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Edmund Weber

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The Revolution of Grace

Martin Luther's, Shri Krishna Caitanya's and Guru Nanak's
Religion of Grace¹

By

Edmund Weber

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Dialectical Theory of Religion

Religion is mind's (germ. Geist) dealing with its dialectical relationship of its two moments: the infinite *constitution* of existence i.e. the infinite mind, and the finite *construction* of existence i.e. the finite mind.

Both moments are contradictory to each other.

The *constitution*, the infinite and indeterminable mind - he may be called ground, foundation or ultimate meaningfulness - is He is determining himself but never determined by or conditioned by something else. He is independent of all his constructing work or karma, of all finite products of mind.

On the other hand, *constructing* existence mind makes himself finite. The whole of his finite construction may be called culture, civilisation, or the whole human beings are producing in history.

The result of the dealing with this dialectical relationship of both contradictory moments, i.e. religion in its proper meaning, we call religious culture. There are two different results or religious cultures possible: Human beings can face that dialectical challenge or not.

Reducing the meaning of religion to traditional or even outlived symbolic items it would be insinuated that there could be found human beings not having the problem of existential dealing. Religion in the proper sense does not depend on its always changing cultural expressions. Important is the common and unavoidable impression of the dialectical relationship one may call oneself pious or atheist or whatever symbolic creations may be.

But the meaning of all those even contrary symbolic items is the same because human nature is the same. So radiational religious symbols call the infinite mind God the creator and the finite minds human creature. Concerning the meaning there is no difference. A difference consists only in the results of the existential dealing, in the religious cultures.

Three Concepts of Religious Culture

The result of dealing or with the dialectical relationship i.e. of religion as mind's free basic act of existence we call religious culture. These ones express the respective results in cultural forms which are always changing and therefore very variable. Although religious cultures may

have the same basic idea their sometimes extremely different expressions give the impression there is nothing identical or comparable between one's own religion and that of other ones. On the other side there are indeed structural differences which people very often do not keep apart enough.

Throughout the course of their history the religious dealing shave speculate three contrary concepts of the *constitution* of human existence.

These contradicting basic results of existential resp- religious dealings are the religious culture of Karmism i.e. radical Righteousness by Work², Semi-Karmism i.e. partial Righteousness of Work, combined with support by some grace, and Kripalism i.e. Righteousness by Grace. It is very important to keep apart these different concepts otherwise their radical existential differences of radical Grace and the two concepts of Karmism or Righteousness of Work will be in its radical and intermingling form covered or ignored or misinterpreted.

Very often religious communities start with a single concept; but over time the other ones will be introduced into the respective community and even takes over the religious leadership – still using the old terms but practising a completely other religious culture. To-day we see that even in Protestantism moralism or Righteousness of Work has Grace de facto driven out even if the word Grace is still used in liturgy and for official declarations.

According to the first concept; Righteousness of Work or Karmism; human existence gets its ultimate meaningfulness or foundation or *constitution* only by Works, by Karma i.e. by manifestations of life.

It is the concept of Moralism which is widespread and prevailing in all religious cultures today. Moralism openly or hidden influences and even dominates more and more all religious communities including self-styled non- or even anti-religious ones.

According to the second concept, Grace, humans have got their ultimate meaningfulness only by God's Grace. This has no beginning and has no end. In other words: culture or one's own creations - they may be

² Righteousness or Justification by Works are technical terms of Protestant theology which mean the conviction that human beings are completely or partially justified or by God on reason of their own good and just works. The other technical term, Righteousness or justification by Grace, means just the opposite: the human beings are justified by God's work, by his unconditionally given Grace; they are right and just in the eyes of God even if they are religious sinners and according Law a lawbreakers. The Righteousness of Grace is not ruling the world;; that is the business of Law.

intellectual ideas, moral actions or enthusiastic feelings - cannot provide existential truth or ultimate meaningfulness. Reason is that Grace is as constitution of existence total and there is nothing completing or competing.

In this respect even good works misused as means of *constituting* existence would be - using a traditional Western term - sin. Sin means the conviction that one's own *constitution* basically depends on one's own performances of life, of one's own *construction* of existence.

On the level of Law the same religiously misused and therefore worst Work can be an extremely good one.

However, modern world culture of Moralism and Karmism are trying to marginalise Grace or repurposing her into an aid if work is too weak to achieve a moralist Pseudo-Constitution.

According to the third concept of Semi-karmism or Semi-Moralism ultimate meaningfulness one must acquire by Karma or Work. But this concept assumes all human efforts to get salvation or meaningfulness for insufficient and sees humans in need of supranatural supplementation.

We call this concept the semi-karniistic or semi-moralist one because Law fulfilling Work or Karma is a necessary element of constituting existence. In this concept so-called grace deserves only as helper to satisfy the Law; Law understood as the organising principle of self-creating constitution.

To some extent such concept can be found even in many traditionally shaped religious communities.

The most prevailing concept is the first one. Many modern consciousnesses completely ignore or even deny any alternative to its moralist or karmistic view of existence.

Because of the actual dominance of moralist or karmistic religions at least religious research should prevent the forgetting of the religion of radical Grace; otherwise this idea will be completely put out of mind. Therefore, one should pay special attention to religious cultures dealing with Grace as constitution of existence.

For this reason this paper will deal with the concept of Grace; how it looks like in the doctrines of Martin Luther, Shri Krishna Caitanya and Guru Nanak, the leading initiators of their respective religions: All these

three religions i.e. Protestantism, Gaudiya Vaishnavism and Sikhism were originally founded on the concept of total Grace. All three ones arose in the 16th century - a century which was one of the most important times of religious history because after centuries of Karmism and Semi-Karmism a revolution of Grace finally succeeded.

Human consciousness became aware of the infinite mind as the true ground of existence. All the traditional and outlived constructions of so-called divine or so-called natural orders blocking the necessary change and progress of science, social conditions, economic development and culture in general. On the long run Grace of *infinite* mind understood as *constitution* of existence religiously created the conditions for a revolution of cultural *construction* i.e. the abolition of the outlived and the legitimation for a new one.

Martin Luther's Doctrine of Grace

At first, we will deal with the revolution of Grace initiated by the Western Protestant Reformation.

The Roman-Catholic Church of those times followed the semi-karmistic concept. The Church of Jesus Christ, the so-called Cathars, had followed - before extinguished by the Roman Inquisition – a strong karmistic way including the doctrine of reincarnation- The ideas of both religions were radically confronted with a revolution of Grace.

The religious leader of this Western revolution of Grace was the well-known Martin Luther (1483-1546). He was a contemporary of the founder of Sikh religion Guru Nanak and the founder of Gaudiya Vaishnavism Shri Krishna Caitanya:

Although all three didn't know one another, their message was very similar.

Martin Luther realised Grace is the only and true *constitution* of human existence:

*[G]ratis dat fundamentum – (God) gives the foundation (i.e. constitution of existence) free of charge.*³

³Dr. Martin Luthers Werke. Weimarer Ausgabe (= WA) 56. Der Brief an die Römer, S. 110.

In the eyes of God, the human beings are just and right by God's Grace. This implies, true existential foundation does not depend on any human work, any karma, on any manifestations of life. And a semi-karmistic collaboration of God and man is a useless and a basic sin against God's Grace, too. Therefore, both models had been completely out of question.

If Grace alone is the true constitution the observance of Divine Law has got a new existential task. According to Martin Luther the mission of Divine Law consists only in ruling and regulating the relationships between people. Only God's Grace is responsible for salvation i.e. true constitution. God's given salvation being free of charge and therefore works being useless God's Grace can become aware which awareness is called faith. However, we must hold on: awareness or faith does not cause salvation otherwise this perception of Grace would be turned into an its absolute opposite – a process which is prevailing in history again and again.

Therefore, it is very important to notice Martin Luther's understanding of the divine task of Law:

The Apostle Paul wants that the human being lives with the people by virtue of the law, but that the justified⁴ one lives with God by virtue of faith. i.e. that justice, life and salvation is in faith. Justice is not prior to faith but with faith is justice and life.⁵

According to Martin Luther Law, Justice, and works have only to regulate and execute the construction of existence; with other words it is their task to organise and realise people's living together.

However, the living with God which is *constituted* by Grace of which one can get awareness of faith. Martin Luther decisively denies that works according to justice and Law are to be done before faith can happen. Such works are e.g. baptism, confession, holy communion, morally good deeds etc.

⁴ The 'justified' one means the human being which is conscious of the truth that the constitution of existence consists in 'Grace only.

⁵WA 2, In epistolam Pauli ad Galatas commentarius. (commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians), 516

Like Grace is free, so faith too. Both happen without any pre-condition. Therefore, To become aware of Grace as *constitution* of existence does need any karmistic requirements.

*Paul preaches such a faith which according to the Gospel the Holy Spirit (of God) puts into the hearts of the hearers and saves it.*⁶

In order to clarify that faith is no salvation earning moral work, he argues the Holy Ghost i.e. gives faith; faith is not a product of human will. Confirming his anti-karmistic position Martin Luther unambiguously determines:

*One who does work (in order to gain salvation), he may be holy, wise, just, whatever he wants, if faith is missing, he remains under the wrath and is damned.*⁷

Mediaeval theology before Martin Luther understood that faith as highest and most effective work man must do if he wants to get salvation.⁸

Fides,

Therefore, Martin Luther decisively insisted on strictly keeping apart the radically different meaning of both terms.

*According to Holy Scripture faith in the proper sense is not our work but a work of God. In the proper sense something is called work which relates to law. Therefore, faith is not a work because it relates to the promise (i.e. of God's no work demanding Grace).*⁹

⁶ WA 39 I, Thesen für die Promotionsdisputation von Hieronymus Weller und Nikolaus Medier. Thema: (Subject) Arbitramur hominem iustificari fide absque operibus legis (We believe the human beings is justified without the works of Law). De fide (On Faith). S. 45,Nr. 15

⁷ WA 39 I: Thesen für die Promotionsdisputation von Hieronymus Weller und Nikolaus Medler. Thema: Arbitramur hominem iustificari fide absque operibus legis, S. 48

⁸ Faith, lat. *fides* is originally a term of the foundation of the Feudal Society and means loyalty. Loyalty is the work of the feudal lord on the one side and on the other side of the feudal peasant to guarantee a specified stable relationship. In this way the Roman Church understood the relationship of God and human beings. However, Martin Luther gave that term a completely different meaning. It is a present of God's Grace and not a work for getting a reward.

⁹ Drews, Paul: Disputationen Dr. Martin Luthers in d. J. 1535-1545 an der Universität Wittenberg gehalten, 1895, S. 42

Just as faith is a gift of God so loving God is a Grace only, too:

It is only God's business to give the faith against nature¹⁰, against reason and believing.¹¹ It is only God's work That I love him.¹²

In his time within the traditional religion people were convinced that human being could live by their nature and loving him in fact they become a friend of God, i.e. get salvation. Insofar that human finite work, a moment of existential construction, tried to replace Grace as constitution of existence:

In other words, if no work justifies (human being in God's eyes) even faith would not justify if faith would be a work.¹³

But faith is just the opposite.

Luther uncompromisingly rejects karmistic or moralist interpretation of true *constitution*. The ground of existence is free Grace and nothing else. And therefore, he rejects the understanding of faith as a from law demanded work.

As human beings are not drove controlled, they can follow their will. Having free will one needs a regulator otherwise its life will not work. This regulator for the construction of existence is as we have seen above the God given Law.

But who the authorised interpreter of Law? Is that a pope or a council of bishops or any other religious body or person? The interpreter is the God given reason only. All human beings participate on that gift of God— even the heathen:

¹⁰ According to Martin Luther the nature of human being consists in fact in constituting existence by one's own work.

¹¹ In contrast to faith (lat. *fides* in the sense of Martin Luther)) believing (lat. *credere*) means voluntary accepting the doctrines of the Roman Church. In that Church these mental activities were understood as religious works by which one could get merits for salvation.

¹² WA 39/1, S.90

¹³ WA 39/1, S.91

*If the heathens – although corrupt in their nature - had been able to have an imagination of God, then the law could come out of themselves.*¹⁴

But this reason is not at all a fixed and unchangeable program of actions and behaviour. According to necessity of actual life reason must produce flexible rules and ideas which secure the living together of mankind. Somewhere Martin Luther said: If necessary, let us make new decalogues.¹⁵

Against contemporary prejudice Martin Luther has called reason the most important gift God has given for the reasonable *construction* of existence.

Elsewhere he praises reason profusely:

*In fact, it's true the reason is the main thing of everything, in comparison with the best one in comparison with the other things of this life and something Divine.*¹⁶

But because of its liberty human will can follow reason or not.

However, reason and laws; and all other decisions of the will deserve only the *construction* of life. Will and its works can never *constitute* human existence. According to Martin Luther *Constitution* of existence means the whole of culture and organisation of existence, all ideas, actions and feelings which make up that life.

The human infinite mind and finite will by work *construct* existence, but their *constitution* is Grace alone becoming aware as faith.

Since the 19th century Moralism or Karmism and Semi-Karmism have overtaken the religious leadership and have pushed back the concept of Grace even I most of in the Protestant Churches and communities so that the idea of Grace is almost only surviving in the liturgy and in documents of the traditional doctrine.

¹⁴ Drews, Paul: Disputationen Dr. Martin Luthers in d. J. 1535-1545 an der Universität Wittenberg gehalten, 1895, S. 55

¹⁵ Decalogue means The Ten Commandments understood as God's Law at all

¹⁶ ¹⁶ WA 39/1; S. Disputation De homine (Disputation on the Human Being), S. 175.

Shri Krishna Caitanya's Religion of Grace

The revolution of Grace of the 16th century was not confined to the West. During the 16th century such a revolution of Grace also happened in the Eastern world, in India.

In Bengal e.g. the well-known Shri Krishna Caitanya – he also didn't know anything about Martin Luther – fought against Karmism and Semi-karmism: He did not perceive God as a servant of Karma Samsara but as gracious protector of his creatures. Even if a human being is unable to love the Lord, the Lord nevertheless takes care of that creature, regardless of whatever it feels, works or thinks.

Therefore, it is a vain attempt to constitute one's own existence if one does not trust in the Grace (skrt. *kṛpa*, m.) of the Lord. In this concern Shri Krishna Caitanya's position was very clear: The unconditional Grace of the Lord alone gives existence ultimate meaningfulness. By singing the name of the Lord one can always be certain of the almighty Grace. It's a serious question to what extent the Karmism and particularly semi-Karmism is sometimes overlaying Shri Krishna Caitanya's religion of Grace in some communities of his devotees.

Shri Krishna Caitanya's perception of God's radical Grace¹⁷, the power of *infinite* mind, is documented in *the Caitanya Caritamrita Antya Lila* (CCA). Several verses of this book treating this subject have been selected, collected and edited under the title *Shikshashtak am*¹⁸ or *The Eight Teachings*. Here we are using a translation which is near to the original text.

Verse 1 (CCA 20.12)

Cleansing the mirror of the heart, mind, and consciousness (citta), extinguishing the great forest fire of material existence, spreading the moonshine of the lotus of good fortune, the life of the spouse of all knowledge, increasing the ocean of bliss, giving a taste of full nectar

¹⁷ Cf. *Journal of Religious Culture* Nr. 248

¹⁸ Skrt. *śikṣāṣṭakam* from *śikṣā*, f. (teaching) and *aṣṭakam* (from skrt. *aṣṭa* eight)). Vide Bhaktivedanta Swamis's edition: <https://www.vedabase.com/en/cc/antya/20>

(amrita) at each step, bathing all souls, let there be all victory for the congregational hearing and chanting of the Holy Names of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

The most important task of finite mind is contacting the infinite constitution of his existence. The contact happens as kirtan, only singing God's names. Krishna's name¹⁹ is his power and means nothing else than that constitution. By singing God's names one faces the infinite ground and constitution of existence and is filled with the power of the name. Then one stays in paradise.²⁰ There is no need to make correct thought about it; producing and hearing the sound is completely enough.²¹

Verse 2 (CCA 20.16)

In your (divine) names manifested various kinds of full potencies (shaktis) therein bestowed, with no rules according to time for remembering them,

O Lord, you are so merciful, but it is my misfortune here that I have no anuraga (interest)²² in those names.

Krishna's names are full of Shakti, infinite power, which is not subdued to any law. A law dictates finite conditions e.g. time or place or behaviour e.g. to contact and face the divine Grace, the infinite mind.

God's Grace offers contact without any condition of work demanding law. That basic contact or service is extremely easy: Kirtan or singing the names of God. But singing the names is not a salvation producing work. Such a karmistic misunderstanding of kirtan leads only to an absurd result that particularly pious people are working hard for their salvation although true foundation has been an already given gift - given before one can do any work at all.

¹⁹ Skrt. *naman*; n. This word originally means that power which makes existence possible, it is the .

²⁰ Cf. *Journal of Religious Culture* No.238

²¹ The holiest moment of Christian Religion, Lord's Supper, the pious ones are not asked to think correctly about that ritual but to look and taste (the sanctified bread and wine. Here too, sensual perceiving is the adequate behaviour to meet the Holy One, the constitution of existence..

²² Skrt. *anurāga*, m. attachment, love, desire, passion

Although perceiving God's free Grace as true constitution, Shri Krishna Caitanya openly and honestly but desperately confesses that he does not want to get in touch with God's Grace.

Verse 3 (CCA 20.21)

By considering (self) lower than straw, more tolerant than a tree, giving honour to those devoid honour, always do kirtana of hari.

Whatever a human being is doing and experiencing whatever happens to him constructing existence his useless in view of his constitution, of his Lord. All constructions do not open the door to the ultimate ground. Therefore, man should ding the name of the Lord and nothing else. That such an extreme simple action, the Kirtan, is enough, means: if singing is not a culture constructing work but a natural expression which even a small child can do, then Kirtan does not produce any Karmaphala, i.e. reincarnating work.

Verse 4 (CCA 20.29)

No wealth, no followers, no beauty or poetic praise desire I; in birth after birth let there be devotion unmotivated unto thee o ishvara.

Alternatively:

O Lord of the Universe, I do not desire wealth, followers, beautiful women, nor the flowery language of the vedas; let me have only causeless devotion to you, birth after birth.

The proper relation to the constitution of existence does not consist in doing any works, not even in ascetic ones, not even in wisdom; that relation is free of charge. Therefore, the adequate relation is causeless devotion, which means: no imposing of any condition is permitted by Grace.

Causelessly loving God has nothing to do with reincarnation. The opinion that there is a necessary link between unmotivated devotion and getting rid of reincarnation does not understand Grace. The unmotivated love is possible even in every reincarnation. This implicates that the contact with Grace, which happens by singing the names of God, does not depend on the liberation from reincarnation. Being in contact with Grace means being in paradise. This paradise is possible no matter where i.e. in which rebirth one exists.

But Shri Krishna Caitanya does not feel any unmotivated love. This confession explains why there is only Grace necessary – a Grace or Mercy which does not depend on any construction of devotional culture. That is - as we see later - the only and true consolation of human existence.

Verse 5 (CCA 20.32)

O son of nanda, servitor me fallen in venom of ocean of material existence, by your mercy (kripa) consider me as particle of dust at your lotus-feet.

The human reality is the negation of the free existence, not founded on human work, not bound to self-dependence.

Shri Krishna Caitanya is not a hypocrite who declares himself an enthusiastic and perfect devotee according to finite rules and etiquettes of subcultures. He confesses to be a karmist in the extreme; nonetheless he begs God to give him at least the Grace to grant him the last and minimal position possible in Krishna's realm.

Shri Krishna Caitanya has no devotion to offer, but nonetheless he believes that Krishna's Grace can give him, the non-devotee, who does not love the divine names, a place at the feet will say true or non-karmic constitution of existence.

Verse 6 (CCA 20.36)

With eyes flowing tear-streams, voice faltering, words choked, with ecstatic feelings in body, when shall i be able to chant thy (divine) name?

Because Shri Krishna Caitanya is not able or does not even want to sing the names of God, he asks for the Grace to become bestowed with kirtan, singing the divine names, but realizing the true existence which does not depend on work and behaviour.

Verse 7 (CCA 20.39)

By moment comparable to yuga, eyes showering tears, empty appears whole world to me in separation of Govinda

The horrible separation from the Lord lets Shri Krishna Caitanya perceive the emptiness of finite world. He does not feel the emptiness of

finite world at first and afterwards separation from God; just the opposite is true: first he feels the separation from the Lord, which then leads him to perceive world's emptiness. Here we see, that the abstract negation of the finite world, the ascetism, does not lead to God. The human being can meet God by singing the divine names facing in this way his true constitution, his infinite mind.

Verse 8 (CCA 20.47)

By embracing with entrapment or trampling with feet, or breaking my heart by not granting vision, or flirting here and there as destined, master of my life is he, verily no other.

Even if God leads him into a desolate situation denying his vision and engulfing him in absolute misery, Shri Krishna Caitanya suddenly and without any finite evidences realizes God is unconditionally his master. Although Shri Krishna Caitanya experiences the opposite nonetheless he can believe that master's care is above all what can happen even if it is a cruel action of God. Having no vision of one's true and free constitution of existence, getting no wanted divine gratifications, Shri Krishna Caitanya perceived God's Grace as absolute free from all imaginable items, free even from experiencing separation and no-vision. God's Grace does never depend on and is always beyond every feeling of happiness or distress. In this way Shri Krishna Caitanya reached a level of existential consciousness which reveals Masters's Grace is in the proper sense means the absolute transcendence of all possible work, behaviour feeling and all human judgement: This transcendence of all real constructions of finite culture including religious culture, Krishna's Grace alone is the true constitution of existence. This truth cannot be experienced by always finite evidences, it can only be believed against all experience.

The Shhikshashtakam is one of the best Indian religious documents are revealing God's Grace, the shakti of infinite mind, as true condition of existence. Indeed, Shri Krishna Caitanya belongs to the revolutionaries of Grace, *kṛpā*.

Guru Nanak and his Message of Grace

Guru Nanak and his followers were also radical partisans of the revolution of Grace who also broke the iron chains of Karmism.

This demonstrates the *Nitnem*, the book of the daily prayers of the Sikh people. Nitnem is full of verses praising God's Grace; a Grace Guru Nanak himself had experienced during his life.

Therefore, we will learn from this most famous poem how the Sikh people understand God's infinite Grace.²³

But Nitnem's poetic verses of Grace are not only a historical phenomenon but still very important for the religious consciousness of the followers of Guru Nanak to-day.

That the Nitnem -mostly following the model of Grace - has become the essential element of piety of most of the disciples of Guru Nanak stems from its doctrine of Grace.

Preaching the Grace constituting existence Guru Nanak liberated his people who was suffering from the cruel burden of karmistic and semi-karmistic self-dependence.

Therefore, let us now have a look at verses which sing about God's Grace as the only true foundation of existence.

We start with

JAPUJI: The Morning Prayer. IV

The Lord is holy; holy is His Name;

Infinite are the expressions of devotion to Him.

All creation seeks boons of Him;

Endlessly does He confer these (boons).

What to offer Him in return?

How to get a glimpse of His court?

What words to utter to win His pleasure?

By man's actions is acquired the vesture of human incarnation;

By God's Grace is attained the Door of Liberation.

*Nanak! Know the All-holy to be Almighty, Absolute.*²⁴

²³ NITNEM. Daily Prayer Texts of the Sikhs. Rendered into English by Gurbachan Singh Talib. New Delhi: Guru Nanak Foundation 1983.

²⁴ Nitnem, p. 6

By their very nature human beings of all religions consciously or unconsciously strive after the *boons* of the Holy One feeling their own Works cannot create true existential foundation.

But the humans could be aware the Holy One is always ready to deliver these *boons* to all of them – without a condition.

The poem is stressing this basic existential fact that the meaningfulness of existence does not in the slightest depend on any manifestations of life. On constructions of existence. The poem is expressing this idea with an un-ambiguous picture:

Human creatures have nothing they could give back for the graciously conferred *boons* of Grace. Not even the praying or *uttering* holy words could *win* the Holy One's *pleasure* - will say there is no behaviour or deed – even the most pious one -which could make the Holy One leaning towards the human beings. Grace cannot be gained even by amazing acts because Grace is an unconditioned gift of the Holy One.

We see the true constitution of existence is nothing we can control or manage. One can only trust the Grace.

The Nitnem summarizes this radical negation of any human contribution to the existential constitution by plainly telling the pious people: Human practise can never gain the Holy One's *pleasure* and benevolence; just the opposite is true: by misusing the Divine Law, one manoeuvres one-self into the horrible cycle of re-birth!

Guru Nanak realised the Holy One is the almighty Lord over all his creatures, including in this case the Divine Law. God is almighty in His Grace and there-fore Grace is greater than God's Law.

Who tries to make God's Law a means for salvation or true constitution is submitting himself to Samsara.

In this regard Guru Nanak uncompromisingly declares:

By God's Grace is attained the Door of Liberation. '

There is only one way to liberation: Grace.

Adequate and corresponding behaviour towards God's offering of Grace isn't any thankful work but faith in Grace:

JAPUJI XV

*Through faith man finds the Door of liberation.*²⁵

If the Door of liberation is only Grace, then faith is not a liberation gaining work; it is a deed without any expectation of the reward of liberation.

The following verses of Nitnem reaffirm this position unambiguously:

RAHIRAS

*“Fruitless is all practice of virtue, austerity, good deeds,
And high attainments of great yogis.
Without Thy Grace none has realization achieved:
This by Grace comes; else all efforts remain unfruitful.
None of his own effort gains devotion to Thee.”*²⁶

All these *high attainments* only produce the horrible illusion of transmigration. In this way these karmistic and semi-karmistic procedures deny the omnipotence of God’s Grace.

The poem attacks the pious arrogance as *unfruitful*. It is *urgently* warning the pious people: You can never become devote to the gracious God by yourself. Boasting one’s own devotion – it may be Christian, Hindu, Muslim or even Sikh - is pure illusion. Such self-styled devotion denies the almightiness of God’s Grace. Self-dependence cannot reach the door of liberation, but self-dependence is very often the door to religious separatism and even terrorism.

The Nitnem knows: God demands no Work when he gives his Grace to the people; he also does not demand any reward from the people afterwards.

JAPUJI: The Morning Prayer XXV

*He the Supreme Giver grants without the least expectations of return.*²⁷
*Liberation from the bondage of transmigration comes by His Grace.*²⁸

²⁵ Nitnem, p. 13

²⁶ Nitnem, p. 90

²⁷ Nitnem, p. 23

²⁸ Nitnem, p. 24

No doubt: The gracious Holy One rejects any merit of good deeds, neither as precondition nor as reward for his Grace.

Therefore, the liberation from Samsara cannot be achieved by lawful deeds; only God's free and independent Grace can get the human being out of the bondage of reincarnations.

About the message which Guru Nanak, the great revolutionary of God's Grace, announced to all human beings, the Nitnem admits no doubt:

JAPUJI: The Morning Prayer XXV
*Beyond this - nothing may be said.*²⁹

Conclusion

Let me conclude: Martin Luther's, Shri Krishna Chaitanya's and Guru Nanak's religion of Grace renounces any necessity of self-management of existential constitution. The human beings are not forced to imagine and construct any basic sense and ultimate value of their existence. In this concern they are created free without any need of ultimate self-determination.

Insofar there is no need for an aggressive enforcing and defending of any self-made and therefore illusionary ultimate definition of human existence.

However, the realisation that true existential foundation is unavailable and not manageable to the human Work i.e. that only trusting in the absolute and unconditional Grace and waiving of one's karmistic or semi-karmistic self-dependence, this realisation may not only be a chance for personal but also for inter-religious peace. -

Therefore, the message of Martin Luther, Shri Krishna Caitanya, and Guru Nanak may also be heard everywhere even in our time.

²⁹ Nitnem, p. 24