

A.W. Tozer:

THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHES that all things are pure to the pure, and I think we may assume that to the evil man all things are evil. The thing itself is not good or bad; goodness or badness belongs to human personality.

Everything depends upon the state of our interior lives and our heart's relation to God. The man that walks with God will see and know that for him there is no strict line separating the sacred from the secular. He will acknowledge that there lies around him a world of created things that are innocent in themselves; and he will know, too, that there are a thousand human acts that are neither good nor bad except as they may be done by good or bad men. The busy world around us is filled with work, travel, marrying, rearing our young, burying our dead, buying, selling, sleeping, eating and mixing in common social intercourse with our fellowmen.

These activities and all else that goes to fill up our days are usually separated in our minds from prayer, church attendance and such specific religious acts as are performed by ministers most of the week and by laymen briefly once or twice weekly.

Because the vast majority of men engage in the complicated business of living while trusting wholly in themselves, without reference to God or redemption, we Christians have come to call these common activities "secular" and to attribute to them at least a degree of evil, an evil which is not inherent in them and which they do not necessarily possess.

The Apostle Paul teaches that every simple act of our lives may be sacramental. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." And again, "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

Some of the great saints, who were great because they took such admonitions seriously and sought to practice them, managed to achieve the sanctification of the secular, or perhaps I should say the abolition of the secular. Their attitude toward life's common things raised those above the common and imparted to them an aura of divinity. These pure souls broke down the high walls that separated the various areas of their lives from each other and saw all as one; and that one they offered to God as a holy oblation acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Nicholas Herman (Brother Lawrence) made his most common act one of devotion: "The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer," he said, "and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament."

Francis of Assisi accepted the whole creation as his house of worship and called upon everything great and small to join him in adoration of the Godhead. Mother earth, the burning sun, the silver moon, the stars of evening, wind, water, flowers, fruits-all were invited to praise with him their God and King. Hardly a spot was left that could be called secular. The whole world glowed like Moses' bush with the light of God, and before it the saint kneeled and removed his shoes.

Thomas Traherne, the seventeenth century Christian writer, declared that the children of the King can never enjoy the world aright till every morning they wake up in heaven, see themselves in the Father's palace, and look upon the skies, the earth and the air as celestial joys, having such a reverent esteem for all as if they were among the angels.

All this is not to ignore the fall of man nor to deny the presence of sin in the world. No believing man can deny the Fall, as no observing man can deny the reality of sin; and as far as I know no responsible thinker has ever held that sin could ever be made other than sinful, whether by prayer or faith or spiritual ministrations. Neither the inspired writers of Holy Scripture nor those illuminated souls who have based their teachings upon those Scriptures have tried to make sin other than exceedingly sinful. It is possible to recognize the sacredness of all things even while admitting that for the time the mystery of sin worketh in the children of disobedience and the whole creation groaneth and travaileth, waiting for the manifestation of the children of God.

Traherne saw the apparent contradiction and explained it: "To condemn the world and to enjoy the world are things contrary to each other. How can we condemn the world, which we are born to enjoy? Truly there are two worlds. One was made by God, and the other by men. That made by God was great and beautiful. Before the Fall it was Adam's joy and the temple of his glory. That made by men is a Babel of confusions: invented riches,

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pomps and vanities, brought in by sin. Give all (saith Thomas a Kempis) for all. Leave the one that you may enjoy the other."

Such souls as these achieved the sanctification of the secular. The church today is suffering from the secularization of the sacred. By accepting the world's values, thinking its thoughts and adopting its ways we have dimmed the glory that shines overhead. We have not been able to bring earth to the judgment of heaven so we have brought heaven to the judgment of the earth. Pity us, Lord, for we know not what we do!