

THIS IS MY FATHER'S WORLD

By: Cornelis Van Dam

The 2010 CLF National Law Student Conference had as theme: "Divine Perspective. 'Set your mind on the things above' (Col. 3:2)." I elaborated on this theme by addressing some of the implications of being children of God in Father's world. What follows is a condensed version of my speech.

Children of God

Christians have an earthly as well as a heavenly father. The latter caused us to be born again by the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-8). Though living on earth, our life and identity as Christians is related to heaven! All this is possible because our rebirth took place *through* the resurrection of Christ (1 Pet 1:3). If it was not for the resurrection, there would be no Christians (cf. 1 Cor 15:17). "As Christ was raised from the dead ... we too may live a new life" (Rom 6:4). Christ's life and our life are so closely related that a believer can say: "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me!" (Gal 2:20). Now that has enormous consequences. "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God" (Col 3:1). That awesome reality means that as Christians we have a new identity and perspective on our lives. All this shapes our worldview.

Worldviews

Everyone has a worldview, that is, a set of assumptions about who we are and why we are in this world and what life is all about. A Christian looks at reality differently from a secularist who denies a place for God in his life. We cannot be consistent as children of God if we have two worldviews, a secular and a Biblical one. We cannot be a Christian on Sunday and a secularist the rest of the week. We cannot divide life up into the religious and the secular (cf. 1 Cor 10:31; Col 3:17).

So what are some of the essential features of a Christian worldview? Besides our identity as God's children, there is the reality of the living God. Without Him, life would be unthinkable for Christians. Our secular postmodern society, however, does not want to hear of God. Atheists have even been campaigning for their belief that God does not exist, yet atheists themselves acknowledge that they cannot be certain about God's non-existence. Why? Every human on earth has implanted in him or her a knowledge of God and His existence (Rom 1:21). Unbelievers may suppress this knowledge and fight it, but they will never be able to completely deny God's reality. Indeed, the evidence for God's existence is all around us "so that men are without excuse" (Rom 1:20). There is no need to surrender to secularism!

As children of God we may show our Christian identity in the workplace, school, and society. We have nothing to apologize for or feel awkward about. We are children of the Most High who is active in this world! We must seek to integrate our faith into our way of thinking so that our minds are not secular but God-focused.

Another critical component of one's world view answers the question: Where have we come from and what are we here for? Christians confess that God placed us on this earth as crown of His creation. We are not animals but humans to whom God gave a task, often called the cultural mandate (Gen 1:27-28). Christians live for God and follow His directives as revealed in the Bible.

The secular postmodern mindset is quite different. It affirms that we are here by chance and that we must decide what our purpose in life is to be. According to the theory of evolution, humankind is but an offshoot of the animal world and not distinct from it. While Christians see their purpose in life as to live for God, the secular postmodern man does not hesitate to live for himself.

But if God made everything, then why do we have evil in the world? This question highlights another component of a Christian worldview: the reason for evil and the solution for it. God's creation work was perfect (Gen 1:31). He made the first humans in such a way that they had a free will. Why did God give humankind the option to choose for or against God? God created Adam and Eve in His image, as His children. A child is by definition free. A child is not a pre-programmed robot. And therefore Adam and Eve were not made that way. They were created as children of God who were to be bound to their Maker by love. Within this relationship they were to grow in knowing God. To help Adam and Eve in that development God tested them so that they could progress in love and the service of God by making conscious decisions for God. But they failed the very simple test of not eating the forbidden fruit. And we failed in them (Rom 5:12). And therefore *all* creation became alienated from God and fell into groaning and the travail of death.

A Christian worldview recognizes evil for what it is and acknowledges that the fault lies with us, humans. God cannot be blamed (cf. James 1:13). But there is a solution. "God so loved the world that he gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). God's solution includes the defeat and demise of Satan as a force for evil in this world (cf. Col 2:15).

A consistent secular worldview, however, sees the presence of evil as evidence that God does not exist. How can there be a good God when there is so much trouble in the world? Furthermore, the secularist considers humankind to be good and with no need for redemption from sin. Indeed, for the secularist there is ultimately no good or evil in terms of transgressing God's law for there is no God in their worldview. Evil is whatever one determines it to be.

A final distinction between a Christian and secular worldview is that the former holds to absolute norms as found in the Bible. The latter denies any absolute moral norms. He will agree to laws out of pure necessity to have some order in a

civil society, but he will not feel bound by any divine ordinance for in his view there is no God.

Conflict of Worldviews

With two diametrically opposed worldviews, you can expect conflict. Today we witness a sustained frontal attack on almost anything reflecting a Christian worldview in our society. This onslaught uses and abuses human rights legislation, the secular media, political correctness, the public education system, and cultural pluralism. The result is the erosion of freedom of speech, freedom of religion, the institution of marriage, the family unit, and Biblical morals. In relatively short order, the intellectual and moral climate has changed beyond recognition. Biblical norms no longer dominate society.

In trying to understand this tsunami-like assault, one must remember that *the* issue at bottom is not the news items of the day. It is rather the cosmic struggle between the Christian and the secular worldviews. It is ultimately the conflict between good and evil as defined by the Christian faith. In many ways it seems as if evil is winning the battle.

How could this onslaught on our morals and worldview be so successful in merely a few decades? Do not most Canadians believe in God? Part of the answer is that Christians have often stayed out of the fray. The credo of our times is that religion is okay for the privacy of your home and your church, but do not talk religion in the public square. It does not belong there! But being a Christian involves and impacts all of life!

The battle raging today has rightly been called “kingdoms in conflict”- the Kingdom of Darkness against the Kingdom of Light. Christians cannot stand on the sidelines as this battle continues. It demands our engagement!

What to do?

“When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Ps 11:3). Well plenty! There is no need to despair! God is in heaven observing the ways of men (Ps 11:4-7). Although there is a gigantic conflict afoot, God watches from heaven. He is a Righteous Judge! He has won the war against the evil one in Christ Jesus! The victory is ultimately ours, despite the fact that the battle still rages.

As Christians, we cannot stay out of this battle. Duty calls us to join the fray and to seek to renew society along more Godly lines. How do we do that? The answer to that question is disarmingly simple but profound. We begin with our own lives and renew them in accord with our Heavenly Father’s wishes. We do the same with our loved ones around us. Then we move outside the comfort of our homes into our community, seeking to engage more and more people in an ever-widening circle of Christian influence and understanding. Put differently, we live out our faith in *all* of life, beginning with the most simple and moving on to greater things. In this way we set our minds on “the things that are above and not on earthly things!” (Col 3:2). We will project God’s image into this world and the holy influence that emanates from that image.

As Children of God, living in Father’s world, we will try to show others that God’s way is the best way for society. We do it in love (Eph 5:1-2) and so seek to win back our culture. We point out to our secular society that Biblical solutions work! For example, study after study confirms that God’s way for marriage and family is best. We let the light of the Word of God shine on all areas of life and we seek to win back to the Father what rightfully belongs to Him. This is my Father’s world! He

knows best! He made everything. So we seek to bring Christian influence to our culture, our life as a nation, our justice system, and our educational institutions. In the process, we also support organizations that want to apply Biblical principles to our country and its institutions.

The Challenge

Secular humanists do not understand the need to bring society's norms in line with God's norms. Indeed, they cannot (1 Cor 2:14). Our society likes the apparent freedoms they have when it rejects the God of Scripture. We, therefore, face an uphill battle in seeking Biblical renewal.

To engage in that battle it is crucial that we nurture our identity as God's children. After all, we are only children in a dangerous environment. We have much to learn and grow in dedication to God. Whether young or old, we all remain children who need nurturing. That nurture takes place through the reading and study of Scripture and through a life of prayer to God. Being a Child of Father above in a world hostile to Him is a challenge, and we need to give the Spirit the room to work in us and through us. As vulnerable and fragile children, we must live close to the Lord and let His Spirit work in our lives.

In this way we can develop our Christian minds (cf Col 3:10). It is generally in university that you develop your worldview. The secular university will seek to align your mind and thoughts with those of secularism. It is the challenge of Christian students to develop as God's children in close relationship to the Father above. We must also love Him with our mind (Mark 12:30). A Christian mind leads to Godly action. We need to build a Christian counter-culture. Biblical solutions work, and we need to project them to those in authority over us and fight

in court if necessary to protect Biblical values. It is an exciting adventure to be busy expanding your mind with a Christian worldview and seeing how God and His Word are relevant for all of life. Yes, it is to experience the resurrection power of Christ in our life!

The Joy

To have a Christian worldview is an exciting and joyful experience, full of hope and life! When we set our hearts on things above, we go where Christ is seated at the right hand of God! (Col 3:1). Our worldview includes the risen and victorious Christ. He rules. And He comes again to make all things new! (Rev 21:5). "When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory" (Col 3:4; cf 1 John 3:2). What a promise! What a perspective in which to live our lives! The battle of history has been won. Christ is triumphant and Christians will share Christ's throne. Let us encourage each other in the joy of our risen Saviour, and let our light so shine before men, that they may give glory to our Father who is in heaven (Matt 5:16)! It is a tremendous blessing, responsibility, comfort, and joy to live in Father's world! ✚



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