

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE (PART 3 OF 3): THE FALSE GODS OF MODERNITY

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Description: Modern society has created false gods which it serves, throwing the world into chaos.

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Who Needs Worship?

God is in no need of our worship, it is mankind that needs to worship God. If no-one were to worship God, it would not take away from His glory in any way, and if all of mankind were to worship Him, it would not add to His glory. It is we, who are in need of God:

"I need no provision from them, neither do I need that they should feed Me for, surely, God Himself is the Provider of all sustenance, the Possessor of mighty power." (Quran 51:57-58)

"...But God is Rich, and it is you that are poor..." (Quran 47:38)

How to Worship God: And Why.

God is worshipped by obeying the laws He revealed through the prophets. For example, in the Bible, Prophet Jesus made obedience to the divine laws the key to paradise:

"If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." (Matthew 19:17).

Also Prophet Jesus is reported in the Bible to have insisted on strict obedience to the commandments, saying:

"Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:19)

Why do human beings need to worship God by obeying the divinely revealed laws?

The answer is simple. Obedience to divine law brings peace to this life and salvation in the next.

Divine laws provide human beings a clear code to guide every sphere of human life and interaction. Since the Creator alone knows best what is best for His creation, His laws protect the human soul, body, and society from harm. In order for human beings to fulfill their purpose of creation, they must worship God by obeying His commandments.

The False Gods of Modernity

God is Who gives meaning and orientation to life. On the other hand, modern life lacks a single center, a single orientation, a single goal, a single purpose. It has no common principle or guideline.

Since Islam considers a god to be an entity that is served out of love, deep respect, and anticipation of reward, one can say that the modern world serves many gods. The gods of modernity give meaning and context to the life of modern man.

We live in a house of language, and our words and expressions are the windows through which we look out at the world. Evolution, nationalism, feminism, socialism, Marxism, and, depending on how they are employed, democracy, freedom, and equality can be listed among the indefinable ideologies of modern times. "Plastic words," to borrow the words of Uwe Poerksen, a German linguist, have been used to usurp God's power and authority to shape and define the goal of society, or even of humanity itself. These words have connotations with a 'feel good' aura. Indefinable words become a limitless ideal. By making the ideal limitless, unlimited needs are awakened, and once these needs are awakened, they appear to be 'self-evident.'

As it is easy to fall into the habit of worshipping false gods, people then have no protection against the multiplicity of gods that modern ways of thinking demand that they serve. The "plastic words" give great power to those 'prophets' who speak on their behalf, because they speak in the name of 'self-evident' truths, so other people keep silent. We must follow their authority; the axiomatic pundits who lay down the Law for our health, welfare, well-being, and education.

The window of modernity through which we perceive reality today is marked by cracks, smudges, blind spots, and filters. It covers the reality. And the reality is that people have no real need except toward God. But nowadays, these empty 'idols' have become the objects of people's devotion and worship, as the Quran states:

"Have you not seen the one who takes his desires as his god?..."(Quran 45:23)

Each of these "plastic words" makes other words appear primitive and out-of-date. 'Believers' in idols of modernity are proud of worshipping these gods; friends and

colleagues consider them enlightened for doing so. Those who still insist on holding onto the "old" God can cover up the embarrassment of doing so by worshipping the new 'modern' gods along with Him. Obviously, many people who claim to worship the "old-fashioned" God will twist His teachings in this event, so that He also seems to be telling us to serve these "plastic words."

The worship of false gods entails the corruption not only of individuals and society, but also of the natural world. When people refuse to serve and worship God as He has asked them to serve Him, they cannot fulfill the functions for which He has created them. The result is that our world becomes ever more chaotic, just as the Quran tells us:

"Corruption has appeared in the land and the sea because of what the hands of people have earned." (Quran 30:41)

Islam's answer to the meaning and purpose of life fulfills the fundamental human need: a return to God. However, everyone is going back to God willy-nilly, so the question is not merely going back, but how one goes back. Will it be in shameful agonizing chains awaiting punishment, or joyful and grateful humility for that which God has promised? If you await the latter, then through the Quran and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad, God guides people back to Him in a manner that will ensure their eternal happiness.

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