

These notes are for a clinic on the biblical/Eastern interface-confrontation, Fifth Av. Presb. Ch. the evening of 22Jan78. Their function is to display some possibilities for fruitful discussion.

1. Occassionally, the Ganges floods westward. It did in the early 1830, when we got Emerson's transcendentalism and then Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy's "Christian Science" with admixture of mesmerism--and Joe Smith's gold plates (Mormonism). It's happening again in the 1970s. God may not be back yet, but the soul is. [See Elliott's excellent SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN MODERN AMERICA.]
2. In the good ol' days, folks in America believed in God and the soul, and sensed no dissonance between the two beliefs. Today, you take your choice: psychocentrism [rooted in Vedanta] or theocentrism [rooted in the Bible]. Sunday we used the Con-sensor on a congregation [1st p. of 2nd sec. of Tuesday's NYT]; earlier, it'd revealed that Manhattan execs split thus on God and the soul: 85% believe in personal immortality, vs. only 15% in God. God is an insult to the imperial, climbing, domineering, power-oriented, wealth-accumulating ego; but the immortality of "the soul" fits nicely into the mentality of Mr. Capitalist. No wonder the Bible insists that only God is immortal (Gen.3, 1Tim.6.16--though he wants to give "eternal life" to us, as a gift through Jesus in the Spirit in the church).
3. Belief in God is a journalistic embarrassment, and the media taboo it as the Victorians tabooed public mention of sex [see the excellent OpEd article on this, 20 Jan78: Wesley G. Pippert, "Reporting Morality"]; but it's perfectly respectable to report all kinds of spiritualism, such as "dying" experiences [Betty Kuebler-R., Ray Moody, etc.]. Indeed, every kind of religion except theism [i.e., biblical religion] is out in the media open, including publishing--as e.g. THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF IGNORANCE. We theists are thus in a media-ghetto except for occasional reports of "born again" experiences--Colson, Cleaver, Flynt, etc.--which the media look askance at, and even tend to lampoon.
4. The Zeitgeist is antiEstablishment, and therefore open to (1) foreign religions and (2) underground [occult] religion (astrology, necromancy, etc.). So the popularity of Alan Watts, Theo. Roszak [e.g., WHERE THE WASTELAND ENDS], etc.
5. "The psychic" is of "the soul," and therefore of a particular religious metaphysic; but "the mystical" applies to all the great religions--as vonHuegel says, every vital religion is a mix of the intellectual, the institutional, and the mystical. See "4W" and "4E" on #545.
6. Eastern religion centers in "being," Western [biblical, particularly] in "doing." Right now, Eastern heads are trying to guruize Jesus--on which see #920. Here, then, we have to do with varying visions of reality--on which see #409.
7. "Spiritual" thinking tends to be either "cool" [Vedanta, Western philosophy] or "warm" [bhakti(love)--on which see #408, comparing the Gospel of John with the Gita, the Bible of (e.g.) Hare Krishna].
8. East and West operate on different "paradigms." A religion is a way of seeing and living in the world, and #605 shows how different the globe's hemispheres are in their world-pictures.
9. The easiest way to see the difference is to compare "prayer" and "meditation." See #87--and contrast prayer with the radical secularism of the soul in #772, in which it merges with hedonism and eudemonism. See also Lindisfarnism, #692.
10. Applied to counseling, see #591.