

RELIGION AND CIVILIZATION

Prologue: Philosophical Foundation

1. Df. religion: set of basic beliefs (BB) used to give meaning to experience; set consists of basic beliefs in epistemology, metaphysics and ethics.
Meaning is necessary for man as a thinking (rational) being.
Meaning is more basic than truth. The need for meaning is most basic.
No experience is meaningful without interpretation in light of basic beliefs (vs. empiricism of all forms).
2. There are two sets of BB which are ordered (e/m/e) and which are contradictory (both cannot be true and both cannot be false).
Epistemology (clarity): the basic things about God and man and good and evil are clear to reason vs. the basic things about G.m.g.e are *not* clear to reason.
Metaphysics (reality): all is eternal is some form or other (material monism, spiritual monism, dualism) vs. *only some* is eternal (God the creator).
Ethics (morality): there is rational justification for the moral law vs. there is no rational justification for any moral law.
3. BB are held more or less consciously and consistently depending on presupposition, personality background and mood.
There is an admixture of both contradictory sets in each person.
In each person, one set is existentially more basic than the other.
4. History is an outworking of the conflict of BB in each and between each person and each group (family, church, nation and all—in belief vs. unbelief).
5. BB serve to give meaning.
Only BB that retain meaning will last.
Moral evil is an act contrary to human nature as rational. It is to NARD reason vs. clarity.
ME is self-destructive and cannot last. The inherent consequences are: m.b.g.
6. History is redemptive; it assumes Creation and Fall. Redemption restores man from ME.
ME exists and man is being called back from ME.
NE is a non-intrinsic source of suffering (t.s.osd/w.f.p).
God imposes NE on man in providence to call man back from ME.
7. Creation is not Providence; Theism is not Deism; First cause is not Second cause.
Creation is any bringing into being of what previously did not exist (by God or man). Subsequent creation is sequential (and cumulative). What is new can be a thing or a person or an idea.
In Providence, God upholds, directs, disposes and governs all creatures, actions and things, from the least to the greatest . . . for *his* purpose (WCF v).
Creation and Providence assume each other; they are not antinomies.
Providence is not hidden; what is hidden is the divine plan, until it is revealed.

8. What is new, after creation, is the covenant of creation (and the Fall), and Redemption (the curse and the promise).
9. God rules in history; he is the judge of all the earth; God comes in several ways; the rule of God is redemptive.
10. Cultures come into being and pass out of being.
There is a distinct process of formation and decay.
Due to ME, men and cultures left to themselves tend to decay. Many cultures have decayed. ME results intrinsically in meaninglessness and boredom (with excess) and guilt (with attendant self-deception and self-justification).
Without foundation there is division, apostasy, decay and collapse. With foundation there is maturity, fruitfulness, unity and fullness.
Foundation consists of BB from GR, SR and HC.
11. Most civilizations have perished; only five major civilizations remain: Christian, Islam, Indian, Chinese and Naturalism (Secular Humanism).
These are all deeply divided within themselves and among themselves.
The conflict of BB within each and among each is still being worked out.
12. Only what retains meaning will last.
What is divided within itself cannot stand as it becomes more conscious and consistent.
Only one culture will last. Only what retains meaning can be true. Only Truth can last. Good by its nature will overcome evil.