

A Cry for Meaning

Viktor Frankl wrote in *The Unheard Cry For Meaning*, "Consider today's society: it gratifies and satisfies virtually every need-except for one, the need for meaning! One may say that some needs are even created by today's society; yet the need for meaning remains unfulfilled-in the midst of and in spite of all our affluence." This feeling of meaninglessness is new. The influence of Ionesco and like-minded authors made the absurd a philosophy of life for many. If we must accept death as final than any meaningful existence is impossible. This feeling leads to despair and fatalism. True. In the past people also saw and experienced absurdities. But they believed that what one cannot understand is not necessarily without meaning. Because they considered life meaningful, they were prepared to suffer or offer sacrifices.

For the Christian life is not absurd. The Gospel judges the absurd. God reaches out to sinners alienated from Him (Rom.3: 10-12). Through Christ we are reconciled to God the Father. Because of His resurrection, death has been overcome and we are heirs to eternal life. What we do on earth for the Lord is not in vain (1 Cor 15:58). But the Christian life is also more than a preparatory school for heaven. The Bible, especially the Old Testament, concentrates on our earthly duties. What given purpose to our existence is the fact that we are God's co-labourers here on earth (1 Cor.3: 9). God's gracious will for our life gives meaning. The relationship between God and man is fundamental. The meaning of my life is that I am a partner in God's covenant, the small friend on earth of the great Friend in heaven. I may live here as a child of God to the glory of His Name.

Not only modern authors speak about absurdity, the Bible also refers to it. Sin is absurd. The Bible calls the unbeliever foolish (Ps.14:1).The foolishness of sin makes the seemingly absurdity of the cross necessary. Paul writes, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor.1: 18). As Christians we don't have all the answers to life's absurdities. The whole book of Job deals with the painful questions of suffering, loss and death. Yet Job could still say, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God"(Job19: 24f). Over against the pessimism of the "Theatre of the Absurd" we face the Gospel of Hope, which Proclaims, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoices"(Ph11.4: 4).

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