appropriate to a Being who is worshipped. In process theist's discussion of God's power, they typically distinguish between persuasive and coercive power, and assert that God only has the former. God, they say, lacks the power (as do open theists) to totally determine the behaviour – more precisely, the concrescence – of any person. According to Keller (1995:106), these are the typical thoughts and theology of Whitehead and Cobb. For them, God can only lure (attempt to persuade) the person to develop in a certain way. The main reason for this type

of thinking and philosophy is that God, in the view of process and open theists, lacks knowledge regarding the future actions of people.

Taking all the above into consideration, and as shall be shown in the following section, open theists have to admit that their view inevitable collapses into process theology. Furthermore, process theists regard traditional views of God (like open theists) as inconsistent with the Bible and logic. As has been pointed out, in open theism as with process theism, the future is unknowable by God. However, as shall be explored later, there are some open theists who hold that the future is knowable by God, but they uphold that God voluntarily limits His knowledge of free-will choices so they can remain truly free. Others like Sanders (1998: 198) take this statement even further, by upholding that the future, being non-existent, is not knowable, even by God.

All of the future that is undetermined by God (which includes all future free choices and actions), since it has not happened and hence is not real, cannot be an object of knowledge. This future, they say, is logically unknowable, and as such not even God can rightly be said to know what cannot in principle be known.

Thus, according to Ware (2000:31) open theism has been emerging for the past twenty years as a prominent alternative to the classical *Arminian* model of Divine providence. With the publication in 1994 of *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*, co-authored by C

Pinnock, R Rice, J Sanders, W Hasker, and D Basinger, the openness proposal moved from backstage to find its place under the spotlight.

Referring to the open theism view, Pinnock et al (1994:103-104) offers a succinct summary of the key notions, doctrinal commitments, and values of open theism:

In this book we are advancing... the open view of God. Our understanding of the Scriptures leads us to depict God, the sovereign Creator, as voluntarily bringing into existence a world with significantly free personal agents in it, agents who can respond positively to God or reject his plans for them. In line with the decision to make this kind of world, God rules in such a way as to uphold the created structures and, because He gives liberty to his creatures, is happy to accept the future as open, not closed, and a relationship with the world that is dynamic, not static. We believe that the Bible presents an open view of God as living and active, involved in history, relating to us and changing in relation to us. We see the universe as a context in which there are real choices, alternatives and surprises. God's openness means that God is open to the changing realities of history, that God cares about us and lets what we do impact him. Our lives make a difference to God—they are truly significant. God is delighted when we trust Him and saddened when we rebel against him. God made us significant creatures and treats us as such.

Further on, a case study will be undertaken to demonstrate that this view is, to a certain degree, in opposition to a traditional theistic view of God, as the One who controls and keeps everything by His omniscient power. What is needed now is that the elements that make up a world-view need to be

explored, to show that the open view of God fails, in the author's view, the test of what comprises a traditional theistic world-view.

4.5 The Major Elements of a World View

The first question one should now ask is: What kind of beliefs make up a world-view? Nash (1992:26) puts forward that a well-rounded world-view includes beliefs in at least five major areas: God, reality, knowledge, morality, and humankind; thus, the following is a breakdown of those elements.

4.5.1 God

Perhaps the most important element of any world-view is what it says or does not say about God. As such, world-views thus differ greatly on this matter. About this, Byl (2001:224) suggests, that if God is the starting point of any world-view, then one should give His revealed Word the utmost confidence as the only trustworthy source of knowledge beyond ones observable horizon. Thus, the questions one would ask regarding matters surrounding world-views is;

- Does God even exist?
- What is the nature of God?
- Is there only one true God?

- Is God a personal being, i.e. is God the kind of being who can know, love, and act, or is God an impersonal force or power?

Recognising the importance of such questions, Packer (1981:45-49) firmly states that the Biblical name for God, Yahweh, expresses His self-sufficient sovereignty, limitless life, and infinite power (see Ps 139:1-4; Eph 1:4-5; Jn 5:26; Jer 32:17). Consequently then, God is the centre, source, and goal of all that exists (see Heb 1:2-3 and Col 1:16-17; Rev 1:8). He is creator, ruler and judge of everything created. Clearly, to ignore any of these elements will, beyond question, result in a God of diminished power and sovereignty, as is the case held by open theists.

4.5.2 Ultimate Reality

Given what has been said, a world-view should also include beliefs about ultimate reality, a subject often discussed under the term metaphysics. In the philosophical systems of thinkers like Plato and Aristotle, metaphysics often becomes a complex and mysterious subject. However, a person need not complicate their world-view for it to include metaphysical beliefs. Thus, generally speaking, these beliefs could include answers to questions such as:

- What is the relationship between God and the universe?
- Is the existence of the universe a brute fact?

- Is the universe eternal?
- Did an eternal, personal, omnipotent God create the world?
- Is God and the world co-eternal and interdependent?
- Is the world best understood in a mechanistic (that is, non-purposeful) way? Or is there a purpose in the universe?

The majority of these questions were dealt with and answered in the previous chapter.

4.5.3 Knowledge

Understandably, a third ingredient of any world-view is one's view of knowledge. Even people not given to philosophic pursuits hold beliefs on this subject. The easiest way to see this is simply to ask whether one believes that knowledge about the world is possible. Regardless of their answer, their reply will identify one element of their epistemology.

Other questions one could include are:

- What are the proper roles of reason and sense experience in knowledge?
- What is the relationship between religious faith and reason?
- Is knowledge about God possible?
- Can God reveal himself to human beings?

- Can God reveal information to human beings?

4.5.4 Ethics

Understandably, most people are more aware of the ethical element of their world-view than of their beliefs about metaphysics and epistemology. Reasons are, people continuously tend to morally judge the conduct of individuals, including themselves, others, and even nations. The kinds of ethical beliefs that are important in this context, however, are more basic than moral judgements about single actions (see Lewis 1947).

4.5.5 Humankind

Furthermore, every world-view includes several important beliefs about human beings. Examples may include:

- Are human beings free, or are they merely pawns of deterministic forces?
- Are human beings only bodies or material beings, or were all the religious and philosophical thinkers correct who talked about the human soul or who distinguished the mind from the body?
- If they were right in some sense, what is the human soul or mind, and how is it related to the body?

Additionally, a person's world-view could also include a set of ideals that lays out how he or she thinks things should be. These ideals produce a gap between the way things are and the way they ought to be. One could rightly consider world-views as double-edged swords. Thus, an inadequate conceptual scheme can, like improper eyeglasses, hinder ones efforts to understand God, the world, and humankind, while the right conceptual scheme can bring everything into focus.

Rightly, one can say, the world exists solely because of a free decision to create by a God who is eternal, transcendent, spiritual, omnipotent, omniscient, omni-benevolent, loving, and personal. Therefore, because there is a God-ordained order to the creation, human beings can discover that order. It is this order that makes science possible; and it is this order that scientists attempt to capture in their laws.

Clearly, as shown through the elements presented, open theism fails almost every required element, in the author's view, needed to correctly build a theistic world-view. Indeed, one can still take this even further, by showing just how dangerous open theism can be. The following will show how open theism can damage the credibility of Scripture by the way it introduces post-modern thinking into its tenets.

In considering the above statement, and in interpreting open theism vis-à-vis a theistic world-view, one would also need to understand its tenets and how they relate to post-modern thought. Hence, the following section will commit to uncovering some of the dangers of a post-modern world-view. This will include how this system has effected and conformed some to accept open theism, as a viable alternative to classical Christian thinking on determinism, God's sovereignty and His omniscience. Modernism and its relation to Christianity will also be explored.

4.6 Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Self

Firstly, according to Dockery (2001:108-109), modernism is characterised by vesting authority in humanity itself. Whether following the external canons of empiricism or the internal canons of rationalism and romanticism, the modernist mind accomplished enthroning humanity as the final arbiter of truth. Secondly, this human authority, according to Dockery, asserts itself both against corporate authority and Divine revelation, either in denying them altogether, or in subjecting them to the individual for validation. While human autonomy is at the heart of every non-Christian thought system, modernism distinguished itself by its self-consciousness. However, modernity can also be defined as a cultural condition characterised by constant change in the pursuit of progress. As such, modernism can also denote the attempt of scholars and theologians to bring religious thought into harmony with the scientific findings and secular

philosophies of the day. The question one may now ask is: Could one combine modernism with Christianity in its pursuit of understanding reality?

4.6.1 Christian Modernism

It was stated in the beginning of this thesis, that according to McGrath (2004:32), a scientific theology is fundamentally Christian in its foundation and in its approach. Thus, in the author's view, one could use the term, *Christian Modernist or contemporary thinker*, when working within science and theology to further understand reality. Furthermore, one could do this, in the author's opinion, without having to enthrone humanity - as expressed by Dockery- as the final arbitrator of truth. In saying this, the author would like to present the following definition of a Christian modernist. A Christian modernist, or contemporary thinker, affirms the power of human beings, including the authority of scripture, the enlightenment of the Spirit and scientific knowledge and technology, to make, improve, deconstruct and reshape their built environment. Therefore, in the author's view, the essence of the Christian modernist is both progressive and optimistic, and therefore this approach can, and has been effectively used throughout this thesis, to further the understanding of reality.

In opposition to modernism, postmodernism is the belief that direction, evolution, and progression have ended in social history. Society is rather based on the decline of absolute truth, and the rise of relativity. All truth within a

postmodern context is relative to one's viewpoint or stance. Postmodernism is therefore an attempt to think beyond the confines of the past; it especially does not take other people's views as the final truth. In the following section, this view will be explored regarding its relationship and influence on current Christian thinking, specifically its influence on open theism.

4.6.2 Postmodernism and Christianity

In the view of Erickson (2002:59), one question that will immediately arise for Christians is how this postmodernism mood and way of thinking corresponds to the Christian faith. Is it possible to be a Christian and to be post-modernist? Are there elements of postmodernism that are compatible with traditional Christianity, perhaps even conducive to it, and are there elements that are in conflict with Christianity?

However, one should first ask whether this is yet an issue. Are there suggestions that Christianity, specifically evangelical Christianity, has absorbed and is displaying any elements of postmodernism?

4.7 Relating Christianity to the Changing Times

Over the years of church history, Christians have held several different opinions about how they should associate their Christian beliefs to the spirit of the times.

Some contend, according to Erickson (2002:63-64), that it is not only what one believes, but also how one preserves the way it is expressed that matters. Thus, no adaptation in presenting the Christian message because of the cultural situation of the recipient or recipients is therefore needed. One simply declares the message, relying on the Holy Spirit to make it intelligible. Similarly, as cultural forces change, there is no need to alter the way one understands the doctrines or explains them to one.

A second grouping in Erickson's view (2002:64), believes there is an unchanging content of the Christian faith. Unless one thus preserves this content, one is no longer dealing with what one terms Christianity. Respectfully, this group is similar to the first one described. Unlike them, however, these Christians believe that the form of conception or expression of the message can suitably adapt to the situation and the times. Therefore, this group believes that just as the Bible continues to be translated into many different languages without changing what it says, so its message can be expressed in many different cultural forms without losing the essential meaning of the original. Thus it can be brought forth in various time periods, using ways of thinking current at those times. Similarly, it can be expressed in different cultures, including African and Asian, just as it is in Western or First World ways of thinking. It can also be expressed at different levels of sophistication and abstractness or complexity. Moreover, one can put it into language and imagery understandable by children, or that which makes sense to a highly educated adult.

4.8 God, the Reality-Constructor

Responding to this, Dockery (2001:110), states that the church may react to this challenge by seeing the creative word of God as a reality-constructor. Thus, a fundamental activity in Scripture is the Bible's articulation of a transcendent, ultimate reality. This is often, if not usually, in contrast to perceived reality. One such case is when the servant of Elisha sees the armies of God surrounding Dothan (2 Kings 6:8-17). Another is when Isaiah sees the vision of God on His throne in the face of pending exile in Isaiah 6. Furthermore, it is found in John's visions of God enthroned and ruling over the earth as written initially for late first-century Christians under intense persecution (Rev. 4-5). In many places within the Scriptures, one is urged to look beyond the order which ones own senses have construed and look, "for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Heb. 11:10). Many do not naturally perceive this transcendent reality. Consequently then, God established a host of metaphors and images through which one is able to view it.

As a result, God's relationship with His people is presented by various metaphors which emphasise different aspects of that relationship. No one metaphor is adequate in capturing the richness of God's nature or the wonder of His relationship with His creatures. Therefore, the task of biblical interpretation may proceed in this post-modern age, with a view to deconstructing false views

and reconstructing – one might even say, proclaiming apt reality. Doubtless, one may do this quite effectively through the images of Scripture.

Given all that has been said, one needs to evaluate and judge open theism according to how it stands up to the scrutiny of Scripture. Therefore, one must ascertain if it either enlightens ones understanding of God, reality and humankind, or if it brings confusion within these particular areas.

4.9 Deconstructing Open Theism

Scripture does not precisely define the nature of human freedom, but philosophers and theologians do discuss it. In general, scholars usually present two main notions of freedom; *libertarianism* and *compatibilism*. Needless to say, both conceptions of human freedom clearly contradict each other, but both are possible views of freedom in the sense that there is no logical contradiction in affirming either view. Supporting the notion that both views of freedom are coherent and defensible, Flint (1988:177-79) puts forward that: “Ultimately the view of freedom that one ought to embrace should be the view that best fits the Biblical data, not our pre-conceived notions of what human freedom is or ought to be”. What follows is a breakdown of the differences and similarities between libertarianism and compatibilism.

According to Wellum (2002:260), compatibilists view human actions as causally determined, yet free. In other words, in contrast to a libertarianistic view, a compatibilist view of freedom, in the view of Peterson et al (1991:59), perceives the human will as decisively and sufficiently inclined toward one option. Thus, even though it opposes the libertarianistic view, it is still free as long as it meets the following requirements:

1. The immediate cause of the action is a desire, wish, or intention internal to the agent.
2. No external event or circumstances compels the action to be performed, and
3. The agent could have acted differently if he or she had chosen to (see Peterson et al (1991:26-28)).

If these three conditions are met, then even though the human action is determined, it may still be considered free. John Feinberg (1987:400) summarises this view well when he states:

If the agent acts in accord with causes and reasons that serve as a sufficient condition for his doing the act, and if the causes do not force him to act contrary to his wishes, then a soft determinist would say that he acts freely.

Generally, open theists like Sanders (1998:220-224) reject this view of freedom, and they do so quite strongly.

Considering this, one could ask: What exactly is the openness proposal regarding the relationship between Divine sovereignty, omniscience, and human freedom? Probably the best place to begin is to define clearly what open theists mean by human freedom, before one can turn to how they view the Divine sovereignty, omniscience and human freedom relationship.

When it comes to human freedom in current philosophical and theological literature, there are two basic views which are primarily discussed and adopted. The one is an *indeterministic* notion referred to in various ways such as libertarian free will or *incompatibilism*, and a deterministic notion referred to as compatibilism or soft determinism. Open theism strongly endorses the former rather than the latter. Therefore, it is important to be clear as to what this view of freedom is, since, as one shall see, it has dramatic implications for how the open theist construes the Divine sovereignty, omniscience and human freedom relationship.

The question one may now ask is: What then do philosophers and theologians mean by a libertarianistic view of freedom? Simply stated, the most basic sense of this view is that a person's act is free, if not causally determined. For libertarians, this does not mean that one's actions are random or arbitrary. In the view of Wellum (2002:259), reasons and causes play upon the will as one chooses, but none of them is sufficient to incline the will decisively in one

direction or another. Thus, a person could always have chosen otherwise than he or she did. Basinger (1993:416) puts it this way; for a person to be free with respect to performing an action, they must have it within their power “to choose to perform action A or choose not to perform action A. Both A and not A could actually occur. However, which will actually occur has not yet been determined” (see Hasker 1983:32-44).

Thus, a further question one may now ask is: How does open theism conceive of the Divine sovereignty and human freedom relationship, given its commitment to libertarianism? One could take it even further by asking how open theists view the relationship between a libertarian view of human freedom and God’s sovereign rule over the affairs of humanity. Wellum (2002:260) believes that most open theists, if not all of them, tend to “limit” God’s sovereignty in some sense. Furthermore, he states, that with the word “limit”, one is not necessarily using the word in a disparaging or negative sense. Instead, it is used in the sense that God freely chooses to limit Himself by virtue that He has chosen to create a certain kind of world which contains human beings with libertarian freedom. In this sense then, “limit”, does not refer to a weakness or flaw in God, but rather to a self-imposed limit that is part of His plan, not a violation of it (see Cottrell: 1989:108-110).

Obviously, this view is in stark contrast to the compatibilist or soft determinist view. According to the determinist, if a person acts in accord with

causes and reasons that serve as a sufficient condition for the person doing the act, and the causes do not force the person to act contrary to their wishes, then a soft determinist would say the person has acted freely. Open theists like Sanders (1998:220-2240) and Basinger (1993:21-37), generally reject this view of freedom, and they do so quite strongly. This leads one to the next point of discussion, namely that of the openness view of *Divine Omniscience*.

Traditionally, according to Wellum (2002:262), Christian theologians and philosophers have sought to maintain that God has complete and infallible knowledge of everything past, present, and future. Accordingly, Morris (1991: 87) writes;

Not only is God omniscient, He is necessarily omniscient, i.e. it is impossible that His omniscience collapse, fail, or even waver. He is, as philosophers nowadays often say, omniscient in every possible world. That is to say, He is actually omniscient, and there is no possible, complete and coherent story about any way things could have gone (no possible world) in which God lacks this degree of cognitive excellence.

However, as scholars have long been discussing in the history of theology, this view of God's omniscience does appear to generate a thorny problem. Simply put: How can one possibly conceive to be free in ones actions if God knows exactly how one will act on every occasion in the future. Morris (1991:89) poses the problem in this way,

If God already knows exactly how we shall act, what else can we possibly do? We must act in that way. We cannot diverge from the path that He sees we shall take. We cannot prove God wrong. He is necessarily omniscient. Divine foreknowledge thus seems to preclude genuine alternatives and thus genuine freedom in the world.

Clearly, this is a valid question, especially if one brings into the equation the study of nature from a scientific perspective. For example, Karl Barth, a neo-orthodox writer, and others of his persuasion used the idea of primary and secondary causes to defend Divine sovereignty of nature. At the same time though, they kept the idea of free will as a God-given attribute of human nature. Furthermore, Barth (1958:148) asserted that God, “rules unconditionally and irresistibly in all occurrences”. Nature is God’s “servant”, the “instrument of His purposes.” God controls, orders, and determines, for “nothing can be done except the will of God.” God foreknows and also predetermines and foreordains. “The operation of God is as sovereign as Calvinist teaching describes it. In the strictest sense it is predestinating”. Clearly, Barth affirms in the view of Barbour (2000:160), both Divine sovereignty and creaturely autonomy. As such, God controls, and all creaturely determinations are “wholly and utterly at the disposal of His power”. As a consequence, the creature “goes its own way, but in fact it always finds itself on God’s way.” Thus the idea is that all causality in the world is subordinate to God. For Barth, when a human hand writes with a pen, the whole action is performed by both – not part by hand and part by pen. Barth further declared that creaturely causes like the pen, are real,

but “have the part only by submission” to the Divine hand that guides them (Barth 1958:42, 94, 106, 133).

Furthermore, Farrer (1966:76, 90) writes that “God’s agency must actually be such as to work omnipotently on, in, and through creaturely agencies, without either forcing them or competing with them”. As a result, God acts through the matrix of secondary causes and is manifest only in their overall pattern. “He does not impose an order against the grain of things, but makes them follow their own bent and work out the world by being themselves”. Barbour (2000:161) puts it this way, “we cannot say anything about *how* God acts; there are no ‘casual joints’ between infinite and finite actions and no gaps in the scientific account. So, too, the free act of a person can at the same time be ascribed to the person and to the grace of God acting in human life”.

As a result, it is at this point that open theists offer a solution, according to Wellum (2002:263), to the foreknowledge-freedom problem that is logically consistent, yet a departure from traditional Christian belief. Their view is known as *presentism*. Presentism strongly insists that God knows everything there is to know, i.e. God is truly omniscient. However, presentism then adds this very critical point: It is precisely future free actions of people that are impossible to know. Swinburne (1993:175) sums it up thus “omniscience is knowledge of everything true which is logically possible to know”. Given libertarianistic freedom, they insist, it is impossible for anyone, including God Himself, to truly

know what people will do since there are no antecedent sufficient conditions which decisively incline a person's will in one direction over another. Thus, in upholding a libertarianistic view of human freedom, open theism denies that God can know the future free actions of human beings (see Hasker 1989:136-138; and Basinger 1993:55-64).

Perhaps one may ask: what are some of the implications of such a view, seeing that open theists consider God to be a "risk-taker". It seems that as God does not know the future, logically, God must respond and adapt to surprises and to unexpected happenings. As a result, the implications are that not only does God lack exact and infallible knowledge of the contingent future, but, as Basinger (1993:58) argues, "It can no longer be said that God is working out his ideal, preordained plan. Rather, God may well find Himself disappointed in the sense that this world may fall short of that ideal world God wishes were coming about".

A question that comes to mind is: Do open theists believe that God's ultimate plans will not come to pass? The answer is no, according to Wellum (2002:263). Rather, open theists argue, even though God does not have exhaustive knowledge of future contingents, He is still God. Moreover, given His familiarity with present causal tendencies and His clear grasp of His own providential designs, God is almost sure about how the future will turn out even

though the future remains open. In defence of this, Rice (1985:55-56) explains it thus:

God's future thus resembles ours in that it is both definite and indefinite. But it differs greatly from ours in the extent to which it is definite. Since we are largely ignorant of the past and present, the future appears vastly indefinite to us. We know very little of what will happen because we know and understand so little of what has already happened. God, in contrast, knows all that has happened. Therefore a great deal of the future that appears vague and indefinite to us must be vividly clear to Him.

Despite these arguments, one must add that even after all the caveats are factored in, open theists must still affirm that a God, with only present knowledge, must take risks. Clearly, if decisions made by God depend solely on the responses of free creatures, then creating and governing such a world is, in the words of Hasker (1989:197), "a risky business."

An example of this type of "risky business" is found in the way open theists view specific passages in the Bible. Consider the following examples where, according to Ware (2000:45), openness proponents claim that God learns and may even be taken by surprise by what develops in His relation with humans.

In Genesis 22:10-12, God halts Abraham at the last moment with knife in hand ready to be raised above Isaac's tethered body and says, "Do not stretch

out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me”.

Commenting on this text, Sanders first approvingly quotes Brueggemann (1982:187) who writes, “God genuinely does not know.... The flow of the narrative accomplishes something in the awareness of God. He did not know. Now He knows.” Consequently, Sanders (1998:52-53) explains further:

If the test is genuine for both God and Abraham, then what is the reason for it? The answer is to be found in God’s desire to bless all the nations of the earth (Gen 12:3). God needs to know if Abraham is the sort of person on whom God can count for collaboration toward the fulfilment of the Divine project. Will he be faithful? Or must God find someone else through whom to achieve his purpose? God has been faithful; will Abraham be faithful? Will God have to modify his plans with Abraham? In Gen 15:8, Abraham asked God for assurance. Now it is God seeking assurance from Abraham.

According to Sanders, this account is illustrative of the fact that God does not know what free creatures will do until they act. For example: Will Abraham obey God? For Sanders, unfortunately God does not know. However, because of the test, God learns here and now that Abraham will. Thus, according to Sanders “We rob the passage of its natural meaning, when we strip from it its simple message contained in God’s own words”: “For *now* I know.”

Furthermore, Sanders also argues that earlier episodes in the biblical narratives clearly show that not only does God learn moment by moment as

humans freely choose and act, but at times, occurrences may even genuinely surprise God. As a result, future free actions may not only be unknown by God; they may also be unanticipated. Accordingly, Sanders (1998:45-46) suggests that the first sin of the woman and man in the Garden of Eden would constitute such a case. He writes:

God, in freedom, establishes the context in which a loving and trusting relationship between Himself and the humans can develop. God expects that it will, and there is no reason to suspect, at this point in the narrative, that any other possibility will come about. A break in the relationship does not seem plausible considering all the good that God has done.

Yet, according to Sanders (1998:46), “the implausible, the totally unexpected happens.” Furthermore, in Sanders’ view, not only does God learn that the man and woman have sinned, but God is, as it were, quite *surprised* by this occurrence. Although God always knew that sin was possible, it was not probable, or plausible, or expected that His human creatures would turn their backs on Him. Thus, it is impossible to know how often this may be the case in unfolding human history, but here according to Sanders, one has a concrete example where God’s belief about the future, i.e. what He thought most likely to occur were strikingly wrong. Rather, the “totally unexpected happens,” God is surprised, and so God corrects His mistaken beliefs as He learns this truth that the man and woman have sinned.

Although Sanders gives many such examples, the most significant one is due to the central importance of this event in all of human history. For Sanders (1998:100-101), it simply is not and cannot be the case that God *knew* in advance that Christ would in fact choose to be crucified. Thus, Christ's decision to go to the cross was not made in eternity past, according to Sanders - as it was not foreknown by God - but rather in the historical moment when, in prayer to the Father, Christ determined *then* to take this path. The fact that Jesus prays to the Father, "If You are willing, let this cup pass from Me." Thus, Matt 26:39 is, in the view of Sanders, evidence that the future was open. For Sanders, no decision was made in eternity past concerning Christ's death, and the cross was not inevitable.

But how can this be, one may ask for say *Theism*, in which God creates a world in which He foreknows with complete accuracy and precision exactly what will occur in every moment of history? For in such a view, as Sanders (1998:196-197) describes it, "God is never caught off guard, never surprised by any event and never forced to make any ad hoc decisions." Where is the risk in this view, one may ask? Of course Sanders continues, "God remains a risk taker in the sense that God allows libertarian freedom and does not control what the creatures do with it".

Thus according to Sanders' statement, it seems that there is a sense in which God takes a risk in His creation of the world, in any non-deterministic

model of Divine providence. Therefore, granting libertarianistic freedom is a sufficient, and perhaps a necessary condition for genuine risk-taking. But, despite this, there is a sense in which the level of risk for the God of open theism is obviously greater. According to Ware (2000:48), in all other Arminian or non-deterministic models, at least one can say that before God creates the world, He knows exactly what He is getting when He brings the world into existence. As a result, God can foresee just what will happen and He knows every aspect of history and its outcome from the start. Every detail of the future, including every future free creaturely choice and action, is foreknown by God with exact precision before He acts, to bring the world into existence. And importantly, in all of these other Arminian models, from all eternity, God knows with certainty that, and precisely how, He will reign victorious in the end, in accomplishing all His purposes and fulfilling all His promises. Unfortunately, this is not so with the God of open theism.

4.10 God's Infinity and His Omniscience

According to Geisler & House (2001:26-27), both theists and open theists agree that God is infinite (without limits). God's knowledge is identical with His nature, since He is a simple Being. So then, God must know according to His Being, thus, God must know infinitely. Understandably then, to be limited in knowledge of the future is thus not to know infinitely. Hence, God's infinite knowledge must include all future events; if it did not, then He would be limited in His knowledge

and perhaps one could then consider God to be finite? Moreover, they further argue that all effects pre-exist in their efficient cause, since a *cause* cannot produce what it does not possess, it cannot give what it does not have. However, God is the First Cause of all that exists or will exist. Hence, the future, including all of its free actions, pre-exists in God. By knowing Himself, God knows all future free actions. God knows Himself infallibly and eternally. Thus, He has infallible and eternal knowledge of all free actions that will ever occur.

Clearly, reality consists of and includes both the actual and the possible. Given this, only the impossible is not real. Despite this, however, God's knowledge extends to all that is real. If it did not, then He would not be all-knowing, since there would be something that He did not know. Since God knows the possible as well as the actual, God must therefore know the future, since the future is possible, not impossible. If it were impossible, then it would never happen. Hence, God must know all that will be actualised in the future, including all future free acts.

Unfortunately, this leaves one with the question regarding the problem of evil. This problem according to Pyne & Spencer (2001:266) is perhaps the dominant question of contemporary theology. How can one believe in a good and sovereign God amid horrific evil? Open theists take the problem very seriously, and they believe they address it more satisfactorily than do classical theists.

For example, Hasker (1989:91-201) argues at length that open theism handles the problem of sin far better than the traditional way of viewing sin, i.e. it is a problem of the original sin of Adam. For Hasker “God is a risk taker” because of His lack of control over human actions, he writes:

One finds excellence in the vision of a creation which, wholly dependent every moment on the sustaining and energising power of it’s Creator, nevertheless contains beings which possess under God’s un-programmed freedom, a creativity of their own; *and* if such a case may be made, then it will be possible to claim that the God of free will theism is indeed the being through which nothing greater can be conceived.

As a result of this type of freedom, Boyd (1997:38-39) opens his book *God at War* with the story of *Zosia*, a child tortured and killed by Nazis in front of her mother. Viewing her experience through the words of the hymn, “My Times Are in Thy Hand”, Boyd writes,

Again, if we have the courage to allow the antinomy between the lyrics of this hymn and *Zosia*’s tortured screams to engage us on a concrete level, the antinomy borders on the unbearable. What does it mean to assert that the hand of the all-powerful and all loving Father “will never cause his child a needless tear” when asserted in the vicinity of a child who has just had her eyes plucked out and of the screams of *Zosia*’s terrorised mother? In this concrete context, does not suggesting that this event came from the hand of God, and that it came about “as best as it seemed to thee”, come close to depicting God on Hitlerian terms? What is more, would not such a conception significantly undermine the godly urgency one should have to confront such evil as something that God is

unequivocally against?... The Nazis' agenda somehow here seems to receive Divine approval. Yet while we are to view the Nazis' agenda as being diabolically evil, we are apparently supposed to accept that God's agenda in ordaining or allowing the Nazis' behavior is perfectly good.

Furthermore, Boyd (1997:20) contends that the Bible was written from the perspective of a "warfare world-view". As he describes it, this world-view;

is predicated on the assumption that Divine goodness does not completely control or in any sense will evil; rather, good and evil are at war with one another. This assumption obviously entails that God is not now exercising exhaustive, meticulous control over the world. In this world-view, God must work with, and battle against, other created beings. While none of these beings can ever match God's own power, each has some degree of genuine influence within the cosmos. In other words, a warfare world-view is inherently pluralistic. There is no single, all-determinative Divine will that coercively steers all things, and hence there is here no supposition that evil agents and events have a secret Divine motive behind them. Hence too, one need not agonize over what ultimately good, transcendent Divine purpose might be served by any particular evil event.

Sadly, statements such as these imply, according to Pyne & Spencer (2001:267), that God is not able to prevent evil events from happening; a conclusion that does little to reinforce one's hope for the future. However, in defence, open theists scoff at this conclusion, for they believe God can intervene. Arguing that God will surely defeat His enemies in the *eschaton*, Boyd (1997:287) writes, "Hence the ability of any within the angelic or human society of God's creation to rebel freely against God shall some day come to an end".

However, Pyne & Spencer (2001:268) rightly state that after expressing his disgust at the “Hitlerian” implications of providence, is this the way Boyd would answer his own questions about the cries of a tortured child? Did God, who was capable of intervening, choose not to act because He wanted the oppressor to remain free? If open theists believe that God can intervene to prevent tragedies of human evil or for that matter, natural disasters, they have in no way, in the author’s view, escaped the traditional problem of evil.

4.11 God and Determinism

On the opposite side of this thinking, lies the *deterministic view*, the claim that everything is determined. The question is: Is the determinist right?

Before addressing the arguments for determinism, it is necessary to remove some misconceptions about the deterministic position. According to Hasker (1983:37) it must be most strongly emphasised that determinists do not deny that people make choices. If they did deny this, their position would be absurd, but the fact is they do not. Besides, the experience of choosing, of seeing alternatives, weighing up desirability, and finally making up one’s mind, is not any different whether one is a libertarian or a determinist. Thus, while determinists believe that there are sufficient conditions which will govern their choices, they do not know at any given time what those determinants are, or how they will decide as a result of them. So, like everyone else, they simply

have to make up their own minds. As a result, the difference between the liberterianistic and determinist lies in interpreting the experience of choice, not in the experience itself.

One may ask: What are the arguments for determinism? For some (perhaps many) determinists, determinism seems to have the status of an ultimate principle. For example, Leibniz (1996:66) found the *principle of sufficient reason* to be a necessary truth of reason. This particular principle states that, for anything which occurs, there must be some sufficient reason that thing occurs rather than something else. As such, Hasker (1983:38) asks: “And how can this be doubted? If there is no *sufficient* reason for something to happen, then this means that the reason that actually exists is *insufficient*, and if that were so, the event would not take place.”

However, Barrett (2004:146-147) believes differently. He states, that the idea of Divine providential action through hidden introduced active information, is consonant with that of a gracious Creator. That is, one who allows the creation to be itself and to have room to develop through the exercise of human free will including the pathways of free procedures. This may also be accomplished via divinely installed guiding principles of chance and necessity. In Christian theology it is the Creator-Spirit who is thus creatively at work throughout space-time (see Jn 5:15 and Rev 21:5). This Spirit of Life, is referred to by Taylor (1972:27-28) as the *go-between God*, he states;

God is ever at work in nature, in history and in human living, and wherever there is a flagging or corruption or self-destruction in God's handiwork, He is present to renew and energize and create again... If we think of a Creator at all, we are to find Him always on the inside of creation. And if God is really on the inside, we must find Him in the process, not in the gaps. We know now that there are no gaps... If the hand of God is to be recognised in His continuous creation, it must be found not in isolated intrusions, not in any gaps, but in the very process itself.

Peacocke (1993:174-175) likens the role of the Creator to that of the composer-

who, beginning with an arrangement of notes in an apparently simple subject, elaborates and expands it into a fugue by a variety of devices of fragmentation, augmentation and re-association... Thus might the Creator be imagined to enable (the unfolding of) the potentialities of the universe which He himself has given it, nurturing by His redemptive and providential actions those that are to come to fruition in the community of free beings — an improviser of unsurpassed ingenuity — a composer extemporizing a fugue on a given theme.

Although arguments such as these have considerable weight, many determinists believe the strongest reasons for their position come from the theory and practice of modern science. The most general scientific argument for determinism is found in the claim that determinism is a “methodological assumption,” a “necessary presupposition” of science, according to Hasker (1983:39). In his view the scientist is seeking to understand, explain and control nature, therefore, the way to reach this goal is by discovering and stating the universal laws to which natural processes conform. The scientist, to begin with,

does not know what the laws are; i.e. what he or she is trying to determine through investigation. However, it is absolutely essential to assume that such laws exist, i.e. the ones that determinism holds, for if he or she does not assume this, the whole endeavour makes no sense at all. And of course all this applies as much to the science of human behaviour as to any other part of science. Thus Skinner (1962:257) states: “You can’t have a science about a subject matter which hops capriciously about. Perhaps we can never prove that man isn’t free; it’s an assumption. But the increasing success of a science of behaviour makes it more and more plausible.”

One should note that scientists can only presuppose determinism as a working hypothesis. As such, the claim that everything is determined is not a scientific conclusion, but rather a philosophical assumption. As Evans (1996:52) puts it:

No one has actually discovered the scientific laws that the determinists believe underlie all human behaviour. Though several generations of psychologists, sociologists, and social scientists of other stripes have laboured mightily, no one knows the laws of human behaviour that are in any way comparable to the laws discovered by the physical scientists.

Consequently, Hasker (1983:41) states that the argument that determinism is a “necessary presupposition of science” seems clearly unsound. Note firstly that the presupposition is relevant to the work of the scientist only if he or she commits to finding and formulating laws which are strictly

deterministic. That is, laws which assert that in a given set of conditions exactly one result can and must follow. But many fields of science seem to get along quite happily with statistical laws which assert merely that, out of several cases of a certain kind, a certain percentage will yield a specific result. Of course, it might be said that this simply reflects the immature and unsatisfactory condition of those sciences. This meaning, the statistical laws are merely temporary stand-ins for the deterministic laws that represent ones ultimate goal.

But even if one were to concede that the final aim of the scientist must be formulation of deterministic laws, this by no means justifies one assuming the truth of determinism. However, what it does justify is the claim that *if success is possible in a certain field of science* - where “success” is defined as the discovery of truth, deterministic laws - then there must be deterministic laws which hold true of the phenomena of that field. But whether success is possible can only be found out by looking.

Therefore, one can say that the argument for determinism as a methodological assumption of science is unconvincing. There is no concrete support yet from the specific sciences; as impressive as it might seem on the outside. In fact, the progress of physics, has led it in the opposite direction (see Barrett 2004; Barbour 2000; Clayton 1997).

But, one may still ask: How then does open theism deal with the area of God's sovereign rule and His omniscience including His predetermined plans for humankind? In the following section this will be dealt with and conclusions to this question reached.

4.12 Open Theism's Diminished God

As previously discussed, often the God of open theism is referred to as a God who takes risks. For example, Boyd (2000:57-58) suggests that taking responsible risks is a virtue, and so is appropriate for God, he writes:

Everyone who is psychologically healthy knows it is good to risk loving another person, for example. You may, of course, get hurt, for people are free agents. But the risk-free alternatives of not loving or of trying to control another person, is evidence of insecurity and weakness, if not sickness. Why should we abandon this insight when we think about God, especially since Scripture clearly depicts God as sometimes taking risks?

Indeed, Boyd (2000:58) further suggests that "if God is truly 'above' taking risks, then, we must accept that things such as sin, child mutilations, and people going to hell are all in accordance with God's will." Though some affirm this, says Boyd, most Christians "reject it in horror." Clearly, God doesn't always get his way, but because God is wise, God's risks are always "worth it."

As a result of Boyd's statement, Ware (2000:50) correctly asks where in Scripture one sees God taking such risk. From the examples given above, it is clear from an openness perspective that God took a big risk in simply giving humans libertarian freedom. Although God wanted them to use their freedom to love and obey him, God knew such a capacity could be used for evil, destructive purposes. Thus, according to open theism, when the man and the woman first sinned, it showed how big a risk God took. Although God fully expected them to obey, they unfortunately failed the test, and brought the beginnings of extensive human sin into the world. This risk is all the more puzzling when one realises that God would have known that His holiness would require sin's penalty to be paid.

Despite the many expressions of hope suggested in open theism (see Sanders 1998:42), it must be seen, according to Ware (2000:51), just how significant is this sense of risk that God supposedly accepts. This is especially so when He chose to create the kind of world He has created. The fact is the God of open theism brings into existence a kind of world in which He largely really only exercises a power of love and persuasion towards His volitional creatures. All their free decisions, unknown in advance by Him, have the potential of either advancing or violating His purposes. The success of these purposes rests, rather significantly, in others' hands. At this very moment, according to open theism, not even God *knows* whether His purposes will be fulfilled. The God of open theism truly is the God who risks.

4.13 The Test of Open Theism

As stated in the beginning of this chapter, the open theism view needs to be tested as to its viability as a theistic world-view. The criteria set forth, according to Nash (1992:26), are that a well-rounded world-view includes beliefs in at least five major areas: God, reality, knowledge, morality, and humankind. The question one may now ask is: How does the open theism world-view compare with these criteria?

What follows, is the basic tenets of open theism. It is with these presuppositions that open theists approach the Bible and interpret it.

- God's greatest attribute is love.

This attribute of God is often elevated above His other attributes and used to interpret God in such a way as to be a cosmic gentleman who wants all to be saved, and mourns over their loss.

- Man's free will is truly free in the libertarian sense.

Man's free will is not restricted by his sinful nature but is equally able to make choices between different options.

By contrast, compatibilist free will states that a person is restricted and affected by his nature and that his nature not only affects his

free will choices, but also limits his ability to equally choose among different options.

- God does not know the future

This is either because God cannot know the future because it does not exist, or... It is because God chooses to not know the future even though it can be known.

- God takes risks

Because God does not know the future exhaustively, He must take risks with people whose future free will choices are unknowable.

- God learns

Because God does not know the future exhaustively, He learns as the realities of the future occur.

- God makes mistakes

Because God does not know all things and because He is dealing with free will creatures (whose future choices He does not know), God can make mistakes in dealing with people. Therefore, God would change His plans accordingly.

- God changes His mind

God can change His mind on issues depending on what He learns and what He discovers people do. Usually, God's change of mind is due to Him being surprised by something He did not plan for or expect.

As one can clearly see, open theism presents a view of God contrary to classical and orthodox Christianity, which sees God as sovereign, all knowing, and unchanging. Thus, one simply has to read these tenets of open theism, to realise that they fail in all five criteria that now follow.

- **God:** Not only is God's sovereignty and omniscience very questionable in open theism, but His ability to protect and love His people is also jeopardised.
- **Reality:** It questions the ability of God to bring to pass what He has stated He will, thus inferring that humankind has the ability to alter future reality, which includes God's plans.
- **Humankind:** Open theism questions God's ability to foresee what humankind will do in the future, which, as a consequence, brings about doubt as to His ability to protect His people, and create a future for them.

- **Ethics;** How can one ethically justify the evil in the world, according to open theists, unless one sees it through the eyes of the God of open theism who cannot, or is limited to control or halt the spread of evil.
- **Knowledge:** Doubtless, the God of open theism is limited in knowledge and understanding. As such, it is a direct attack on the omniscience and sovereignty of God, and is contrary to Scripture.

4.14 Conclusion

In concluding this case study of open theism and its failure as a viable theistic world view, one will do well to consider two questions that have been in the foreground throughout this part of the debate. Firstly, can the teachings of God's foreknowledge and determination of the future be accounted for in open theism? Secondly, do any of these teachings require that one affirm specifically God's exhaustive knowledge of the future?

First, notice the specificity and exactness, as well as the breadth and variety of God's knowledge and prediction of innumerable future items. God knows in advance every word that one speaks before it is even spoken. God predicts the naming of certain individuals long before they are born, as well as the places in specific kingdoms that are yet in the future. He declares how many kings will come at some future time, what alliances will be made and the affect

of these on other nations, and on Israel. He further knows how long government structures will be in place with precise accuracy, including the times and dates of events, which are far too numerous to mention here.

Second, one can notice how frequently that which was predicted, prophesied and determined by God has come to pass, even though the free will of people were involved. To make this point more forcefully, one needs to ask the question of how much of predictive material does some involvement of future free choices enter into the fulfilment of them, and one will realise that the vast majority, if not all, have come to pass. This will surely give one an idea of how much God knows of all the free choices, decisions, actions and contingencies relating to the totality of the future, both near and far.

In the following chapter, the crucial questions of how God provides guidance for his people will be explored. Special reference will also be made to how God leads people through prayer, including questions regarding areas such as: Can one trust God's leading and be confident that His direction is best, as opposed to the God of open theism, who relies on people making right decisions? Furthermore, how shall one interpret and make sense of the terrible suffering in the lives of people? As such, the question of: Is God at work to bring about good through all suffering, or is suffering or pain sometimes simply an unavoidable and pointless by-product of this sinful and evil world? Accordingly,

scientific case studies will be explored and compared to what Scripture states concerning these issues.