

## **ULTERIOR MOTIVE IN FAITH IN GOD IS TO WATER DOWN SUFFERING AND HOW TERRIBLE AND INTOLERABLE IT SHOULD BE AND THUS COMFORT YOURSELF**

The ulterior motive when you believe in God

Jesus said that you must love God totally and you love your neighbour only because he says so and not for your neighbour's sake. Clearly, it is a sin to believe in God because you feel love and compassion for suffering. That is starting with something and ending up with God. For the believer, God is to be the 100% starting point.

For example, suppose we have free will. Then we must celebrate it because God has given it and this pleases him and not celebrate it because it is good for us and gives us dignity (it does not dignify us but let us forget that for today). Again it is all about God.

This is a horrendous doctrine. The principle is disgusting. It is clearly saying you care about nobody and you need religion to behave decently. But there is more to life than outward good behaviour. You need the right disposition towards others as well.

If you care about people, you simply cannot put God before them or serve them only for the sake of pleasing God.

The sufferer will want to get rid of the suffering. That is what he or she cares about not God.

The true believer who suffers cannot be pleased if anybody does him or her a favour if it is suspected or seen that the person is doing it solely to please God. It adds to the suffering. Suffering is a lonely thing. That makes it worse. And suffering persons who are not religious will suffer far more if they realise that believers are to look after others because it pleases God - all our love must manifest our complete love of God. A sick person who struggles with self-esteem and depression and abuse does not need to hear people encouraged to see her just as a tool with which to please God.

Any faith that says that God sends suffering to discipline us and make us better people is to be condemned. It insults us by saying that suffering should happen. It may be objected that suffering people need the comfort of knowing that the suffering they are stuck with serves some wonderful divine purpose. The objection says we are depriving those people of a chance to find meaning in their suffering. They are supposedly left without the comforting thought that their suffering has value. It is not that simple. Sometimes you think you are helped emotionally by something because you don't know that you would feel the same or nearly as good without it. Religion takes advantage of that.

We deny that suffering has value. But we affirm not that we can use it to do good but that we can do good in spite of it. This is in no way approving of their suffering. It is disapproving of it so much that we want to see good done in defiance of it. In fact using your suffering to do good alone will stop the suffering being worse than it needs to be. Thinking there is a purpose for it will not.

If it takes a good person to suffer for a purpose it takes a better one to bring good out of useless suffering. If people see suffering as inexcusable and as something that must not happen God or not, they have the chance of being willing to do all they can to eradicate it. They do not tell anybody that their suffering has advantages and is useful to a God. What they do is look into the murky filth and find the little gold nuggets. They build on them to make the best of the situation. When that attitude is adopted, all concerned will feel more in control. They will not feel the need to pretend that God needs this suffering for a purpose. The correct attitude affirms that suffering will not be allowed to win. It will not be allowed to destroy the "soul" of the victim. This is about all being their own God.

God is not the only idea on offer to those who suffer. Suppose sufferers do in fact need God. What if the sufferer has autism or something and needs a tangible god? Why not encourage them to worship a statue of say Luke Skywalker? Why is nobody asking what kind of God they want and need and giving them that? They are being used. They are directed towards your version of God because you are using their situation to draw them to it. That shows your true colours. You are making it about you and your faith and not putting them first.

Bad answers to the problem of evil

Theodicy or saying evil is a mystery is quite nasty if it amounts to, "I don't care what God is. I will call him good no matter what proof or evidence that he cannot be is out there. I will believe what I want about God. It's me, me, me. Even if I suffer

for this God, I am suffering for my pride and it's not really God I am suffering for. I will condone what I think God does to others if it makes me feel happier." It would be brutal considering how some people suffer. It would mean you are helping them not for their sake but for the sake of your religious dogmatism. The bottom line is that you end up worrying more about yourself, than God. Again this is all about pleasing yourself and not really about God.

Christianity admits that the person with this attitude is condoning what he or she sees as cruel acts of the divine.

Nobody really knows how common the attitude is. Priests and nuns riddled with it are not going to tell us.

## The Cross

Christians believe that God became Jesus and suffered on the cross to overcome suffering and give us the opportunity to go to Heaven where there is no suffering. They say that this doctrine gives us hope that there is a good answer to why God allows suffering even if we do not see the answer yet. It says it shows God uses suffering but hates it. So they trust that the message of the cross is that there is an answer and that suffering can be redemptive. Jesus supposedly suffered to save us from sin so that we could be forgiven.

If the cross is crucial for trusting God in the face of suffering then we must find God in it. We must feel and reason our way to God through it. Since unfair suffering is the big objection to belief in God and it is necessary to avoid the risk of condoning the evil that happens, it follows then that faith should start with the cross not with reasoning that there is a God and then deciding he died on the cross. It wouldn't be very human to believe in God without being horrified about human suffering and wondering what God did about it. If we are about loving others and God then we have to start with the cross and reason from that point that there is a God. The apostle Paul said he knew nothing but the cross of Christ and focused on nothing else.

The implications of the cross are,

# anybody who does not believe in it is guilty of condoning what they see as a cruel God

# such a person might act loving but is not really loving

# you must believe that God himself embraced suffering on the cross

# God is not worthy of worship unless he suffers with us and as one of us

# God didn't die on the cross as an act of bravado but because he had to take his own death penalty for our sins

# God died on the cross in the name of justly paying for our sins - if there is no God there is no justice. We cannot say suffering is evil unless we believe in justice and you cannot consistently believe in it without God.

The downside then is that the cross implicitly slanders all who disagree with the notion that God suffered on the cross to save us and accuses everybody of being murderers.

Is feeling good worth it when that is the price you have to pay? Is it something you should feel good about?

Another fatal fault is that the cross cannot stop you thinking, "Right I choose to believe God is right to stand by and let suffering happen no matter what. I don't care about evidence or truth." The cross only says there is an answer but doesn't hint what it is, so the cross actually worsens that attitude. The answer could be that God is entitled to torment us for fun and torment himself too. It gives your stubborn dogmatism more ammunition.

Believers say that it is a problem how unjust suffering happens when God can stop it but that if we abandon God for this reason we deny that there is any justice for unless there is a God there is no such thing as justice and love.

They assume that there is a problem of moral values which is bigger than the problem of evil being tolerated by God. But the two problems could cancel each other out as equals. The argument, "It is worse to say there is no God for that does away with morality than to say that God lets us suffer unjustly" refuses to admit that if you need a God in order to value justice and love you are defeated if unjust suffering shows that God is not on the side of justice and love if he exists. So the arguments do cancel each other out if an all good God cannot allow unjust suffering to happen. If you say God cannot allow it then the arguments are cancelled out. If you say maybe God can allow it you are not really sure and are only guessing. It could still be that they cancel each other.

God cannot ask us to have a firm belief in justice and love if the argument, "God exists and therefore justice and love are to

be followed and valued" is inconclusive. If you are not certain justice is justice you are not really a servant of justice. A God of justice and love then simply has to explain clearly why he lets unjust suffering happen and help our minds absorb the answer. The problem of evil and suffering has just got worse. We are asked to say that God has the right to lovingly let us suffer unjustly and we can only guess that God is the ground of justice and love!

## Don't Deserve Any Love

People worry about exceptionally good people dying unrewarded and many monstrous people dying unpunished. The Christian response is that nobody is truly that good so the argument does not count. So the doctrine of God is clearly but implicitly judgemental and passive aggressive.

Some religions say that we are all born sinners and we never deserve any love. They say that any love we get from God or any he inspires people to feel towards us is just his generosity. If we don't deserve love from God we deserve it from nobody.

The crime of those judgmental religionists is in telling us that religious faith must tell us that we should love. They want us to love only to satiate a religious authority. They want us to love because we are commanded to. We have to love people because people are people and for no other reason. Love must not be based on religious faith. We must love because we let the love in us flow.

## The problem of evil

Why do believers never tell the suffering and dying person to celebrate how blessed they are in their suffering? The suffering is ignored as they praise God for their endurance. They praise the qualities one who suffers exhibits but does not rejoice that they are suffering. This is pure manipulation. A real lover of God would say, "Okay you suffer and God is ultimately responsible for he made all things. But it is better to be alive and suffer than not alive at all!" That sounds awful and hideous.

Having said that, believers praise God for what he does and does not do so they do praise him indirectly for letting people suffer unjustly. It is very manipulative of them. Even calling evil a problem implies a difficulty that God should be praised for. It is called a problem for it is a mystery to us but God is right to let the problem exist.

Faith in God is impossible because terrible suffering happens. You need to have a possible explanation for this suffering in order to truly believe in God. If God wants us to believe in him, then he must explain why he lets suffering happen first. He has not done this. Only an evil God would force you to risk condoning what should in fact not be condoned at all. Even if God is right to allow suffering we don't know so we are still taking the risk. That risk is evil itself. The problem of evil is always "solved" with more evil!

The risk is bad for these reasons:

-To condone evil is to say yes to it for yourself

- To condone one evil is to condone all for evil in a way is about chaos and evil is a pandora's box

- Suffering is abhorrent.

- Human nature will sometimes condone evil to make itself feel better and less defeatist but the good feelings and good results do not justify such an attitude. It is using evil to feel better and do better but the end result cannot be called really good as far as intention goes.

- We will condone some evils and sufferings quicker than others. The fact that the question arises, "Should I be quicker to approve of how God lets a baby suffer than a sinner?" shows there is something unfeeling about how the godly function.

Some say, "If there is no God, you are still accusing something of condoning suffering. To accuse a non-existent Jack the Ripper suspect is still to be unfair." That argument is not logical for if nature lets us suffer it cannot be said to be condoning for it does not know what it is doing.

Finally

If you you believe in God then you are saying suffering is a difficulty perhaps but not a disproof of God. Suffering is not a difficulty. It is insulting to say it is a difficulty and not a cause for doubt. Suffering needs to be seen as a disproof and as vile for that is what it is. There is no other way to see it.

Religion likes to say, "Pain is a warning that something needs to be fixed or mended and so it is good in a way." But it warns you in spite of itself. There is nothing good about it and it is callous to say there is. And suffering is a kind of pain and is often useless. To see suffering as ALWAYS inviting you to get better is stupid. It shows a shortage of empathy and commonsense.

We conclude that the question of suffering is more important than religion or God. God is that which alone matters meaning it is a sin to worry more about suffering than about him. The very concept of God is offensive.

Nobody has the right to tell you that your suffering is part of a divine plan. They do not know. They do not know if telling you that can harm you. We react differently when something is done to a person and not a mere accident.

It is easy to condone somebody else's horrendous suffering when your own is not that bad.

Atheism demands that you do more about suffering than belief in God does. It demands that you join together with others and defy suffering.