

Take hold of God and pull

Hallowed Be Thy Creation

by Al Wolters

For every thing created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving; for then it is hallowed by the word of God and prayer.

1 Timothy 4:4

These are Paul's words to Timothy as recorded in the Revised Standard Version - except that the word "consecrated" is changed to "hallowed." Consecration has overtones of holy water sprinkled over intrinsically secular affairs, a sacred icing on a secular cake, while hallowing has at least the possibility of conveying what the Holy Spirit is talking about here: the renewal-from-within that our Latinate theologies have attempted to grasp with the word sanctification. It brings to mind the leaven which penetrates and leavens the whole dough. The good old Anglo-saxon word "hallow," says my trusty Webster's Collegiate, "may be equivalent to 'consecrate' or it may imply intrinsic rather than conferred holiness." Out of the mouth of lexicographers....

This is a not unimportant point in a not unimportant passage of the Scriptures. Paul, whose word should count for something (being apostolic), tells Timothy that his being a "good minister of Jesus Christ" depends upon his driving home precisely the point being made in this passage (verse 6). All of creation is to be hallowed. To reject any part of God's good creation - Paul is talking specifically about the institution of marriage and certain non-kosher foods, but he generalizes the point - is the fruit of a monstrous heresy which deserves to be called demonic in origin (verse 1). Perhaps Paul is putting his inspired finger here on the aboriginal heresy of the human race, the deeply ingrained Gnosticism by which we all seek to exculpate ourselves and lay the blame instead on some part, some feature, some aspect, some dimension of the created fabric which Yaveh has designed as our element and appointed place. Our embodiment, perhaps, is the problem, with its attendant sexuality or passion. Or, perhaps, it is the institutional side of our society which bedevils our race: family, marriage, state, business, church, with their heavy weight of authority and responsibility. Or could it be the curse of our rationality that is the original sin? Every philosophical gospel of our age has its own creational villain (and corresponding savior), but none speaks of "hallowing" as an answer and an antidote.

Hallowing takes place through the word of God and prayer, that is in the context of the great covenantal intercourse between God and his beloved people: He speaking his word of promise, blessing and command, and they speaking back in thanksgiving, petition and praise. The whole range of created phenomena, in their great variety and mysteriousness, was designed for us who believe and know the truth (verse 3). And that entire vast array, including our bodiliness, our sexuality, our emotions, our patterns of social responsibility, our rationality, and much more, is called to be hallowed in and through and by that dialogue of the word of God and our prayer, that fellowship of the Creator and his creature. Nothing is to be excluded from this: not music or dance, not labor relations or journalism, not our fantasies or selfimage.

Hallowing is possible only through the Spirit of hallowing, who is also the Spirit of Christ. Christ and the Spirit have everything to do with creation: the one who redeems it atones for

the curse that has blasted it, the other renews it into the Kingdom of God. The Spirit backs up the work of the Son, just as the Son backs up the work of the Father in creation. Redemption and sanctification do not stop with our personal lives: the whole world lies in their scope. Let us all go out then, having heard the Apostle's manifesto on creation, and be "good ministers of Jesus Christ."

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