

The Crossings Six-Steps and World Religions.

Colleagues,

Marie and I are getting ready to move to an “old folks home” before summer’s over. Nowadays it’s a “retirement community,” yet still populated by old folks. So it’s purge, purge, purge to move into one-half the living space. Also purge, purge, purge those filing cabinet drawers. What strange and wonderful things one finds! Here’s one found in the file folder from a course on “Why Jesus in a World Awash with Many Religions?”

It’s a handout that walks through major (so-called) world religions and does a Crossings “six-steps” with each one of them, asking what that religion’s own diagnosis is of the human malady and its proposed good-news to bring a new prognosis for the patient just diagnosed.

E.g., according to the fundamental tenets of a specific world religion (say Buddhism) what is its diagnosis of the human malady? Step one: initial diagnosis. Step two: deeper diagnosis. Step three: final diagnosis. And then on the good-news side: What does Buddhism propose to heal the malady? Step four: healing for the final diagnosis. Step five: healing for the deeper diagnosis. Step six: healing for the initial diagnosis.

Here’s how the handout looks.

Peace & Joy!

Ed

Why Jesus? Comparative Models for the Human Problem and its Solution, Using the Crossings matrix.

I. A CHRISTIAN Model for Problem and Solution (Taken from Luke 2, the Christmas Gospel. According to Bertram's "A Christmas Crossing.") **THE HUMAN PROBLEM**

1. Living "in the dark." Benighted.
2. (Deeper) "Heart" problem. "Mega" (=Luke's own term) fear. But not fearing – nor loving, nor trusting – God.
3. (Deepest) "Root" problem, a God-problem, Lost. Lost to God in that darkness.

THE GOSPEL'S SOLUTION

4. "Glad tidings." A SAVIOR [=a finder of the lost] "Christ the Lord – lying in a manger," a signal of the coming cross.
5. Joy trumps fear, a faith trusting the manged Messiah.
6. "Glorifying and praising God," originally the angels' job, now carried out by shepherds as sub-angels of the Messiah.

Question: Why Jesus needed here? To heal the root-problem (#3) which then brings healing to everything else.

II. A HINDU Model for Problem and Solution **PROBLEM**

1. People create suffering: for self and others. Past bad karma brings more suffering.
2. Desires in the heart cause suffering.
3. Imprisoned by karma, by the endless cycle of reincarnation (samsara).

HINDUISM'S SOLUTION

4. Salvation is escape from karma, from samsara.

Complete escape = Nirvana, into nothingness.

5. Getting insight into the “big picture” (1,2,3,4).
Committing one’s heart to escape, to kill desire.
6. Practicing escape in daily life. Many ways to do that. Many gods in the picture. Many sacrifices to the many gods, a daily ritual.

Why Jesus needed here? Yes, karma does rule, but the problem is worse. See #3 in Christian model. The soul does not escape God’s criticism. Good and New: Christ conquers karma, also God’s criticism coming via karma.

III. A BUDDHIST Model for Problem and Solution **PROBLEM**

1. People create suffering: for self and others. Past bad karma brings more suffering.
2. Desire in the heart to clutch the permanent causes suffering.
3. Ignorance and its results: Imprisoned by karma, by the endless cycle of reincarnation.

BUDDHISM’S SOLUTION

4. Enlightenment about 1,2,3 leads to escape from karma and samsara. Full escape = Nirvana.
5. Acquiring insight into the “big picture” (1,2,3).
Commitment to escape, to kill desire.
6. Practicing detachment in daily life. Ideal life of the monk. In folk-Buddhism many gods in the picture.
Making sacrifices, acquiring merit.

Why Jesus? Karma as critic, yes. Samsara the retribution. But the problem is worse. God IS present in our lived experience, both source of blessings and “final” critic. The soul is also subject to God’s criticism, no self-generated escape is possible. Good and New: Christ conquers karma, also God’s criticism. Christ liberates

people to trust God, join God to participate in the world's suffering, not escape it. A good and new enlightenment: call it "the Mind of Christ."

IV. A MUSLIM Model for Problem and Solution **PROBLEM**

1. Daily life lived contrary to the Qur'an, contrary to Allah's revealed will.
2. Heart not submitted to Allah. Not striving to follow Allah's revealed will.
3. Lost, Damned. Allah, though also sometimes merciful, never ceases to be critic. Mercy is never sure.

ISLAM'S SOLUTION

4. Allah reveals his will via Muhammad in the Qur'an. Salvation is: "Obey this," Allah's final word.
5. Submission to Allah's revealed will: Striving. Either because of fear of #3, or faith in #4.
6. Living in obedience to Allah's revealed will. Doing the 5 pillars, believing the 6 doctrines.

Why Jesus? The problem is even worse. Striving for righteousness is the problem, not the solution. Needed is liberation from striving, and from God's critique of strivers. Good and New: Jesus, compassionate Rescuer – sent from Allah! Swaps with sinners, takes the heat of God's critique. Easter says: God approves the deal – no divine critique for Christ-trusters. Christ says: Trust me (New #4). Christ-trust replaces striving (New #5). "Obeying" Christ (New #6).