

Divine Grace and the meaning of life

Grace is the gift of God. God is seen as a gift and he gives you himself to be your friend and your all. For Christians, that truth is about the meaning of mortal and eternal life. It is the meaning of life.

Let us examine this claim.

If God is not a God of grace then how will that affect the doctrine? It would be more like a relationship with an ordinary person. The person is cherished by you and you cherish them and you are intimate but the intimacy of grace is missing. With grace God lives in you and you live in God and God prompts your actions and gives you existence. It would mean that to give meaning to your life, you must find somebody to love you and God is one option among billions of people.

The objections to a God of grace are:

People easily mistake their strength during bad times as a gift from God when it is only natural.

People easily think that God is telling them something in their hearts when it is their imagination.

People with a bad view of God still act as if they believe he is with them and they have a relationship with him.

God has a plan for your life but the plan is not about if it makes you happy or not. It is about making you holy. Thus most of us will not feel God gives life meaning.

If there is a choice then what matters? God relating to you as one friend does to another or God being intimate with you by grace? They are not mutually exclusive. But one has to be the best choice. It would be God relating to you as a friend. Grace is not possible unless that happens first.

Thus it is clear that the meaning of life is to love and experience enough love from others.

It is more important to do good than to believe in God, to pray, to look for God's grace, or to feel God is blessing you. Religion harms people in subtle and sometimes violent ways through opposing that truth.

Religious belief alone is not enough - it has to prove how strong it is by translating into action and devotion. God supposedly gives you the gift of faith that translates into action. It calls that gift grace. The need for faith to be supported gives organised religion a job and loads of money. It gets power and political influence.

Religious devotion to love is riddled with contradictions which means that the good the believers do is irrational.

Christianity teaches that the meaning of life is found in an intimate relationship with God where he lives in your heart and supernaturally supports you and grants you faith and the power to love him.

Is this relationship the meaning of life? If it is, then the now matters, not the future or Heaven. But it is clear from human experience that you may need to love somebody to get this meaning and meaning should be about the now. None of that require a religious solution. An atheist experiences it too by loving a good man or good woman for example.

If the Ten Commandments are about a relationship with God then they are not a list of obligations but divine guidance. A relationship with God would mean that you and God have rapport and have the same needs and learn from each other. But such an idea is mad. It would appeal to the crude pagan idea that God is like a creature in the universe with magic powers. But the concept of God that is required by Christianity and many philosophers is something very abstract and mysterious. God is unlike man in that he cannot even change his mind or be surprised. God is outside time and space. And the fact remains that seeing commandments as guidance shows no insight into what law and command means. Laws and commands are not nice. The Ten Commandments are about control not relationship.

The pope would tell you, "You have infinite value in the eyes of God. You are that valuable for God values you." If that is true then he is saying you only have that value for God thinks you do. But God thinking you are valuable does not mean you are valuable. It means you are not. And God cannot be expected to think a person is as valuable as himself. If God is the source of people, then he is more important than them.

Religion says faith in God, the creator without whom nothing would be, is compatible with any person or thing having an

inherent value. But it like the pope does not really mean what it says. It does not tell us how they agree just that they do. That is to obscure the fundamental disagreement.

If you are of endless value and your future until death or even eternity is going to be mostly terrible, knowing your value is going to make you feel worse. You will be riddled with anger and resentment. Religion says that because God adores us so much we can entrust our future to him and be confident that he will take care of us and get us through the bad times. But that contradicts the experience of those like Jesus who feel abandoned. And as God lets our free will open Pandora's boxes and if he does this for the right reasons, our future could be terrible without it being God's fault. Confidence in God does not mean you think he can help. Confidence in the genius who is your boss does not mean you can expect him to do what is not possible.

Some believers say that because of our huge value to God and our importance to him, we can make a decision that is irrevocable to live forever without him and dwell in hate and evil forever. That does not really explain why it's final. Our dignity is not relevant. Do they mean that you magically get the power to see all the good and bad results of your decision against God so that you can make a final one - one that will never change? Then surely God is to blame for giving you this power when he knows you will probably use it against him. Also, knowing all that should not close the door. A decision is always final for now but the future could be a different story.

What about the notion that God wants us to love him totally for our sake and not his own? It does not make any sense. If we love God for our own benefit that is not loving God.

God giving meaning to your life is about what your life means to him not you. If God alone matters for God alone is perfect good then it would be wrong to see any good in a person as their own and not as entirely God's. How could such a doctrine make anybody happy?

Believing that God loves us unconditionally may make us feel safer but it should not. In real life, we tend to feel safe if we prove ourselves to be worthwhile people who can meet challenges and face them armed with our inner resources and capacity to learn. God's love cannot make us feel safe without that. To derive comfort from the thought of being loved by God is indicative of disordered self-esteem. It is a worry because you need the God-crutch and you wouldn't need it if you were really okay. God's love can ask for some horrible things so there is no sense in feeling safe with him. It would be presumptuous to feel safe. God's unconditional love does not in itself guarantee that you will be saved from death and moral degeneration. We see that evil exists and we are told that we created it not God so God has to make the best of it. But making the best of it is a general statement - the best will not come to all. What is generally best will mean there will be individual casualties. It is arrogant to imagine you will not be one of them! If arrogance gives you meaning in life then how can Christians say that meaning in life comes from being good and from loving God?

It is not true that you need God to have a sense of purpose in life. The vast majority of people do not love God passionately. It is the thought of a heavenly reward from God rather than God that many get some meaning from.

The believers want a sense of purpose which is why they want God. To say they need him is just simply a lie.

Believers in grace say God did the good works they do not them. They say they are useless without God.

They ignore the fact that they would have done much good before they committed themselves to God.

Good people sometimes talk and act as if they are not the ones doing the good works. They think of themselves in the third person. Tony has the attitude, "Now Tony must go and take that charity donation down to the poor family down the road." They do this because they think the good they do is better than them and they feel they will do it better if they dissociate their goodness from themselves in their minds. They don't have the confidence to see their goodness as it is - as part of them and as them. They feel they are being humble before others. They feel that good is a power bigger than any person which is why they let themselves channel it but do not claim it as part of themselves. They might feel they have insulated themselves against the pain that comes from failing to be good. So what is happening is, if goodness is bigger than people then people fundamentally cannot be trusted but goodness can. Their humility is faked because they know fine well that their goodness is their own creation. Their confidence problem can lead to them letting others do and giving them a misleading and unhealthy example. People who say that any goodness they have comes from God not them are an extreme example of the problems the dissociation will cause. So they do not really think they have the goodness. These points show that those who get meaning from life by imagining their goodness transcends them and thus is not really theirs are in fact using religion and prayer and faith to medicate psychological problems they inflict on themselves. And that is the kind of thing that priests and religious powerhouses encourage!!

You have a problem. Are you giving up control if you stop trying to solve it? Yes if you have a reasonable chance at succeeding. No if you cannot succeed or if succeeding is not worth it. Giving up control IS being in control. The search for

meaning is essentially the search for feeling you are in reasonable control. You can get this sense by accepting something else as the boss and serving it or you can get it by thinking that somehow you are the boss. But in reality, you are always in control. The search for meaning is the search for what you already have. For some reason, you are not seeing it.

The Roman Catholic Church holds that grace is a supernatural and totally intimate relationship with God. The Church holds that some people go to Limbo where they will enjoy everlasting happiness of a lower level than the happiness that will be enjoyed by those who go to Heaven to be with God. Those who are in Limbo do not enjoy a relationship with God. St Augustine when asked if this teaching was cruel argued that life is so precious that it is better to endure this mild damnation forever than to be put out of existence altogether. At least he proved that Catholics who tell us that you need God to be happy are contradicting themselves and their belief in Limbo!

People emphasise the alleged link between religion and the sense of purpose in life as if there is a way to retain this sense during the worst times of your life. That is not necessarily true. But they don't admit that which is very cruel of them. People are given the impression that religion means you always feel and sense that God is with you however bad things get. It blames people who experience their lives right now and for the future as useless for that awful experience. The experience might be misleading them but that isn't the point. The point is how they feel. If the experience is wrong it is still a real experience. Sometimes all you can do is just see in your mind that your life is important even if your feelings say otherwise.

For many, the quest for ultimate meaning is really expressing a background belief that one is too special and too wonderful for the life not to mean something supremely. It is sheer thinking you are better than others and everything else. That is why you imagine that God thinks you are so incredible that he had to make you!

Would believers rather have a stupid purpose for existence than no purpose at all? Yes they would. Then even if there is a good purpose it is more important to them to have any kind of purpose! The idea of grace is tied up with good purpose. It excludes and refuses to help those who want any purpose and don't care if it is not the best purpose.