

The Search For Certainty

The Goal: To affirm the possession of the knowledge of God.

I. The Search for Certainty in Natural Theology.

A. The Position: While the Roman Catholic Church recognizes the apologetic place of special revelation and the Church as well as general revelation - the emphasis is on the latter as the foundational starting point.

Even though the effect should be better known to us, we can demonstrate from any effect that its cause exists, because effects always depend on some cause and a cause must exist if its effect exists. We can demonstrate God's existence in this way, from his effects which are known to us, even though we do not know his essence. (The Summa Theologies. I,Q2,Article 2,3)

B. The Representative: St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

His four important sources: The Scripture, church tradition, Augustine and Aristotle.

C. The Principles:

1. The validity of sense perception: "There is nothing in the intellect which was not first in the senses." (The Summa Theologica, I,Q84, Article 6)
2. The testimony of causation: (see quotation #1).
3. The acceptance of the principle of analogy of being: "Now when an effect is more apparent to us than its cause, we reach a knowledge of the cause through its effect." (The Summa Theologica, I,Q2, Article 2,3)

D. The Evaluation:

1. Theological inadequacies:

- a. A non-Biblical concept of creation: Man was created in the image of God to which was added a supernatural gift (donum superadditum). This "gift" uniquely related man to his Creator.
- b. A non-Biblical concept of the Fall: Man lost the donum superadditum, the natural endowment or image of God remained intact although now weakened through being susceptible to concupiscence.

2. Apologetic inadequacies:

David Hume (1711-1776) has shown by accepting the above three principles one is inevitably led, by the principle of economy, to a very defective concept of "God". This "God" cannot be shown to be infinite, good or one.

II. The Search for Certainty in Religious Experience.

A. The Position:

Is an historical point of departure possible for an eternal consciousness; how can such a point of departure have any other than a merely historical interest; is it possible to base an eternal happiness upon historical knowledge? (Philosophical Fragment, Søren Kierkegaard. Titlepage)

How does the learner then become a believer or disciple? When the Reason is set aside and he receives the condition. When does he receive the condition? In the Moment. What does this condition condition? The understanding of the Eternal. But such a condition must be an eternal condition. He receives accordingly the eternal condition in the Moment and is aware that he has so received it; for otherwise he merely comes to himself in the consciousness that he had it from eternity. It is in the Moment that he receives it and from the Teacher himself. (Ibid., p. 79. Princeton University Press, 1962)

B. The Representative: Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855)

Factors which structured his thought: His father and the family curse; the early death of the family; his frail health; Regina; the Corsair incident; the state Church of Denmark; Romanticism; and Hegelianism. Through all of these there is Søren's constant wrestling with the concepts of the New Testament.

C. The Principles:

1. The absolute qualitative difference between God and man.
2. God is not known by reasoning, He is a "hidden God" (Deus absconditus).
3. God is known only as Subject (Person) and by an inner subjectivity (not subjectivism) which results in spiritual transformation.
4. God cannot be know through history alone. He is known only as the Reason is set aside, the Paradox in Jesus Christ is accepted, and the Moment is received. In this man is caught up in a venture or risk (leap) of faith.

D. The Evaluation:

1. The non-Biblical position that the historical revelation of God in the Scripture is an inadequate basis for truth and certainty.
2. The non-Biblical separation of faith And knowledge.
3. The non-Biblical evaluation of regeneration (The Moment) as primarily epistemological.
4. The non-Biblical interpretation of the historical events of the Bible and the Christian life as psychological.

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