

Bite Size Bible Study

Reality? #141

By Pastor Lee

Many people tend to think that the Physical Sciences tell us the realities of the universe. But is that true? I recently watched a video of Dr. Matt O'Dowd in his PBS Space Time series. In it he questioned: What If Physics IS NOT Describing Reality? It made me start thinking about our Theology and the Bible. Stick with me and I will explain.

Neils Bohr said, "It is wrong to think that the task of physics is to find out how Nature is. Physics concerns what we can say about Nature." He also insisted that what we actually model is the results of our own observations, not the world itself.

His student and closest colleague, Werner Heisenberg, said: "The laws of nature which we formulate mathematically in quantum theory, no longer deal with the particles themselves but with our knowledge of the elementary particles." In other words, he is saying that the mathematical laws of physics don't govern reality, they're not even direct models of reality. Rather, the laws of physics are models of our experience of reality. Physics models state our observed information about the world. He also wrote "what we observe is not nature in itself but nature exposed to our method of questioning".

Then what is physics really trying to do? Is it to find the mathematical laws that govern the universe? Not really because no one has to solve the difficult equations related to electron motion for it to be able to do its thing. Our laws of nature are just models. So maybe the job of physics is to come up with laws that do the best job at predicting how the universe works; and then hope that we can infer truths about the universe based on which laws work best.

For those that have stuck with me thus far, let me ask some piquant questions about what we believe about our Theology.

Does our current Theology or our Bible actually tell us the complete story about the reality of God? If we do any study of the cultures in the Bible we soon find that each saw God in a different way. At times He was their protector, at times He was the accuser and the cause of their destruction. Some cultures saw Him as One. Others saw Him as a trinity. Some even saw Him as the head of a pantheon of gods. Each of these cultures saw God from the questions that they ask about – who is God? The questions that they ask gave them a particular perspective of who the Real God is, but not the complete reality. The answers that they worked out for their culture, worked for them; but not necessarily for another culture.

The Bible tells us how these various cultures saw God, but none saw God in His completeness. Their view worked for them in their time and the Real God worked with them in their limited understanding. God was not limited by their understanding but chose to work with them within that limit. Just as the electron can do its thing without our mathematical laws telling it what to do; so to, God can do His thing without our comprehension.

Does this mean that our Bible and the Theology that we read into it has no purpose? I don't believe that for a minute. There are truths that we find in each. These truths surpass our limited understanding of the real God. Love is one of many of those truths. Paul said: *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking it is not easily angered; it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.* 1Cor 13:4-7

This understanding seems to work in all cultures and seems to be universal. For now this seems to be how we see God – through His Love for His creation. But we need to remember that Love is not all of what God is. Our question is only partially answered. The complete answer to who and what God is, will have to wait.

Paul tells us: *For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.* 1 Cor 13:9-12

READ THAT AGAIN – VERY SLOWLY

I think in reference to the above it is time we as believers stop being so adamant about what we think we know about God and allow for others to have their perspectives about the only God. It is clear that we see God from the perspective of the questions we ask about Him and if we ask different questions we could get a different understanding. God is so much bigger than we can even conceive, who are we to tell another person that their view of God is imperfect or even wrong. It is our responsibility to live a life that conforms to the understanding He has given us and not to tell others of their errors in their understanding. It is the Holy Spirit that is responsible for teaching each person what he needs to know about God, and when that teaching will be understood and acted upon.

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