

In Man We Trust : The Neglected Side of Biblical Faith

Religious Despisers of Culture

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has often spoken in terms of another world. Much of the hymnody of the church has ended in the affirmation that "heaven is our home." Thus, waiting—postponing—has become a primary virtue held open, especially for deprived groups such as the Black community in America which has been invited to accept suppression because in a heavenly realm "things will be different." It hardly needs to be reported that a goal extrinsic to the process itself has led to a devaluing of the historical process, a disengagement from it, a cynicism about it, a rejection of it. The consequence of such an opinion has been a church which has cared less about *life for the community* than another goal which is yet to appear. From time to time, the church has not really cared if "a city is exalted" or if "it is overthrown" (Prov. 11:11). This anticipation of an extrinsic goal which has dominated the church has also played a great role in Western culture. It is one of the sources of uninvolvement and social indifference which now plagues affluent America: we don't really care, and often our theology has taught us that we don't need to because meaning is elsewhere.

Wisdom represents a protest against such a deferred goal. It is pragmatic and impatient. It affirms that life's values are embraced or rejected here and now—any other approach which lets us off the hook is quite irrelevant. Any talk of the *will of God* which doesn't lead to life for the community here and now is idolatry. Anything which creates life for the community, no matter what its source, is the will of God.

Second, wisdom affirms that the *authority* for life is to be discerned in our common experience. What is right and good is not identified by answers in the back of the book, but only by patient, careful discernment of what we ought to be doing to be *us*. Wisdom takes a very utilitarian view of what we ought to do:

Liberalness is good and ought to be practiced because it makes a man wealthy (Prov. 11:25).

Graciousness is commended because the gracious person is honored (11:16).

Diligence is endorsed because it brings a person effectiveness and influence (12:24).

Discipline for children is recommended because it results in a certain kind of child (13:24).

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