

Cosmology and Biblical Purity

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Do we see all of life from the vantage point of biblical cosmology—from the perspective of God’s relationship to what He has made? It is absolutely essential that we do so if we are to be discerning and if we are to avoid the snares in our culture which are taking souls captive (Col 2:8). When we view our entire existence from the perspective of biblical cosmology it is intensely satisfying as well because cosmology shows us how all things are unified in God’s design for His creation.

However, there is an added challenge before us: we live in an age in which modern science has taken God out of the realm of creation and providence. The result is that the creation tends to no longer be seen as the theatre of God’s glory, but rather as a purposeless cosmic accident controlled by present laws and processes explainable by science. The prevailing attitude today is, “Sure we will let God be the subject of the Christian religion, but we will not bow to His claims to be Lord of history and Lord of the cosmos.” How reminiscent this attitude is of Psalm two! “The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed” (Ps 2:2).

The Word of God corrects the willful ignorance of our age by constantly reminding us that created reality is a perfect comingling of creational and moral order (Ps 96). The knowledge of biblical cosmology has been lost in our Western civilization—namely the all-pervasive truth that God’s moral order is just as real as the physical created order.

Cosmology begins with the fact that God made all things out of nothing. He is Creator; Upholder, and Definer of what He has made. This has profound ethical ramifications for our lives. For if we define something other than the way God does; or, if we use something in a way God forbids, we are engaging in direct revolt against His Person. We must understand through our study of cosmology that God is ultimate owner and ruler over all, and we His creatures are stewards and co-rulers over His creation (Ps 8). Since man was created to be both a steward of the physical and moral order, we are not owners. As stewards we will give an account of our stewardship (Rom 14:11-12). Have we used what was entrusted to us for the purpose of serving and honoring God? To take the blessings of God for self without a view to be a faithful steward is to be a usurper. Lucifer was the first usurper.

In an act of covetousness and theft he sought to take for himself what was not his that he might use it for selfish purposes. All who are followers of Satan are engaged in the same covetous acts of usurpation. Human usurpers refuse to pay the modest ‘rent’ of a lifestyle of thanksgiving unto God—as a consequence, like their spiritual father, the devil, they are engaged in the theft of God’s rightful glory. Romans chapter two makes it abundantly clear that usurpers are living on borrowed time (Rom 2:5-9).

Biblical cosmology immediately impacts the issue of our battle for sexual purity. The hypnotic draw of illicit images is in part tied to an anatomical ideal for the human body. When yanked from the divinely ordained context, anatomical beauty is but an idol. Sexual idolatry (the worship of the creature instead of God) involves tearing portions of God’s creation from their ‘habitat’ as *creation structures* and selfishly using them for our lusts instead of for God’s glory.

Pornography has the destructive power to fragment our acting and thinking because it advances the deception that human anatomy can stand alone apart from the transcendentals (universals) of *truth, goodness, order, glory, morality, purpose, teleology (design), and goodness*. God forbids public nudity not only to prevent sexual lust, but also because male and female as the image of God is so ‘heavy’ (weighty in significance) that our unclothed anatomy can never be a comprehensive statement of our creational identity as God’s own image and likeness. Mankind as a unity of body and soul can never be depicted accurately as merely a biological creature.

We know that the craving for sexual intimacy is a driving force in human experience. But, taking those desires to illicit erotic images instead of pursuing sexual oneness within the marriage bond is dishonoring to God and is ultimately unsatisfying. Why does eroticism’s promise of satisfaction and fulfillment prove to be a mirage, leaving one empty, hollow, and distant from God? Why does porn produce the long term fallout of guilt, shame, and self-recrimination? As biblical Christians we know that answer. As Augustine observed, God made us to desire; He made us to love. “When those desires are oriented away from God and toward our own selves, they result only in pain and destruction. When those desires are aimed at God however, they bring about joy and pleasure.”ⁱ

Stephen Nichols further states, “Edwards reminds us, that the nature of sin is enmity against God. Sin is hell-bent in opposition to God and to the design of God in the creation of the world, which was His own glory and the spiritual and eternal excellency and happiness of His creatures. If sin is opposition to Divinity’s design, then the atonement is absolutely central and essential to overcoming that opposition and to accomplishing Divinity’s design.”ⁱⁱ

Sexual oneness was created for just that, to consummate and build the covenant bond of marital oneness to the glory of God. Therefore to use sexual stimulation NOT for the purpose of marital oneness but for self represents a rejection of God’s design and a covetous usurpation of God’s good gift—using it for selfish purposes. No wonder guilt, shame, and self-hate follow sexual impurity. For those who do not repent in obedience to the gospel, God’s judgment will hit like a sledgehammer someday (Gal 6:7-8).

Now here is where biblical cosmology can be a mighty weapon in our arsenal against the bondage of sexual lust. Our culture offers us the lie of a divided life—as if we can successfully live with a set of beliefs which contradict our behavior. So pervasive and subtle is this lie that millions of professed believers have no clue that their lives belong in the very dangerous category of ‘hypocrite’ (hypocrisy was the constant target of judgments uttered by Christ—Luke 12:56). Biblical cosmology gives us a vantage point to see the soul-endangering absurdity of the divided life. Thus, biblical cosmology can assist us in reasoning through the issue of sensual temptation and our required response of mortification of sin.

In order to understand the lie of the divided life, we begin at Satan’s own fall. In effect, Lucifer’s self-deceived reasoning was acted upon—the devil imagined that he ‘won’ his freedom and autonomy from God by rejecting his created purpose. His lie has now become his lifestyle—his imagined autonomy from God is founded on his rebellious act of attempting to transcend his created bounds and limitations. But here is where cosmology gives us an indispensable lens—Satan’s rebellion did not create a new reality or new level of independent existence. What it did was put him in a death spiral—like a planet

knocked from of its orbit Satan is careening toward a black purposeless eternity of wrath and crushing suffering.

Lucifer's rebellion is the original source of self-exaltation. All acts of rebellion mirror Satan's actions and his lie. Theologian A. H. Strong makes the following observation: *Sin is a fundamental and positive choice or preference of self instead of God, as the object of affection and the supreme end of being. Instead of making God the center of his life, surrendering himself unconditionally to God and possessing himself only in subordination to God's will, the sinner makes himself the center of his life, sets himself directly against God, and constitutes his own interest the supreme motive and his own will the supreme rule.*

The viewing of porn says in effect, "I accept Satan's cosmology; for I may take my yearnings for sexual oneness and for beauty outside of their divine boundaries and context." Thus porn serves as a fragmenting agent that cleaves in pieces God's good and wise creation structures (God's laws for social order and His glorious vision for relationships). Porn deconstructs God's creation structures and jeopardizes our grasp of biblical theism in the process. The reason why is because the knowledge of God is only exalted and retained when we have a unified life characterized by revering and obeying God's creation structures.

Culturally we are at a terrifying juncture. By casting away God's creation structures we are casting away the knowledge of our Maker. This deception is destroying souls today. It is a deception which says, "I can rip God's good gifts out of their moral context and worship them—and at the same time know and worship the one true God." Jesus says otherwise: no one can serve two masters. He will love one and hate the other. Man cannot live a dichotomized lifestyle and retain the love of divine truth at the same time. God refuses to let us successfully approach Him when we allow our heart idols to remain precious to us, unmoved, and unmortified (Ez 14:3-8ff.).

Either we love the truth of God and labor to conform our lives to that truth—or we live by our natural desires and as a consequence, lose that truth by distorting it, neglecting it, devaluing it, and suppressing it in order to justify the expression of our illicit yearnings. Scripture induced repentance is needed to reunite our lives (Ps 86:11). Thus the Word of God has a rectifying role—it corrects our fragmentations and our wrong interpretations of life.

We need constant course corrections by the Word. Sin and guilt throw mud in our spiritual eyes—when we sow to sexual lust, it kills our objectivity in handling God's truth (Jas 1:21). The reason why is as follows: in order for a person to retain his lusts, he must distort the truth. The reason why is because no one can live a radically dichotomized lifestyle for long—either his behavior must change, or the truth must be abandoned. Jesus described this truth-distorting activity as 'hating the light' (Jn 3:19-21).

God's creation structures are anchored in biblical theism and biblical cosmology. Our culture is abandoning these structures and is thereby nearing the precipice of destruction by accepting the enemy's definition of freedom (which is nothing more than the old anarchy in new garb). To love pleasure more than God is to be part of this anarchy (2 Tim 3:4). Let us remember, all sin is a resentment of God's moral majesty (Rom 8:6-8). Sin patterns involve a rejection of our 'bounded-ness'—a defiance of the wise and good limitations and boundaries God has placed upon us.

Satan's lie about freedom says, "Liberty is freedom FROM divine design." God says that freedom is UNTO divine design—divine design realized. In other words, redemption restores the believer to God's design in every social and created sphere. Heaven will be the perfect manifestation of God's design for every sphere—social and physical. This is why heaven will be a place of indescribable beauty. By contrast, our culture continually parades false beauty—gross sexual immorality is being mainstreamed in the entertainment industry, numbing our understanding of God's wise and perfect design expressed in cosmology. Back in 1947, Richard Weaver (*Ideas have Consequences*) lamented America's departure from first principles. "There is ground for declaring that modern man has become a moral idiot."ⁱⁱⁱ

The cultural sexual assault is so prolific that moral shock value is being lost as corruption is normalized. The ability to blush is nearly gone (Jer 6:15). By our culture's mainstreaming of animal passions we are rapidly losing any sense of why God requires purity, decency, modesty, self-control, and fidelity. Once this stage is reached, a society becomes ignorant of the truth that God as holy Creator has an absolute claim upon our lives as His image bearers. We lose sight of what we owe God by way of moral perfection and worship. Biblical cosmology asserts that God's character and God's purpose for the creation constitute prime reality.

God's in-breaking into human history can be viewed from the perspective of three mountains.

1) At Mt. Sinai God broke into human history by accompanying the giving of His Law with a terrifying spectacle of fire, quake, smoke which produced fear and dread. What a withering lesson; God must provide the way of approach. 2) At Mt. Calvary God broke into human history by assuming the curse, guilt and punishment of His covenant people in the death of Christ. The doors of mercy were flung open.

The last days before Christ returns will be a time of apostasy (2 Tim 3:1-9). As with Israel in the days of the judges, *everyone did what was right in his own eyes*. This very attitude is now descriptive of our society—just as it was of Israel's apostasy; a people that once knew God (Judges 21:25). 3) When Christ returns to establish the capitol of His Kingdom at Mt. Zion, the in-breaking will be in fire, wrath, destruction, and eternal judgment (2 Thess 1:7-9).

Biblical cosmology defines the universe as a worshipping chorus of God—created to shine forth God's excellence, perfections, power, wisdom, and majesty. The social structures which God designed to govern mankind constitute a 'blueprint'—our loyalty to that blueprint is inseparable from our loyalty to God Himself. We do not love, serve, and glorify God unless we fully embrace His creation structures—acknowledging that His righteous laws are designed to order the social institutions He created. The foundational social structure is marriage. In the following three paragraphs, Al Mohler captures well the concept that marital sexual relations are in no way isolated from the overall relationship in all its holistic dimensions:

[For] marriage is not merely the [lawful] arena of sexual activity, it is presented in Scripture as the divinely-designed arena for the display of God's glory on earth as a man and a wife come together in a one-flesh relationship within the marriage covenant. Rightly understood and rightly ordered, marriage is a picture of God's covenant faithfulness. Marriage is to display God's glory, reveal

God's good gifts to His creatures, and protect human beings from the inevitable disaster that follows when sexual passions are divorced from their rightful place.^{iv}

“God’s gift of sexuality is designed to pull us out of ourselves” and our self-occupied concerns and desires and “toward our spouse” (Mohler). The man committed to sexual purity is living in a state of sexual integrity toward his wife. In order to pursue their mutual pleasure in the marriage bed, the husband “is careful to live, to talk, to lead, and to love in such a way that his wife finds her fulfillment in giving herself to him in love.” Their marital relations then become “the fulfillment of the entire relationship, and not an isolated physical act that is merely self-centered personal pleasure.” “[T]his man can be confident that he is fulfilling his responsibilities both as a *male* and as a *man*. . . His sexual desires are being directed toward the one-flesh relationship that is the perfect paradigm of God’s intention in creation.”

God has given the gift of sexual oneness in the moral context of the marriage covenant. Sexual purity, fidelity to one’s marriage partner, and self-control must govern our sexuality if we are to be obedient to the Lord (1 Thess 4:2-7). The Word of God, and not the flesh, is to set the standard for our behavior (Rom 8:5-9). Diligent control over our sexual desire is inseparable from marital commitment (Song of Songs 8:6-7; Proverbs 5:15-23). The USA is sexually sick. Cyberporn in combination with autoeroticism has enslaved millions of Americans.^v

The porn viewer uses his sex drive as a dynamo of lust—as he turns to pornography his desires are not turned toward a spouse, but are turned inward. His arousal through illicit images is tantamount to the seduction of the imagination and the corruption of his soul.^{vi} This self-directed misuse of sexual desire becomes a ‘tutorial’ in selfishness. We are warned in 2 Peter 2:14 of a terrifying prospect—that by habitually sowing to lust it is possible to develop “a heart trained in greed.” Al Mohler again comments:

Pornography is a slander against the goodness of God’s creation and a corruption of this good gift God has given His creatures out of His own self-giving love. To abuse this gift is to weaken, not only the institution of marriage, but the fabric of civilization itself. To choose lust over love is to debase humanity and to worship the false god *Priapus* in the most brazen form of idolatry. The deliberate use of pornography is nothing less than the willful invitation of illicit lovers and objectified sex objects. . . The damage to a man’s heart is beyond measure, and the cost in human misery will only be made clear on the Day of Judgment.

“Internet porn plays a part in an increasing number of divorce cases.” Author and New York Times columnist, Ross Douthat has gleaned this fact from a survey of matrimonial lawyers. This has prompted Douthat to pose the question, “Is pornography use a form of adultery [for a married man]?” The author “suggests that we should . . . regard infidelity as a continuum of betrayal.” In other words, “The internet era has ratcheted the experience of pornography much closer to adultery than I suspect most porn users would like to admit.”^{vii}

The spiritual consequences of using hard-core pornography affect not only one’s fellowship with God and with other believers, but also, ultimately affect one’s grasp of biblical theism. Peter Jones notes that, “The masses are rendered insensate with a constant diet of sexual degradation, while at the

same time, reassured by the spiritual and moral liberation that paganism offers.” Jones argues that liberty of self-expression in the area of sexuality has historically been an instrument for the “deconstruction of the biblical God and sexuality.”^{viii} No wonder Satan is so passionately committed to the deconstruction of sex. One cannot live as a sexual libertine and expect to keep his or her biblical theism intact.

The biblical command to *leave and cleave* is central to growth in intimacy and commitment between the marriage partners (Gen 2:23-24). ‘Bonding’ or ‘companion-ing’ is a biblical value that is a prerequisite for building strong marriages (Deut 24:5; Eph 5:25). The biblical counselor is always to impress upon the counselee that the Scriptures constantly call us to look to God in whom transformed relationships are possible. What God requires is beyond our natural capacities. The promise of the Word is that through the Holy Spirit’s power, we may become by grace those who enjoy God-glorifying marriages.^{ix}

God’s dominion mandate described in Psalm 8 extends not only to cultivating order in the physical creation, but also to the moral order which accompanies divinely ordained spiritual and social laws. This means that mankind is accountable to God for his stewardship of the creation structures governed by the laws of God. Now this is intensely relevant to fathers and husbands. For the man is the priest of his family—he is to raise up a God-fearing community in the ‘miniature community’ of his family. This is only possible if the husband has high praise and esteem for the wisdom, love and goodness of God manifested in divinely ordained creation structures set forth in biblical cosmology.

When we look intently at this cosmological truth of the dominion mandate, it blasts us out of our privatized subjective view of religion. Cosmology hits us with a revolutionary dose of reality by taking the issue of mortification of sin out of the truncated category of ‘*my own private heart piety—my own private struggle with lust*’—and placing it within God’s master plan and design for creation (cosmology).

Here is the reason why: the husband and father is to exercise the dominion mandate in such a way that his marital fidelity becomes a *culture-making* act. For a Christian marriage not defiled by the infidelity of erotic images sets the climate for culture-making to take place. Fidelity to Christ, fidelity to the marriage covenant, and fidelity to biblical cosmological design are inseparable. How we need to be lifted out of our shrunken perspective of private erotic indulgence. We need God’s all-wise perspective—we need to stand atop the biblical vantage point of cosmology so that we might be staggered by the scope of God’s purpose and plan. The gloriousness of His design exposes the tawdriness of its counterfeit.

The ancient lie is intended to overturn and destroy God’s purpose for the creatures made in His image. As His creatures, we are to reflect His perfections by aligning ourselves with His creation structures. God’s creation structures are at the heart of reality. The ancient lie sown in Eden was an offer to rise above our creaturehood by transcending the bounds and limits inherent in God’s design for us. Upon believing the lie, self would become the new *integration point* and the new *reference point* instead of Almighty God.

The evil one has never desisted from his efforts to deface the image of God by means of idolatry. The worship of created things is idolatry. This is how the devil further shatters the image of God; idolatry destroys our human unity as persons. By contrast the worship of God in Christ strengthens our humanness. Sexual idolatry is a dysfunction in worship (Col 3:5). Whatever we worship in place of God places us into bondage and servitude. The way out through Christ entails embracing a unified Christian

experience—firmly anchored in biblical cosmology. Only when our lives are aligned with God’s prescriptions for our social relations will God be glorified in us through our relationships.

Idolatry is tied to false notions of beauty. Scripture imbues upon us that beauty has no existence independent of God. True beauty is always joined to divinely ordained *transcendentals* of truth, purpose, moral context, design, covenant, goodness, wisdom, reality, and order. Biblically, beauty is to serve as a *glory pointer*. Beauty joined to the transcendentals does just that. Beauty divorced from the divine context of transcendentals is idolatrous—it cannot serve as a *glory pointer*.

For this reason beauty is the most extensive battle ground for the eternal souls of men and women. “Beauty is mysterious as well as terrible. God and the devil are fighting there, and the battlefield is the heart of man” (Fyodor Dostoevsky). The devil traps and enslaves through idolatry by removing beauty from divine transcendentals—the enemy offers beauty by itself, as if it can stand alone without serving as a *glory pointer*. Satan is the great compartmentalizer. In other words he fragments our understanding of life—he fractures our understanding of God’s design for creation—and he does so in order to fragment and fracture human idolaters. God at the center of our lives *integrates* us; idols *dis-integrate* us.

Through doctrines of demons and the lying philosophies of the world, Lucifer shrinks God’s domain in the world to a tiny religious sphere so that he as the deceiver may use the whole of creation for his idolatrous purposes. This ‘de-sacralization’ of the creation has become one of the devil’s prime tools for deception (Paul Helseth). Pagan cosmology, the worship of the creation is always the default position when creation’s role as an ‘inerrant’ revealer of God is rejected (Romans 1:18-20, 23-25).

How do we escape idolatry? We must insist upon the truth—that every square inch of our experience belongs to God. The depth of what we love on earth we must love for Christ’s sake—for all things exist for Him—they exist for our enjoyment, but ultimately to show His excellence and goodness.

The evil one seeks to shipwreck the faith of many professed believers by suggesting to them that their Christianity is safe in a partitioned off compartment in their lives. This is a deadly lie because true faith is a constant *whole-souled* act. All the faculties of our being are called upon to live in genuine faith in Christ. And, not the least of these faculties of our being is our affections. Jonathan Edwards stressed that the religious affections are the fruit of a new heart, and that these affections are what moves the Christian life like a watch spring.^x

The Holy Spirit takes up residence forever in the true child of God and confirms to His child that God’s glory and our happiness are bound up together. Satan cannot counterfeit this sentiment—no natural man sees God’s glory and the creature’s happiness woven together in Christ. The hypocrite, says Edwards, speculates about spiritual things whereas the soul of the truly converted feeds on spiritual truths, upon Christ’s perfect suitability to save.^{xi} The true believer is always growing in his affection for divine holiness, and as a consequence his disgust for what is unholy grows.^{xii} Strong love for Christ expresses itself in fruitfulness, self-denial, and mortification of our lusts.^{xiii}

Edwards shows us why that a compartmentalized Christian life is impossible for any extended length of time. True Christianity is bound up in the believer’s religious affections. Christ will not share our heart with idols. As we have been stating, God’s creation structures are just as real as our own solar system. Our problem is that we tend to view his moral laws (including his laws governing social

structures) as separated from cosmology. We tend to buy into postmodernity's lie that God's laws for social structures are but arbitrary impositions of the church upon society rather than what they really are: *creation structures which are the very moral fabric of the universe—the very foundation of freedom and dignity and the bedrock support of a just society and an ordered civilization.*

At the end of creation week God pronounced His benediction upon every creational structure declaring them all to be *exceedingly good* (Gen 1:31). God's blessing of His creation structures includes all of the relations which He has sanctioned including social relations.

The power of the gospel raises us to newness of life—first of all making us right with God through Christ, then enabling us to obey God from the heart. The gospel is intended to radically transform us by causing our affections to be wrapped around things above (Col 3:1-4). It is all about *spiritual seeing*—about true source, about true treasure. The gospel puts us in God's story—into His plot so that His glory and our good are bound up together in the Person of Christ.

Our whole lives then become an answer to God's call. We could say that the gospel writes a new 'script' for us by transferring us out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of God's Son, and by making us adopted sons of God born from above (Gal 4:5-7). This new life lived out is the warranty, proof, and evidence of possessing saving grace. The gospel pours the new believer into its 'mould'—giving precise shape to our new life direction in Christ—a direction that makes our lives a living affirmation of the beauty of God's creation structures.

Biblical cosmology gives us a vantage point to see that our lives constitute a kind of biography under construction. God will read each person's 'biography' aloud on judgment day (Rom 2:16). What a sobering thought that we are becoming today what we will be tomorrow. Each person's life will ultimately prove to be an object lesson to the watching universe. God will bring history to its consummation in Christ, and then history will prove to be an exhaustive lesson—declaring to the rational universe the results of honoring God and the consequences of not honoring God (2 Pet 3:10-14). Would we live any differently if we were convinced of cosmology's message that my life will prove to be an object lesson to the rational universe—either of eternal honor or eternal dishonor?

The Christian must find his or her place in the battle of the ages, for it is a battle for 'all the marbles'—for the eternal souls of men and women. Central in this battle is the human body—and the very epicenter of the battle is the sexual body. One's body, with its sexuality, is intended by God to be a prime spiritual resource. *The body is not for immorality, but for the Lord* (1 Cor 6:13). Our body (with its desires) is either presented to the Lord each day, or it is presented to unrighteousness. So crucial is the human body (with its sexuality) to the battle of the ages that Paul commands his readers not to *go on presenting the members of their body as weapons of unrighteousness. Instead present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as weapons of righteousness to God* (Rom 6:11-13).

God's great purpose is to extend and maximize His glory through creation, providence, redemption, and judgment. This is central to reality. Aiming for God's glory so that Christ has first place in everything is therefore the source of unity between every intellectual discipline, every aspect of

creation, every aspiration of man, and every human longing.^{xiv} As my friend Pastor Hal Farnsworth has said, “It is time, it is way overdue in the church; the cosmology bomb has to hit.”

Endnotes:

ⁱ Stephen J. Nichols, “Proclaiming the Gospel and the Glory of God,” in *For the Fame of God’s Name*, p. 376

ⁱⁱ *Ibid*, pp. 383-384

ⁱⁱⁱ Richard Weaver, *Ideas have Consequences*, p. 1.

^{iv} Al Mohler, “The Seduction of Pornography”

^v Hindson and Eyrich, *Totally Sufficient*, pp. 191-193

^{vi} Mohler, p. 3

^{vii} Ross Douthat in Roberto Rivera y Carlo, “Porn Adultery & Marriage” *Boundless Webzine*, 2005

^{viii} Peter Jones, “Androgyny: The Pagan Sexual Ideal,” *Americans for Truth about Homosexuality*, p.6

^{ix} Hindson and Eyrich, pp. 195-197

^x Jonathan Edwards, *The Religious Affections*, pp. 28-31

^{xi} *Ibid*, pp. 166-167, 172-173, 197-198, 200

^{xii} *Ibid*, p. 317

^{xiii} *Ibid*, pp. 352-354, 371, 374-375

^{xiv} Norman Klassen and Jens Zimmerman, *The Passionate Intellect: Incarnational Humanism and the Future of University Education*, pp. 10-13