

Thoughts on listening to THESIS cassette 4.2 and reading its "Update":

1. Jack Biersdorf (pp.2ff) has the best summary I've seen of the Jan.73 Chicago conference of Insearch (funded by the Geo. Dayton Foundation) to study the future of religion in America. Case studies of 46 "trend-setting groups representing various responses to cultural and societal issues. Jack, Dir. of Insearch (and then still NCC Dir. of the Dept. of Min.), is not on the tape, but his opening speech--from which the "Update" precis was made--is available, and would (I think) be a good document to use in D.Min. Integration Seminar. A few morsels:

(1) Most groups are now preoccupied with achieving intimate community as the most important sign of their fidelity to the gospel. Like it or not, this overshadows others goals and interests.

(2) Hit by the scientific myth (I would add, both as threat and as promise), Christians are making two responses:

(a) Retreating before what appears a steady advance, while reinterpreting religious teaching as congruent with the modern science of each era. This is the liberal option.

(b) Ignoring the cultural onslaught so as to prevent cultural captivity. This is what Peter Berger calls the strategy of the cognitive minority. (I add that Pete says this's possible only if the community is language-tight enough, i.e. if the community meets frequently enough and uses its special language enough so that the language remains alive for the members of the special community, as was true of the early Christians. This has been a heavy emphasis of the Southern Baptists since the Civil War, was heavily stressed at SBTS when I was there as fellow-student with Clarence Jordan and Gordon Cosby and others who've maintained the tradition; and Southern Baptists, with the exception of the variety of Pentecostals, are the only growing religious group in America today.) Says Jack, "The middle is eroding. The most exciting and fastest growing groups are at the extremes"--conservatives, HPM, Easterns, transpersonal-psy. types. "The future is with those who can believe with integrity that their myth is a claim to the truth. In the contest of myths, the ones that survive are the ones that do grant power and bestow meaning. If liberals are to have an important part in the future, their faith can neither be just an excuse for social action, nor only a conversation about religion as intellectual concepts." [In substance.]

(3) The East is influential because people are turned off on Western disciplines and methods of salvation and/or enlightenment and because in the West (as not in the East) religious experience and psychology have split off from each other and the latter has gone secularistic. Little future for religious movements and institutions that fail to take seriously enough folks' present preoccupation with self-development, spiritual development, inner peace. Options:

(a) Pentecostalism.

(b) HPM and the applied behavioral sciences in general. (d, WEE) Exploration of West's heritage.

(c) Eastern individualism (yoga, etc.).

(4) The safety-in-numbers applies to religion: "we need many different bets on the future" so should welcome and encourage religious pluralism.

(5) And ecology: Religion can help the West provide a new World Model of nonmat-
~~er~~istic "success," "a life style of reduced consumption and satisfaction from community and personal growth....authentic, personal, religious experience and authentic intimate community." How now use our resources to model that future?

2. A good 9" on Key'73, which I'd like to play in Adm.Fac....Good bibliography and case on house church....Bob Paul on his new THE CHURCH IN SEARCH OF ITSELF (the three basic orientations: Church, Bible, Conscience)....3 on renewal: Dennis Bennett, T.A. Raedeke, Arch Hargraves.

3. Only house-church, and buildingless NYTS? If removal of tax exemptions, yes! But I'm for a rich, powerful

Church (AB) unless Parousia (AD). [See vertical.]

CHURCH	inner	outer
strong	A	B
weak	C	D

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AD (beginning of the Church, and renewals); AB (Constantinian and early Medieval; maybe the recommencing of the building of our city's Cathedral of St.Jn. the Divine); BC (late Medieval); CD (today, with Pentecostals and Southern Baptists as exceptions).
 DANGER: Manichean disdain for outer, without Manichean inner strength.