

The “Big Picture” Unifiers of Christian Worldview

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A. All things are created for God’s glory.

1. ***God has a supreme regard for the things that make Him known (Ps 19).*** The end or goal of creation is God’s glory manifested. Scripture is the *revelation about the revelation*. How you treat *general revelation* is inseparable from how you treat *special revelation* (the Bible) (Rom 1:18-23).
2. ***God has an infinite propensity to delight in His own glory*** (and to delight in the exhibition of that glory). God’s glory is, and must be, the object of all knowledge. Without God’s glory unifying all knowledge, we are left with the prospect of hopelessly fragmented (atomistic) ‘knowledge’. God’s disposition to communicate Himself is His *goodness*. God’s goodness is evidenced in what He does in creation and providence—His ordering of the world in providence is for the sake of His Name (Is 48:11; Ez 36:22-32; Rom 11:33-36; 2 Cor 4:14-15; 1 Cor 10:31; Eph 1:11).
3. ***The ground of the creature’s happiness is God’s eternal communication of Himself.*** The highest interest of the creature is the glory of God. The chief end of the moral portion of creation is that they are made to know their Creator (and find their all in all in Him). In the Person of Christ, God’s glory and our good are bound up together. This is what makes heaven a place of endless bliss—it is the unbroken communication of God to the creature (Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Edwards*, “The End for which God Created the World,” vol. 1, pp. 94-121).

B. This is a ‘moral universe’ created to be a stage for God’s moral majesty. God’s cause is focused upon His intent to manifest His moral majesty (his holiness)—this is ultimate reality. Only the redeemed are ‘rightly adjusted’ or oriented to this cause.

1. The Law is God’s holiness in transcript (or ‘codified’). ***The moral law as a codified copy of the divine nature***; an unchanging expression of the holy majesty of God’s Person (Rom 3:9-31).
2. Since God’s moral government is founded upon His Law, the ineffable principle of moral cause and effect (sowing and reaping) reveals God’s righteous character. ***God’s moral Law is built into the very fabric of the universe and creation*** (C. H. Dodd, *Gospel and Law*, pp. 70-71, 79).

C. The Cross of Christ is the central event in human history.

1. ***The Son of God brought everything into harmony with the holiness of God—through Christ all of God’s enemies will under His feet (1 Cor 15:25).*** To be sure; this harmony has two different expressions: justification and judgment (David Wells, *No Place for Truth*, pp. 299-301).
2. ***In both expressions (the cross and hell), the holiness of God comes into its full and awful expression.*** In the one case, it does so in Him who bears the consequences of that wrath on behalf of those He represents. In the other case, it is expressed in the final and awesome alienation in hell of those in whom God’s judgment vindicates for all eternity His holiness (Ibid.).

D. It is only possible for sinners to regain a true knowledge of God by seeing the divine glory in the face of Christ (2 Cor 4:4-6).

1. ***The glory of Christ is the sum of all His divine and human excellence.*** These perfections, centered in His Person, make Him the radiant point of the universe—the clearest manifestation of God to the creature—the object of supreme adoration, admiration, and love. To see His glory is to be saved; from then on, through *beholding the Lord*, we are transformed from glory to glory (2 Cor 3:18).
2. ***Christ as Logos emanates the brightness of the Father's glory.*** Christ is equal with God; yet clothed in our nature (Phil 2:6). In Christ's *Theanthropic Person*; the divine and the human meet, and are 'reconciled' that we might eternally experience the closest possible communion with God.
3. ***At the moment of conversion; God floods the heart with light.*** The result of the light shining is *gnosis*—the saving knowledge of God; the revelation of the Father in the Son; the image of the invisible transcendent God—in whom are hidden all the treasures of God's wisdom and knowledge (Col 2:3). The light of God shining into the heart removes satanically induced blindness (darkness which originated in the Edenic Lie) and brings the true knowledge of God.
4. ***In Christ incarnate, we see God's perfect attributes in our own human nature.*** Sinful, mortal man cannot adequately contemplate the perfections of God (as mere *abstractions*), for God's glory is spiritual and transcendent and man cannot grasp it. Men have no immediate knowledge, no earthly equivalent, and no point of contact with the glory of God. It is true that a form of 'reflected glory' can be seen in the wonders of God's creation (Ps 19; Rom 1:18-21). But God's *essential glory* must be reflected in the face of Christ in order for us to savingly know and behold God (Heb 1:1-3).
5. ***Being placed 'in Christ' changes our relationship to God's glory.*** The natural man has no sentiment to live for God's glory. By contrast, the saved man becomes an "*unveiled one*" to behold God's glory in Christ (3:14-18). In the Person and work of Christ, God has made our cause (eternal life with Him) His cause. *To see the glory of God in the face of Christ creates in us a passion for God's glory and brings us into total sympathy with God's plan to glorify Himself.*

E. The gospel begins with who God is—that His nature and disposition is to share Himself with us that He might be glorified and we might enter into His joy.

1. ***God gives us Himself in Christ to the eternal joy and wellbeing of the redeemed creature.*** We must labor to view everything through this lens of the gospel (1 Jn 2:24). For, God is the gospel. The ultimate gift of the gospel is that the gospel gives us God and His glory (John Piper).
2. ***The highest vantage point to view the unfolding mystery of redemption is to scan everything from the "mountain peak" of propitiation.*** From this mountain top of propitiation, we may view the entire perspective of God's self-revelation, the Bible. In Genesis, God met the sin of our first parents with the sacrifice of two lambs. This gracious act of God pointed to Christ's ultimate work of atonement (Gen 3:15). Jesus spends three years preaching, training, and healing, but He walks "eyes wide open" into betrayal, condemnation, and crucifixion (Luke 9:22). The closer the disciples came to Him, the more enigmatic the announcement of His impending death became to them (Matt 16:21-22ff) (J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, pp. 172-174).
3. ***The pinnacle of God's love is expressed in the following words: "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 Jn 4:10).*** Propitiation in Christ is the foundation of God's love to us and our love back to Him and to the brethren. The propitiation accomplished by Christ is the ground of our personal assurance of

salvation. As you search the Scriptures you will find that you cannot live a life of gratitude to God without assurance, you cannot worship aright without it, you will not be eager to obey and put off sinning without it. It requires assurance to love, and to serve with right motives. God desires a level of assurance for you characterized by confidence and enjoyment of God based upon propitiation. Because of these reasons, Scripture makes Christian assurance a duty (2 Pet 1:9-10; 1 Jn 5:11-12).

F. Christ's Lordship is both personal and cosmic (Col 1:15-20).

1. **Christ is supreme and preeminent; He has first place in all things.** All things exist for Him; for His glory and His pleasure. "In Him," means that Christ is the *sphere* in which creation took place. All the laws and purposes which guide creation and govern the universe reside in Him. He is not *in all things* (pantheism); but *all things are in Him* (dependent upon His majesty and transcendent might). In Him *all things* find their source, sustenance, order, purpose, and destiny.
2. **All things exist for Him and unto Him. Christ is the goal of all creation—the focal point of the universe.** The universe was created *for Him*; and it abides forever to that end. Christ is the ultimate point of reference of all things and every creature. He has absolute first place in the realm of creation—in every place, for all time, and over every atom.
3. **Cosmic reconciliation is needed because heaven and earth are not now united. Kingdoms are in conflict.** Sin ruined the universe; destroying the original creation harmony. (Note the four separations resulting from sin; *man from God; man from himself; man from man; and man from nature*). Through the blood of the cross the sin principle is conquered; the curse is borne, the Law is satisfied, evil principalities are disarmed, peace is made, restoration results. Though Christ and His cross, the universe is brought back and restored to its proper relation to God. The victory accomplished at the cross will be consummated at the glorious return. Only then will Christ's preeminence will be acknowledged by every creature (Phil 2:9-11).
4. **"Cosmic" reconciliation has as its cause the spiritual reconciliation accomplished at the cross!** It staggers our comprehension to grasp from Colossians chapter one that the *reconciliation* and *remaking* of the universe is not a fiat act as was original creation. "Cosmic" reconciliation has as its cause the spiritual reconciliation accomplished at the cross! So paramount is the Person and work of Christ that the very restoration of the universe is pictured as waiting for the public revealing of the sons of God (an event that will coincide with the lifting of the curse) (Rom 8:19-21ff; 2 Pet 3:10-13).

G. Christ is the consummation of all things (Eph 1:7-11).

1. The mystery that Christ incarnate should fulfill all of God's purposes has an **eschatological consummation**. Everything in the cosmos will be 'summed up' under the headship of Christ (Eph 1:7-11). Christ truly fills all things—the destiny of all things is determined by the relation they bear to Christ (Eph 1:23; Phil 3:21).
2. **Christ must reign until God's authority is restored in every single sphere.** Every enemy of God's glory will be placed under His feet (1 Cor 15:25-28). The salvation of sinners now is part of God's larger plan which encompasses the entire universe itself. Christ will bring all things to their consummation—for God's decree envelopes all things that take place in heaven, in earth, in hell; past, present, and future whether to believers, unbelievers, angels, or devils (Eph 1:9-12).
3. **To 'sum up in Christ' is a profound concept; the word for 'sum up' means to bring all things under**

one head, or heading. Just as when numerical figures are placed in a column and added up into a sum which makes sense; so also, Christ will make sense of all things. For the moment so much of man's existence appears fragmented and confused. The world is so filled with suffering, war, disease, violence, injustice, heresy, and rebellion. We long for the day when everything will be brought into meaningful relationship and definition under the Headship of Christ.

4. ***The permanence and continuance of the universe rest far more on Christ than upon physical laws—this is a Christo-centric universe.*** When Christ was born, the *Logos*, the eternal utterance of God was on earth in human form. At the incarnation; the meaning of life; and the meaning of all things entered the time, space, and mass as the *logos*; the Person of Christ (He is the rationality of the universe).
5. ***When Christ returns, only what is joined to Him will last. All else will be shaken into oblivion (Heb 12:27-29).*** All else will be weighed on the scales as worthless and blown away as chaff. Whatever is not built upon Christ the Rock will be judged by fire, and consumed as worthless. Consider how essential the truths of Christ's supremacy are to our boldness in proclaiming the Gospel (Matt 28:18-20).

H. The 'big picture' view of reality points ineffably toward an all-consuming question: "what is man's relationship to the Word of God?"

1. ***The greater part mankind does not understand the purpose of human history—that at its consummation, it will prove to be the public record of the honoring and the dishonoring of God and the revelation of what happens to each person as a result.***
2. ***Do we really understand that God has determined to publicly destroy human wisdom (and all of its subscribers and proponents) by means of the cross of Christ (1 Cor 1:21)?*** The consummation of human history will be a mighty revelation of God's holy perfections; for it will prove absolutely that God is wise, righteous and loving; and that He is as good as His threats and His promises. The rational holy universe* will rejoice at God's final dealings as He ties up every loose end and confines and punishes all evil forever (*by 'rational holy universe' we mean the innumerable holy angels).

I. God's sovereignty is over all things—including evil. The "Potter's right is over the clay." Romans 9:22-23 constitutes what is known as the "Grand Demonstration."

1. ***God will reveal His wrath against sin, and God will reveal His wealth of His glory as He saves "vessels of mercy."*** God's nature is made known in His response to evil. For from the "same lump" of depraved humanity, God fashions vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor. God's glory is displayed in the destiny of these vessels. God's decree is inseparable from His intent to glorify Himself. Shall God make the universe, and then have it fail to bring glory to Him? God shall obtain the goal or objects of the "Grand Demonstration." It was for wise and holy purposes that He decreed (decreed to permit) the sin of our first parents. His divine nature shall be gloriously revealed in His dealings of wrath and grace.
2. ***The universe was made for God. He filled it with an angelic audience. These rational moral beings make up the heavenly host that is witness to all of God's works.*** Creation, the Genesis flood, and the Crucifixion are spectacles witnessed by angels. Each of these events comprises an historic stage in the "Grand Demonstration." The 'Grand Demonstration' presents a very humbling view of man's insignificance (a very poignant reminder that man exists for God's glory and pleasure).
3. ***God bears with sin for holy and wise purposes. All things He does are according to the counsel of His will. He answers to no one.*** The unbeliever cries "fatalism!" Such a charge is made out of ignorance.

For man's acts are free acts. Men act out of who and what they are. God's decree does not compel and coerce them against their desires. Men are not pawns or robots. God's predestination establishes human free agency. God affirms the choices men make. When men sin willfully they violate God's directive will. But human sin is within the decretive will of God. Confusion issues from a misunderstanding of human freedom. God's decree does not eliminate human freedom, it establishes it. For God has determined that history shall move in a precise fashion toward a predetermined end. This divine plan shall realize its terminus through the use of means. The means are nothing less than free acts of men. This truth is vividly illustrated by the acts of Pharaoh (Rom 9:17-18) and actions of the enemies of Christ (Acts 2 and 4) ("*The Decree*," *Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*).

4. ***First and foremost this doctrine is doxological—it is intended to inspire reverence, worship, and praise.*** For the election of vessels of mercy is designed to display the riches of God's glorious grace. The salvation of the elect astonishes angels. The saint who truly comprehends these things will be humbled, thrilled, and motivated. The saint who understands will not look at history as he once did. He will not view current events within a context of business as usual. Instead he will see each person's part in the "Grand Demonstration." These insights move us to a more God-centered way of thinking.
5. ***When life is viewed within the framework of the "Grand Demonstration," it will imbue gospel preaching with urgency.*** It will emphasize the present patience of God in delaying the Second Advent of Christ. It will display the terrifying prospect of an endless stream of wrath issuing from the throne of God (Dan 7:10). It will exalt the wealth of God's grace that saves men but not angels. It will magnify the glorious state where saints are above angels. And it will reiterate that all God does in time and eternity is done under the eye of angels. On the last day, the elect are acquitted before angels and the damned are condemned in the presence of angels.
6. ***God's "Grand Demonstration" will not be complete until the last elect person is safe in glory and the last reprobate is confined in perdition.*** Then, the destiny that is deserved shall eternally magnify God's justice and the blessedness that is undeserved shall forever magnify His grace. Every human being will then prove to be an object lesson to the rational universe. To dwell upon these things is to place the pride of man in the dust.

What part is each man playing in the "Grand Demonstration?" What a basis upon which to call men to repentance. That sin is against God, it is evil, it brings forth misery and God will forever display His wrath against the individuals who persist in it. They will be object lessons of the unending wages of sin. How is the doctrine of the "Grand Demonstration" to affect our worship, meditation, and preaching:

- Human and angelic sin will not thwart God's purposes: God will surely receive the glory for all of His works.
- God's purpose is to exhibit sin as ruinous, shameful, and deserving of eternal wrath.
- The course of history is accomplishing God's "Grand Demonstration." History as controlled by God is a differentiating of vessels (i.e. those of honor and those of dishonor).
- God does not apologize for His acts of wrath and judgment: "He sat as King at the flood" (Psalm 29:10), He says, "Return O children of man into dust" (Ps 90:3).
- The "Grand Demonstration" doctrine is essential if we are to give God the fear due His Name (Is 8:13-14). The consummation of 6000 plus years of human iniquity shall forever be an inescapable object lesson to the watching universe—God is not only glorious in His salvation; but also in His wrath and judgment. Romans chapter nine wields a whetted sword against every self-centered world view.
- Romans chapter nine exalts God's sovereignty over all while motivating believers to make diligent use of the means of grace. As the saints make careful, faithful, and obedient use of

their privileges in the new covenant, they shall assure their hearts before God and make their election and calling sure. Those who are in Christ can rest assured that God has chosen to reveal His perfections through His covenant faithfulness to His people (Eph 3:8-10).

7. ***God has predestined the elect to be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:28-30; Eph 1:4; 2 Thess 2:13-14; 1 Jn 3:2-3).*** God is focusing His power in the gospel (Rom 1:16-17). But the Lord shall accomplish His purposes for His people through the use of the gracious means He has appointed (the Word, prayer, the fellowship of the saints, the ordinances). God's commitment to His Name seen in the new covenant is a flawless argument that it is reasonable and rational for His people to surrender their lives to Him as living sacrifices (Rom 12:1-2).

J. *God regularly renews us and readjusts us to Himself by granting us through His Word transforming views of His Majesty (Is 40:12-31).*

1. ***There are times in which God may affect a mighty cure of spiritual ills simply by having a person look and believe. The cure for so many of our spiritual maladies entails fresh views of God's majesty. We were created for majesty 'created to run on God' (Is 40:12-31). We were designed by God to be enthusiastic spectators of His excellence.*** We were created to take delight in His beauty, excellence, splendor, and perfections—to bask in the golden light of His wondrous works—exalting the wisdom, goodness, and power associated with His awesome deeds. But, even more, we were fashioned not as passive spectators; but to be energetically involved observers who pour out their praise and plaudits. Beholding the majesty of the Lord with delight has a powerful ordering, rectifying effect upon the soul of the believer (Puritan John Howe).
2. ***We are to take care that we do not allow our created propensity to praise the God of excellence to habitually fall upon all lesser boasts. "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things, declares the Lord" (Jer 9:23-24).***

CONCLUSION: *In our culture of information overload, immediacy can endanger the morality God requires in our decision-making.* Mary Helen Immordino-Yang of USC's Brain and Creativity Institute said in a news release, "For some kinds of thought, especially [in] moral decision-making . . . we need to allow for adequate time and reflection." "[H]eavy reliance on a rapid stream of info snippets through television, online feeds and social networks might reduce the frequency of full experience of such emotions, with potentially negative consequences . . . if things are happening too fast, you may not ever fully experience emotions about other people's psychological states, and that would have implications for your morality" (http://cosmiclog.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2009/04/14/4351606-is-twitter-evil, April 14, 2009).

In our age of social networks and instant 'answers' there is the temptation to associate immediacy with efficiency in our decisions. We have a rising generation of professing Christians that has not been taught to 'wait upon God'. Our culture of immediacy reinforces the polar opposite of waiting upon God. Access to the immediacy of information too often 'trumps' the divine demands of holiness in all of our decisions—decisions which can only be made wisely by dependency upon the Lord. Psalm 25:3-5 – *Indeed, none of those who wait for You will be ashamed; Those who deal treacherously without cause will be ashamed. 4 Make me know Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths. 5 Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; For You I wait all the day.*